

# Hayao Miyazaki



## **Artist Biographical Information**

Hayao Miyazaki is a Japanese animator and a leader of the world famous animation company Studio Ghibli.

He was born on January 5, 1941 in Tokyo Japan to Katsuji Miyazaki, an aircraft parts manufacturer and Akemi Ota, an animator. He had 3 other siblings and together they worked in the family business of airplanes. They soon moved to Kanuma city to escape the Tokyo bombings of WW2, events that later affected his content greatly. It was at this time that his mother became sick with spinal tuberculosis and stayed in a hospital for almost 3 years.

After working in the family business for so long, Miyazaki became interested in animated movies, one of his main influences being Hakuajaden (Legend of the White Snake), the first full length color animated movie in Japan.

After his general university education, Miyazaki became an animator for Toei animation (producer of Hakuajaden) and began at the bottom of the artistic hierarchy, with laborious cel-by-cel drawings to move characters and objects. His co-workers quickly discovered how imaginative he was as he pitched many great ideas to the animating company. He climbed in ranks and became a leading character in the animation studio named Studio Ghibli.

Some of his earlier films included Castle in the Sky and Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind. These films reflected his dislike for the military and war he gathered from his childhood and the admiration he has for planes, aircraft and flying contraptions he picked up from the family business. The film he is most known for is My Neighbour Totoro, inspired by the very same forest he lived in as a young child, which ironically almost brought about the death of Studio Ghibli due to the depressing undertones of the film.

Miyazaki kept producing films like Kiki's Delivery Service, Porco Rosso, Princess Mononoke and Spirited away and gained a contract with Disney to translate his films to english to expose his films to the American audience. From there, his films spread all over the world and his creativity and genius reached audiences everywhere.



### Significant Films

*My Neighbor Totoro (1988)*. A film about two sisters who move to the countryside. As their mother is sick in a hospital bed and they live alone with their father, they encounter magical beasts who introduce them to a fantasy world to take them away from the troubles and uncertainties of the real world.



*Howl's Moving Castle (2004)*. Based off of the book by the British author Diana Wynne Jones, the film is about Sophie, a plain girl working in a hat shop, the only excitement in her life being occasional meetings with a mysterious wizard. Her happiness is witnessed by an evil witch and she is cursed, turning 80 years old. She travels to the handsome wizard and his intricate moving castle to reverse the curse and find great friends along the way.

### Art Movement Information / Personal Style

Miyazaki's animation style is the classic way of animating where each frame is drawn out by hand and the frames are later compiled into a film clip on a computer software. He dislikes computer animation or 3D animation presumably because he follows the traditional Japanese 2 dimensional art style.

His style differs greatly from contemporary Japanese animation, or anime, because he personally dislikes that style of storytelling. His characters don't have a big eyed style and the subject matter in his films is more fantasy rather than science fiction. He draws a lot of inspiration from British fantasy writers like C.S. Lewis or Philip Pullman as well as the architecture and colours of European countries themselves.

His films have a common theme of the exploration of human warmth and the preciousness of childhood. His films have a strong and brave but still human and relatable female lead. Many of his films convey a strong environmental message, reminding us to be aware of our home and not take the Earth for granted. His films have a very painterly feel as he pays great attention to shot composition, colours, and the effect each scene has to the overall feeling of the film. His later films, like *Howl's Moving Castle*, are visually massive and have the ability to transport the viewer into another fantasy world.

### Questions

1. What is one prevailing theme that carries through most of Miyazaki's films?
2. How does Miyazaki's style differ from contemporary Japanese animation?

## References

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