

STUDYGUIDE





INTRODUCTION

his study guide to accompany the Japanese anime Spirited Away, has been written for students from years five to eight (ages ten to fourteen). It provides information and suggestions for learning activities across the Key Learning Areas of the Arts, English, SOSE, Science and Mathematics. Spirited Away has a multi-layered narrative and will be understood in a variety of ways depending upon the ages and cultural backgrounds of viewers, their previous experiences, especially with anima and manga, and their beliefs and values.

BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM

ABOUT THE FILM

Chihiro is a wilful, headstrong girl who thinks everyone should fit in with her ideas and meet her needs. When her parents Akio and Yugo tell her they are moving house, Chihiro is furious. As they leave, she clings to the traces of her old life. Arriving at the end of a mysterious cul-de-sac, the family is confronted by a large red building with an endless gaping tunnel that looks very much like a gigantic mouth. Reluctantly Chihiro follows her parents into the tunnel.

The family discover a ghostly town and come across a sumptuous banquet. Akio and Yugo begin eating more and more greedily. Before Chihiro's eyes her parents are transformed into pigs! Unknowingly they have strayed into a world inhabited by ancient gods and magical beings, ruled over by Yubaba, a







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demonic sorceress. Yubaba tells Chihiro that newcomers are turned into animals before being killed and eaten. Luckily for Chihiro she mets Haku who tells her that she can escape this fate by making herself useful. Chihiro renounces her self-centredness and laziness and begins a journey of self-discovery.

Spirited Away is an adventure film that is full of action but without violence. Many of the problems encountered by characters in the film are dealt with using resourcefulness and humour. The film cleverly explores important questions through fantasy, using a mix of modern and traditional ideas.

BOX OFFICE DOLLARS

Spirited Away cost 19 million dollars to create. This is about five times less than a usual animated feature production budget, but it is a huge amount of money for a Japanese animated feature. Even before it was released in the USA and Europe, Hayao Miyazaki's film was hailed as the first non-American film in history to have brought in 200 million dollars at the box office worldwide.

 Calculate the difference in money required per minute of film for *Spirited Away* and a usual American animated production. Why do you think film-makers in the US are able to spend so much more money on creating films than Japanese filmmakers?

MARKETING A FILM

There are many different ways films can be brought to people 's attention so that as many people as possible will view it in a cinema.

 Select a film that has been released recently and make a concept map like the one above (see concept *map*) showing how people came to know about the film.

How did you find out about *Spirited Away*? Make a list of things you had heard about *Spirited Away* before you saw the film? How did you find out these things?

Fast food outlets sometimes promote a film by offering collectable merchandise. Clever advertising makes these small toys or cups appealing and people feel like they should have the special collectable toy. Of course, while collecting the promotional item you are also buying the food of the store.

- Do you think this type of marketing works? Explain your ideas.
- What are some other ways that you would market Spirited Away?

ANIME AND MANGA

In Japan, people of all ages go to see animes, even adults! It is a very popular form of entertainment in Japan, as are mangas. Mangas are Japanese comics. But unlike our comics, they are more













like novels with pictures. Miyazaki has created a very beautiful manga called *Nausicaa*. This epic ran for over 12 years! Mangas are extremely popular in Japan and people everywhere of all ages read them. There are many different types of mangas, pitched at different audiences.

- How many Japanese animes have you seen? Perhaps you've seen *Pokemon* or *Dragon Ball Z* or *Sailor Moon*? Or even some of Miyazaki's other animes like *Princess Mononoke*. Write your own definition of 'anime'.
- Have you read any mangas or seen any? Which ones? How different are they to other comics?

Anime has many different types (gen-



res). As well as animes for TV there are many animes in the cinema on a regular basis. Many have never made it to Australia; although we have been watching animes on Australian TV since the 1970s.

 Ask your parents or carers if they remember Astro Boy or Princess Knight or Kimba the White Lion (which the Lion King is based on).

Osamu Tezuka created all of these animes. In Japan Tezuka is regarded as the 'godfather' of anime. Miyazaki is an admirer of Tezuka. Like Tezuka, Miya-



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zaki also has produced many mangas. When Tezuka's work screened on TV, as now, the voices of the characters were dubbed into English rather than having subtitles. As a consequence in the 70s, audiences tended to believe that such animations were American because the characters had American accents.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a film subtitled and/or dubbed?
- Which do you prefer to watch?

You would have noticed that Japanese anime looks different to Western animation and often the storyline of these are also different. Look at the eyes of characters, these particularly are often extremely expressive. In animation most of the emotions and ideas are carried by the expression of the character's eyes). Often the eyes look less Japanese and more Western, although this is changing. Once all Japanese animes had characters with Western eyes.

• Why do you think the Japanese decided to do this?

AFTER VIEWING THE FILM

ELEMENTS OF THE FILM

Several elements come together to help a film tell a story, for example, there needs to be a setting, characters and a plot. The plot usually involves some sort of problem being resolved and along the way some important ideas, or themes being explored such as friendship, loyalty or trust.

When we arrive at a cinema to view a film we usually have some expectations about the story, the main characters and what will happen in the film.

 What expectations did you bring to Spirited Away? Make a list of the things you thought would happen in this film, the sorts of problems or conflicts you thought would happen in the film and how you thought the problems would be sorted out or resolved.

The opening scenes of a film set out to create expectation about what will happen during the film. At times some viewers will have expectations that are not explored.

- Did this happen for you in *Spirited Away*? Give some examples.
- Think about the opening scenes of Spirited Away. What action created expectations about what would happen in the film? Draw a scene from the beginning of the film and list expectations created for you.
- Use a plot outline like the one in chart 2 to map out the story, or narrative, in *Spirited Away*.









In Japanese anime, characters face difficult journeys. Their decisions and how they think and feel about their world is often complex. Because of this complexity, the characters often display both good and bad qualities.

Which characters in *Spirited Away* have both good and bad qualities?
What discoveries could you say characters make about themselves and about others as the plot unfolds?
Use a chart like the one in chart 01 to record some of your ideas.

Away as a classic like Alice in Wonderland.

 Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What are some classic stories you have read or viewed as films? Do you know of any classic stories from countries other than Australia, England and the US? What do you think are the characteristics of a classic story?

Character	What did the character discover during the film?	7
Chihiro		
		-
Haku		
Yubaba		
		1*

Some people have described Spirited



CHART 2

CHART 3

		FILMS	
Film Elements	THE LION KING	SPIRITED AWAY	LI'L ELVIS
Setting	Jungle, desert	Mystical world Rykon (hotel)	
Hero(es)	Simba	Chihiro	
Villain(s)	Scar	Yubaba	
Other main characters	Nala, Mufasa	Huku. Zeniba	
Plot The king dies. His son, Simba, runs away, but realizes he must face his responsibilities and return. Chibiro is trapped in a mystical world where her parents have been turned into pigs. Chibiro must learn to be bray and selfess in order to save her parents and free them			
Themes	Responsibility, friendship, circle of life	Compassion, bravery, friendship, loyalty, personal growth	_

CLOSE ANALYSIS

We call the beginning of any film, starting with the credit sequence or as soon as the film begins, the opening sequence or the opening credit sequence. During this time the film aims to establish who the characters are and where the film is set. As well, main locations, conflicts or problems, the story and plot are introduced. Then in the middle of the film all of these are explored. Finally in the end or nearing the end of the film, all of these are resolved. We call the ending the closing sequence, when the story achieves closure. A classic narrative (one with a clearly defined beginning, middle and end that travels in a linear line as it unfolds its story) is probably the most common form of storytelling across cultures in films. However some cultures can play with and disturb these conventions.

 Can you think of any films, which don't achieve closure? Which ones and in what ways is closure not achieved?

Use the headings and questions below (*see chart 4*) to track and explore the narrative flow from the opening to the closing sequences of *Spirited Away*.

• Why do you think that Miyazaki chose to name his film *Spirited Away*?

The narrative of *Spirited Away* could be described as a cyclical narrative, that is, the story comes full circle, returning in some way to the beginning. All narratives (stories) in films depend on cause and effect. Characters trigger and motivate a cause, which has a subsequent effect and so on. Basically a narrative is a chain of events in a cause and effect relationship, which takes place in time and space.

 Draw a circle and around it add four or five key events from *Spirited Away* to show how the plot is cyclical. Does the film return to the beginning? Is it a new beginning or





has nothing really changed? Does Chihiro change in the ending? If so, how did she change and what caused the changes? What other changes are evident?

 List some cause and effect relationships for Chihiro.

Work in groups of three to make a chart like chart 3. Compare some of the elements of *Spirited Away* and another Japanese animation with Australian and American animations you have seen.

 Display your chart in the classroom and look at charts made by other groups of students. What similarities are there between films? How are they different from one another? What conclusions can you draw about Australian, American and Japanese films? Think carefully about the themes of the films and the types of characters they include. Are there particular types of characters or ideas included or not included in films from particular countries?

CHARACTERIZATION

Look up the meaning of the word protagonist. Who would you describe as the key protagonist in *Spirited Away*? What is the meaning of hero and heroine? Is the protagonist in *Spirited Away* a heroine or hero? Why do you think this?

Make a list of films you have seen that have a female protagonist. Ask your parents to name films from their childhood with female protagonists. Who found this task easier, you or your parents? Discuss with your

	OPENING	MIDDLE	CLOSING
4	What problem is introduced?	How is it explored?	How is it resolved?
RT	What characters are introduced?	How are they developed?	What growth or changes have they experienced?
CHA	Is the setting introduced?	How is it introduced?	Do we leave the setting? How?

class why you think this is the case.

Miyazaki wanted to make Chihiro an ordinary little girl, to capture something realistic. This meant that the physique of a little 10-year-old girl had to be painted and somehow her soul, or her personality also had to be captured.

Do you think Chihiro is a realistic little girl? What is she like at the beginning of the film? Write two 'character report cards' (see chart 5) describing her personality, one at the beginning of the film and one at the end. Compare the stills from the film, (on page seven), with your descriptions. Do they match?

At the beginning of the film Chihiro is an awkward, sulky little girl. We see her sprawled out on the back seat of her parents' car with pouting facial expressions. She certainly does not look like she is going to be the perfect, cute little heroine that we have seen in many other animated films. By the end of the film we have seen the fighting spirit of Chihiro emerge, but we have also seen her charm and the depth of her spirit. Her abilities to adapt to an often frightening, mythical environment and to use her judgement to make considered decisions have emerged. She has developed confidence and a sense of self, an identity. Along the way, she seems to become cute. As the animators reflect her spirit in her facial expressions, she could even be described as pretty.

- Give some examples from the film to show whether you agree or disagree with this summary of the changes in Chihiro's personality and appearance.
- What do you think Chihiro learned by the end of the film? What were the key events that led her to this thinking?
- Use a chart like the one below to

STRONG WEAK

list a scene where you think Chihiro displayed each virtue or quality. Add other virtues or qualities. (see chart 6)

Who is your favourite character, apart from Chihiro or Haku? Make a chart like the one above to show the virtues and qualities of the character you selected. (see chart 6)

SOUND DESIGN

The audio part of a film is made up of dialogue, sound effects, music and atmospheres. We call this the sound design of a film.

- Imagine watching Spirited Away with the sound turned off. Discuss with your class how this would make you feel as a viewer. Why would it have this effect? Would it make the film seem longer or shorter? Why do you think it would have this effect?
- What type of music did you notice while you were watching the film? Would you describe the music as modern, traditional or as something different? How did the music help the film to tell its story?
- Work with a friend to make a list of sound effects you remember from the film. Why do you think you remembered these sound effects? How did they contribute to the film story? Do you remember any scenes where silence was used to create meaning? If so, what meaning did it create?

FILM DESIGN

Animes are recognized for their artistic mastering of the animation form, in terms of the look of the overall animation. Japanese anime manage to look like they are live action. This is due to the camera angles, sizes and movements of the filming. The backgrounds in anime are often painted by hand and have little computer generated work done in post-production (after the anime is filmed, so during editing). Animes often have the look of what we call painterly. They are textured and have depth to the forms on the screen, even though it is a 2D art form.

What do you remember most about *Spirited Away*? What impression did it leave on you?

Spirited Away is an imaginative, colourful animation. The Artistic Director, Yoji Takeshige uses handcrafted art and stylized paintings to create mystical but believable settings and characters. Miyazaki wanted light and colour to fill the story, so Takeshige used many nuances or shades of colour, for example, from the sombre hues of the noren (curtains hung from the door) that hang in the yuya to the violent colours on the bridge-we see every imaginable shade of red. For all these contrasting hues and weights of colour to be visible Takeshige had to be sure the light did not drown them out. At times he chose a weak, reddish light to reflect the ancient times of Japan, while at other times scenes are purposely darkened. In the scene where Chihiro's parents are transformed into pigs, he darkens the scene purposely so the audience feels Chihiro's fright.

The Artistic Director says that Miyazaki asked him to draw from Chihiro's point of view. He wanted reality to be skewed from her subjective point of view.

 Discuss with your class what you think Miyazaki meant by this. Do you think the artistic director achieved Miyazaki's goal? How would the images have changed if the film had been drawn from another character's point of view, for example, Haku or Yubaba?

VIRTUE OR QUALITY	SCENE	
friendship		
determination		
discipline]
pride		
thoughtfulness		

SETTING: MYTHICAL WORLDS

The imagery in Spirited Away draws heavily upon the realist approach of live action films, for example, gentle tracking movements, unusual angles, aerial shots, changes in perspective or point-of-view all contribute to the way the viewer is drawn into the mythical world. This is a constant feature of all Japanese animes (particularly feature length films). This is to give the illusion that the anime you are watching is believable, just like live action. We call this ability to believe 'suspending disbelief'. This is also achieved by the painted style of Spirited Away, through the texture and depth of the imagery.

Artistic Director, Takeshige describes the scene where Chihiro takes the train and goes to Zeniba to save Haku as the most difficult to design. Although the scene is not very animated, it was difficult because it was complicated to portray a train travelling on an ocean. After all a train voyaging on water is not an ordinary sight! Nevertheless trains and oceans are things you are familiar with, so the scene had to be realistic. Firstly the art department had to decide upon a tone for the scene. In the end many touches were added using computer graphics since 'in a film like Spirited Away there is one main challenge: to make the incredible believable', says Takeshige.

 Use Paint or a simple drawing programme to create a scene where two ordinary everyday objects come together in an unusual way.
Plan carefully so that the tone of your work captures reality. Can you make the incredible believable?

THEMES AND ISSUES WITHIN THE NARRATIVE

Japanese anime tend to have complex storylines that leave some people confused and needing to watch the film again. Because a lot of animes are filmed from mangas, some information can get lost on an audience who hasn't read the manga. It is also a part of the Japanese storytelling tradition that stories tend to be based on metaphors and symbolism, so the stories often reference spiritual matters and ideas. They often concern themselves with stories about the environment, technology and humans. These animes tend to look at the environment as needing protection, to question the ethics and impact of technology on humans and society. But they do this without being didactic (hitting you over the head with the message). They also tend to encourage values of compassion, loyalty, honesty and truth and triumph friendship, strength and bravery.

Is this true in some way about Spirited Away? How?

TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

The director of *Spirited Away*, Hayao Miyazaki, believes each country has its own traditions that are important to pass down to future generations. He worries about the effects on people who have lost touch with their heritage.

- Invite Japanese guest speakers (e.g. exchange students from a local secondary school) to share traditions important to their families. Find out if traditions vary from family to family or from one area of Japan to another. Investigate whether Japanese traditions are being lost.
- Invite several older Australian guest speakers to talk about traditions important to their families. Be sure to include Indigenous guest speakers. Once again, find out if traditions vary from family to family or from one area of Australia to another. Investigate whether Australian traditions are being lost.
- Find out about the importance and significance of the Ngarinyin Pathways Dulwan project. How did the Ngarinyin elders' people decide to preserve their traditions and culture? Who helped them with this important task? Visit the Ngarinyin Pathways Dulwan web site:
 - http://www.acmi.net.au/pathways or the Immigration Museum's web site: http://immigration.m useum.vic.gov.au/#
- Create a multimedia presentation that explores Japanese or Australian traditions and hold an exhibition of your works. Invite the guest speakers, students and teachers from your school and family members to discuss your work.

ANCIENT GODS, MYSTICAL BEINGS, SYMBOLISM AND RELIGIOUS REFERENCES

In Japan, for thousands of years people have believed that Kami (gods) and Rei (spirits) are everywhere: in every river, tree, home and kitchen. The film-maker used his imagination to visualize these beings. Some were inspired by Japanese folklore. One was inspired by a paper mask used at the temple Kasuga Taisha ceremonies.

 Draw the River God. What aspects of our environment do you think inspired this image? What might cause the sludge and smell of this being? Think about the things that came out of this god. Write an explanation to accompany your drawing stating why you think the film-maker chose to represent the River God in this way.

Hayao Miyazaki tells us that No-Face is a wandering god who has no home and no basis in Japanese folklore. This character represents modern Japan.

- As a class discuss examples from the film that show how this character is a metaphor illustrating greed.
- Create your own character and place her or him in a scene to show how generosity could be represented.

Religious symbols can be found everywhere in Japan and this is much the same in Miyazaki's films. They can be found discreetly throughout scenes and reflect traditions and people's lives. A connection with nature is an essential characteristic of the Japanese soul.

 In Japan, religion is more of a cultural thing rather than something that draws followers. It is omnipresent, but not overpowering. Find out what that means.

FRIENDSHIP

People develop friendships in all sorts of ways—through their families, groups they belong to, school, hobbies or interests. In *Spirited Away* Chihiro develops a special bond with Haku because they face some similar challenges.



What things do Chihiro and Haku each have in common? Imagine these two characters have become email pals. Write four or five messages they might write to each other after Chihiro leaves the mystical world of the gods.

CHILDREN'S CONCERNS

When *Spirited Away* film-maker, Hayao Miyazaki, is planning a film, he tries to think about the problems and concerns of children, especially girls. He has noticed that many children feel overprotected by the adults in their lives. He says they feel like they cannot play without adult eyes watching what they are doing. Do you agree?

 Conduct a survey amongst Year 1, Year 3 and Year 6 students to find out if they feel overprotected by adults. Graph the results, then write a report explaining your results.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Hayao Miyazaki says it is not his role to educate people about ecology. Yet he does admit he projects his personal experiences onto his films. He regularly helps clean up a river that runs by his house, and he prefers trees to concrete.

What other things do you remember from the film that you think might relate to his experiences and preferences?

COMMUNICATION

In *Spirited Away* language is important to the story. In the world where Chihiro becomes lost, words become very important and powerful forces. When Chihiro tells Yubaba (the witch) that she wants to work, the witch is unable to stop her.

• Create a list of problems you think the world has today. Work with a group of friends to select one of these problems. Create a graffiti wall of positive words that

capture ideas to help solve this problem. Display and share graffiti walls with other class members.

GOING FURTHER

ANIMATION

The art of animation is really just like a magic trick or an illusion. Animation has been around for a long time and amounts to creating a moving image by showing lots of still images really quickly one after the other. There are lots of different ways to animate pictures, but they all rely on the same idea. When people view lots of slightly different images quickly one after the other they are not able to separate the pictures out individually. Their eye fools them into believing they are seeing a moving image.

MAKING A FLICK BOOK

The flick or flip book is a really simple way to try animation yourself. First, collect the things you need:

- · black lead pencil
- 32 pieces of paper measuring approximately 6cm x 8cm
- colouring pencils or felt tip pens
- a stapler that will staple thick documents.
- Think of a simple sequence of movement such as a face changing expression, an animal running, a flower opening or the sun rising over a hill. Now draw it on one of the 32 pieces of paper. Include crosses

beside each drawing (called register marks) and the number of each image. This will help you to get the drawings in the right order later. Be sure the image is in the middle of the page.

- 2 Slightly change the action of one part of the drawing only on each page. Be sure to line up the register marks each time. This will help you to position the image correctly onto the pages of your flick book.
- 3. Draw each picture on one of the blank pages. Start with the last page of the book, and work forwards, so you can see the previous drawing beneath. Trace most of that image and change one thing slightly each time to give the illusion of movement. Colour each image using the same colour scheme. Dark colours work well.
- 4 Place the 32 pages of the flick book in order.
- 5 Finish making your flick book by stapling together the 32 pages in the correct sequence

WHAT ABOUT FILM ANIMATION?

With live action film the camera runs at a constant speed, but with animation, film sequences are built up one frame at a time. When small changes are made to each image between shots this is called *stop-motion animation*.

In *cel animation* characters and other moving features are created on transparent sheets called cels. A separate background or setting is created, then each time you want to create movement a new cel drawing is filmed against the background.

You could create a background and then make your own action cels using plastic transparency sheets, permanent pens and oil based paints. It would be a good idea to create a storyboard first.

Films usually run at 24 frames per second. Usually each drawing is shot for two frames. So, every second of film needs 12 drawings. If this is the case in *Spirited Away* work out how many drawings would be needed altogether for the total film? You might need a calculator for this one!

STORYBOARDS

A storyboard is a little like a comicstrip. It is a set of simple drawings that helps you plan the plot and how you will present the visual elements of your film story. It should show the main scenes, some written notes about the action, camera shots and movement and the sound needed. Shot sizes and movements give animation the look of live action, so it is important to think about this aspect very carefully.

STOP MOTION ANIMATION

If you have access to a video camera you can create a simple stop motion action.

You will need:

- white board markers
- white board
- white board eraser

Plan a simple action with a character in a simple setting. For example a skater travelling down the skate park on a ramp. The skater is going to skate up and down the ramp once and then fall. Draw the ramp in full. Then draw the skater skating, bit-by-bit, thinking of the movement required. Each time you draw a bit more, film with the camera using the record and pause functions on the camera. Do not use stop on the camera. By pausing and recording you can film short small movements and then when we watch it will be one continuous flowing movement.

STUDIO GHIBLI

Hayao Miyazaki creates a fascinating image of how Studio Ghibli works. He says he considers himself Kamaji. Yubaba is Mr Suzuki, the president of Ghibli. He says Ghibli is just like the bath-house in the film. Chihiro is like a young animator who has come to visit. When she arrives she finds Yubaba shouting and giving orders to everyone. Meanwhile, Kamaji is forced to work hard under Yubaba's orders. He is so overworked he does not have enough arms and legs to do the task. As for Chihiro, she has to make herself useful if she doesn't want Yubaba to make her disappear, that is to fire her!

Imagine you are an animator and you have a fantastic idea for an anime and you want to show it to Studio Ghibli. You will present to them a 'pitch' for a new script. In this you need to have the following ideas to present to the studio. They prefer that you present this pitch, in either Powerpoint or Hyper Studio (or another web-based program). It will need:

- 1 A 200 word synopsis (what the film is about)
- 2 A character list with who they are, what they look like, who they relate to, their role in the story, and sketches of them.
- 3 A description of the setting and locations with sketches.
- 4 What music, sound effects and atmospheres will be used in the sound design?
- 5 How the anime will look in terms of texture, colours, forms.
- 6 An outline of the themes and issues explored in the story.

THE NEXT STUDIO GHIBLI FILM

Studio Ghibli hopes to release another film in Japanese theatres in 2004. Hayao Miyazaki is not sure if he will direct it. He comments that the world is changing enormously. Japan is going through a serious recession and terrorism is on the rise. He believes the studio must produce a work that is pertinent, that will ask the right questions, provide some answers, and give people hope.

- Work with a partner to create 10 or 15 storyboard frames outlining a film that would meet Hayao Miyazaki's ideals, or
- Design a film poster that would meet Hayao Miyazaki 's ideals.

Some Miyazaki feature films you may wish to see are:

- The Castle of Cagliostro
- Nausicca of the Valley of the Winds
- Princess Mononoke
- My Neighbour Totoro

SOME WEB SITES OF INTEREST:

Spirited away http://www.spiritedaway.com.au

Studio Ghibli

http://www.ntv.co.jp/ghibli/ http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/ ghibli/

Madman http://www.madman.com.au/

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J, Clements and H. McCarthy, *The anime encyclopaedia a guide to Japanese animation since 1917*, Stone bridge Press, Berkeley California, 2001.

Celia Meehan, *Kites, Kimonos and Karate*, Macmillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, 1997.

JAPANESE ORGANIZATIONS

Japanese Seminar House http://www.japansh.com/intronew.htm

Consulate-General of Japan h t t p : / / w w w . m e l b o u r n e au.emb-japan.go.jp/index.htm

This study guide was written for ATOM by Vyvyan Stranieri and Christine Evely, Education Programmers, Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

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