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# PLOT

## HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

### BEST FANTASY MOVIE

Young Sophie Hatter, who runs her late father's hat shop, encounters the mysterious wizard Howl by chance. He takes a liking to her. This attracts the attention of the Witch of the Waste, who has been seeking Howl's heart for herself. She curses Sophie, turning her into a crone. As the curse prevents her from telling anyone of her true form, Sophie decides to run away. Along the way, she befriends a scarecrow that she names Turnip Head, and they come across Howl's castle. Once inside, Sophie meets the fire demon Calcifer who powers the castle and recognizes that Sophie has been cursed. Turnip Head, and they come across Howl's.

**“Calcifer offers to break the curse in exchange for Sophie's help”**

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in breaking the pact between him and Howl. When Howl appears, Sophie announces that she is the castle's new cleaning lady. As she adjusts to life in the castle, she discovers that the front door is a magic portal leading to several places.

Howl receives summons from the King, who orders his various assumed identities to fight in the war started by the disappearance of Crown Prince Justin. Howl sends Sophie as his mother to decline. At the palace, Sophie runs into the Witch of the Waste, who reveals that she cannot reverse the spell she



# LITERARY QUALITIES

Oscar-winning director Hayao Miyazaki ('Spirited Away' and 'Howl's Moving Castle') has resigned from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, mere weeks after accepting an invitation to join. The acclaimed animation guru was one of only three Japanese film industry people ever to join the Academy, his departure leaving actor

Ken Watanabe ('The Last Samurai') the only living Japanese member. A spokesman for Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli said the director's reasons for leaving were related to a desire to 'concentrate on his creative activities', as he gears up for pre-production on his next, as-yet-untitled, feature-length animation.

## STUDIO GHIBLI

Just thought I'd start a forum topic - for the sheer hell of it. And being a British animation forum I thought I'd ask about Japanese animated films... just to be contrary. Studio Ghibli films - do you like them? Hate them? Have a favourite? Why? I think my personal favourite of those I've seen is Princess Mononoke. Lots of epic scenery, crazy creatures and demons, sword play and (I think) well chosen voice cast for the English speaking version.

Saw 'The Cat Returns' at the weekend - wasn't very keen on that. But this may not be fair as I had just come back from a three hour hike and slept through the middle of it. Just thought I'd start a forum topic - for the sheer hell of it.

## NEXT MOVIE REVEALED

Miyazaki's works are characterised by the recurrence of progressive themes such as the absence of villains; environmentalism; pacifism; and feminism. His films are also frequently concerned with childhood transition and a marked preoccupation with flight.

Rumor has it that Hayao Miyazaki's next (and possibly last) movie will be an adaptation of the Chinese children's book "I Lost My Little Boy" - an original story about a boy dying of heart disease apparently based within the fictional world of Miyazaki's older movie My Neighbour Totoro.



## NEXT MOVIE REVEALED

The next project from Hayao Miyazake (director of 'Howl's Moving Castle') and Ghibli Studio has been announced. 'Gake no ue no Ponyo' (which translates as 'Ponyo On A Cliff') will tell the story of a five year-old boy and Ponyo, a goldfish princess who longs to be human. Production on the film began October 2006, with a release in Japan set for 2008. A Western edition is likely to arrive in 2009.

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## 谊友小生 先生谊生夏生 HAURU NO UGOKU SHIRO 2004

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# VOICE CASTING

## SOPHIE HATTER

Emily Mortimer  
Chieko Baisho



## CALCIFER

Billy Crystal  
Tatsuya Gashuin



## WITCH OF THE WASTE

Lauren Bacall  
Akihiro Miwa



## GRANDMA SOPHIE

Jean Simmons  
Chieko Baisho



## WIZARD HOWL

Christian Bale  
Takuya Kimura



MARKL  
Josh Hutcherson  
Ryunosuke Kamiki



## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FILM AND NOVEL

### “Diana Wynne Jones did meet with representatives from Studio Ghibli”

but did not have any input or involvement in the production of the film. Miyazaki traveled to England in the summer of 2004 to give Jones a private viewing of the finished movie. She has been quoted as saying:

“It’s fantastic. No, I have no input—I write books, not films. Yes it will be different from the book—in fact it’s likely to be very different, but that’s as it should be. It will still be a fantastic film.”[3]

As Jones noted, the film is significantly different from her original novel. Much of the plot is similar, but it is flavored with many of Miyazaki’s familiar themes: airships, redemption, solving one’s own problems, beautiful natural landscapes, societies reminiscent of Victorian or Industrial era societies, and cute anthropomorphic

sidekicks. The focus is still on Sophie and her adventure while being cursed with old age, but the main action of the film’s story takes place during a war, reminiscent of World War I, with bombing-attacks, by airships, on civilian cities similar to the those made by the German Empire, and monstrously-large Dreadnought style battleships, involved in the arms race before the outbreak of World War I. The film is located in a fantastical nation somewhat reminiscent of pre-World War I Alsace. Indeed, many buildings in the town are identical to actual buildings in the Alsatian town of Colmar, which Miyazaki acknowledged as the inspiration for its setting.[citation needed]



Whereas the novel is concerned with Howl’s womanizing and his attempts to weasel out of locating a lost wizard and a prince, the film has Howl avoiding helping in a national war for pacifist reasons, and deals with the consequences of this decision. This aspect of the film’s plot is actually rooted in Miyazaki’s

political views as a pacifist — in an interview with Newsweek magazine, Miyazaki told the interviewer that the movie had started production “just as your country [the USA] had started the war against Iraq”, and the subsequent rage he felt about the Iraq war “profoundly impacted”.

### “Many of the book’s characters are modified for the film”

The character of Howl’s apprentice, Michael Fisher, is a teenager (15) in the book but a young boy, “Markl”, in the film. Sophie has only one sister in the movie compared to two in the book (although the other sister is alluded to as an aside near the film’s opening). The Witch of the Waste, instead of looking young and beautiful, is a huge heavyset woman who later becomes an old crone. In the book, she is a frightening villain terrorizing other characters, but the film’s latter half transforms her into a “grandmother” character, and she is even taken into Howl’s home.

## SPECTACULAR VISUAL TREAT

While computer animation is kicking hand drawings to the curb in the U.S., it’s nice to see that the classical animation form still thrives in Japan. What strikes me about Howl’s Moving Castle is just how colorful it is. Studio Ghibli shows no signs of slowing down When it comes to creating gorgeous panoramic scenes, diverse character designs and finishing things off with a flourish when the colors are applied. It can’t be underestimated how the wide range of colors used in this film really help things stand out even more and accentuate the fantastical aspects of this film. Yes, the mood for the most part is grim throughout the movie.

Though the title suggests otherwise, Howl’s is really about Sophie, a young woman working in a hat shop who encounters a mysteriously handsome stranger in the streets one day. This encounter sets off a long chain of events and encounters, as Sophie encounters a witch (whose curse on Sophie ignites the rest of the film), a talking flame, an apprentice, a scarecrow with a turnip head and of course, the enormous moving castle. The storyline is vintage Studio Ghibli, weaving normal settings with magical elements to create a hybrid world where you know some of this stuff is implausible in reality, but you could not care less because of this amazing imaginative world that the filmmakers have cre-

ated. re you know some of this stuff is implausible in reality, but you could not care less because of this amazing imaginative world that the filmmakers have created.

### “IN ADDITION TO THE BEAUTIFUL COLORS, THE STRONG AND WONDERFULLY DIVERSE CAST OF CHARACTERS IS THIS FILM’S GREATEST STRENGTH.”

The characters are more or less stereotypical, yet their physical appearances and interactions with each other ensure a unique feel to it all. Sophie is your vintage vulnerable protagonist, Howl is the brooding guy with a heart of gold, Calcifer is the spastic sidekick, Markl is the curious assistant, the Witch is evil but not as cruel as you would think. These characters are both easily identifiable in the roles they fill, while charmingly original in the flair they bring to those roles.

I won’t go so far as to proclaim that this is the Best! Ghibli! Ever! - but this is a visually spectacular treat

that shows Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli are still chugging along.

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# MIYAZAKI RETURNS

Oscar-winning director Hayao Miyazaki is set to make an eagerly anticipated return to cinema in 2008, having started production on his latest animated feature at Studio Ghibli. Miyazaki's last film was 'Howl's Moving Castle', which grossed \$170 million in Japan and \$225 million internationally. He previously won an Academy Award for 'Spirited Away'. Studio Ghibli has confirmed that Miyazaki and his staff have been scouting locations in Kobe, Japan for inspiration. The director is also apparently putting his storyboards together using watercolours for the first time, rather than his traditional method of using black and white sketches.

Shortly, the city is attacked by enemy planes as Suliman's henchmen invade the castle. After protecting the hat shop from the bombing, Howl transforms and draws the guards away, while Sophie and Calcifer bring the castle to the Wastes. So that Howl would not be continuously forced to

burning, Sophie douses her and Calcifer with water. The castle breaks apart, and Sophie and Heen are thrown over a cliff.

Sophie recovers in tears, believing that she has killed both Calcifer and Howl, as their lives are interconnected. As she is sobbing, Howl's ring points to the remains of Howl's castle door; she walks through it. She finds herself in Howl's past, where she sees Calcifer being caught by a young Howl as a falling star. Howl catches Calcifer falling from the sky, and makes a pact with the demon that he will give him his heart if he serves him. Sophie is pulled back into present time: before leaving she tells Howl to find her in the future.

Back in the present, Sophie finds Howl and realizes that he has been waiting for her all along. He carries her.

defend them, Sophie pulls Calcifer out of the castle to destroy the magic and cut off all ties to the city, then moves him back in to create a smaller version of the moving machine so they can rescue Howl. Unfortunately, the Witch of the Waste discovers Howl's heart in Calcifer's diminishing flames, and grabs it. To save her from