

100 metre Films presents

FIREFLY DREAMS

A JOHN WILLIAMS FILM

RELEASE: 11TH AUGUST 2001, NAGOYA, AICHI, JAPAN

VENUE: Cinema Skhole **address.....**

Ticket Enquiries: Martin@100MeterFilms.com>

- TEACHING MATERIALS -

The forthcoming release of Firefly Dreams has prompted the creation of some basic teaching materials and suggestions for teachers interested in having their students focus on drama and several social issues brought to the fore in this production.

The materials comprise ideas for pre-viewing, that could be carried out during the final weeks of the present semester, and post-viewing ideas, which could be used in Fall Semester classes, with a viewing of the film as a summer assignment. The film will run from 11th August to 21st September in Nagoya, **with a later release in the Tokyo area.**

Pre-paid tickets at the discount price of 1400 yen each can be purchased from 1st June from the cinema, from Martin@100MeterFilms.com, from ????? Prices at the door will be 1700 yen each (Students 1500 yen) Evening performances will have English subtitles.

Teachers who wish their students to use internet as a part of their studies can direct them to the 100meterfilms.com website, where a great deal of background information can be viewed, including details about the film's development, the director, actors, and plot. Some of the stunning photography from the film also appears on the website.

Enquiries, comments, suggestions regarding the teaching materials are welcome:
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PLEASE NOTE that because these teaching materials are not designed with one level of student in mind, teachers being faced with students with different levels of English proficiency, teachers should choose the questions they consider useful or relevant to their own students' levels.

The teaching materials comprise

1. ideas for pre- and post-viewing activities
2. comprehension and discussion questions
3. additional activities

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Read through the BIOGRAPHICAL DATA about the director, John Williams, (Appendix 1) and his DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT (Appendix 2)

Comprehension Questions

A. Biographical Details

1. Where is the director from?
2. How old was he when he made his first film?
3. How many films has he made?
4. When did he begin to write screenplays and what was his job at that time?
5. When did he come to Japan?

B. Director's Statement

- Who was John Williams asked to give advice to after he came to Japan?
- What problems was the girl having?
- How did John feel about the girl, and why?
- What does the term 'rebellious' mean to you
- What examples of teenage 'rebelliousness' can you think of
- What motivated John to make this film?
- Who did he model the main character, Naomi, on?

- What two important objects did John find in an abandoned farmhouse?
- The mirror plays an important part in this film. What do we usually see when we look in a mirror?
- In this film people become mirrors for each other. Which two people in particular become mirrors for each other in this film?
- What does the 'globe' image represent according to John Williams?
- What does the 'mirror' image represent according to John Williams?

SYNOPSIS (Appendix 3) Acquaint students with the plot by reading the synopsis, looking at photographs, exploring the website

20 Important Words: brat / isolated / ageing / relative / Alzheimer's disease / intrigued / gradually / mysterious / summer romance / sour / resonance / contemporary / experience / generation / rootless / era / spiritually empty / materialism / frenetic / urban / values

1. Photocopy the synopsis and prepare a cloze task to focus students on important vocabulary
2. Using the list of characters (Appendix 4) make Naomi's family tree
3. Read through the synopsis and draw the time line for 'that' summer. Begin in Nagoya: Naomi fights with parents; Naomi's mother leaves; etc
4. Looking at the title page photograph and the title "Firefly Dreams", what images does the title "Firefly Dreams" bring to mind? What do you know about fireflies?
5. Looking at the title page photograph and the title "Firefly Dreams", what kind of story do you expect the film to be about?
6. Using the **photographs provided**, (and those available on the website) and the list of characters (Appendix 4) try to build the main characters. What do you expect them to be like? What do you expect Naomi to be like? What do you expect Mrs Koide to be like? What do you expect Masaru to be like?
7. Using the **photographs provided**, (and those available on the website) imagine what kind of story might be built. How and why might Naomi and Mrs Koide be brought together?

Synopsis Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the city brat?
2. Why is she sent to her aunt's hotel?
3. After working in the hotel, what job does Naomi have to do?
4. Who is Mrs Koide?
5. What happens to Naomi's summer romance?
6. What do Naomi and the old lady share?

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7. There are 2 or more striking contrasts in this film. What are these contrasts between?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (These can be used for pre- or post-viewing work)

1. "Firefly Dreams" brings to the fore various problems faced by teenagers, and various problems in the relationship between parents and adolescents.
 - a. What kind of problems are these?
 - b. What kind of problems do you relate to most, and why?
 - c. Which teenage problems are you aware of, but have not experienced yourself?

2. “Firefly Dreams” brings to the fore the generation gap problem in Japan.
 - a. What differences do you notice between your parents and yourselves?
 - b. What differences do you notice between your parents and their parents?
 - c. Why are there such differences between people of the following ages in Japan: 80, 50, 20?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1. Write a brief summary of the story.
2. Imagine you have the chance to write a review of “Firefly Dreams” for a local magazine. Write a short summary of the film and explain why you think people would want to see the film.
3. You want to tell a foreign friend about the film because it is in Japanese and she/he won’t understand it. Explain the story to your friend and describe your favourite part to her/him.
4. There are several parts of the film in which we see people feeling nostalgic. Point out the ones that you noticed.
5. What specific objects in this film make us think about the past?
6. Write a paragraph about the scene that you thought was the most moving in the film.
7. John Williams says that we see ourselves (mirrored) in other people. Which character do you see yourself in, and in what way do you identify with him/her?
8. Dreams play an important part in “Firefly Dreams”. In which part of the film do you remember seeing any dreams?
9. There are several interesting characters in this film. Describe one character that you like. Why do you like him/her?
10. Naomi’s character develops at various stages in the film. At which points do you notice a change in her?

Compare and Contrast Tasks

1. Naomi and Mrs Koide
2. Naomi and Yumi
3. Naomi and her school friend.
4. Naomi before and after her countryside experience
5. Life in the city and life in the countryside

Extra Activities

A.

1. You have the chance to meet the director, John Williams.
Prepare 3 questions you would like to ask him about the film.
2. You have the chance to meet a character: Mrs Koide, Naomi, Yumi...
Prepare 3 questions you would like to ask.
 1. You have the chance to meet one of the actors. Who would you like to meet?
Prepare 3 questions you would like to ask him/her .

B.

Scenery

1. Horaiho is an mountain area located just 2 hours from Nagoya. What do you know about it? What is it famous for?

2. You work for the tourist office in Horaicho and want to attract visitors from Nagoya.

a. Research and write an historical/geographical introduction to the area b. Having seen the film, write some sentences about Horaicho that you think would attract people from the city to come and stay on holiday in this town.

C.

Actress

Yoshie Minami has had a long and distinguished acting career in Japan. She started her career in the all woman "Takarazuka Review" playing one of the male roles.

1. Research and write some introductory notes about the Takarazuka Review
2. Research and write a biographical summary about Yoshie Minami
3. Ask your parents and grandparents to tell you about Yoshie Minami. Recount what they tell you to your classmates.
4. Try to find one of the old movies in which Yoshi Minami has appeared. Compare her role in that with her role in "Firefly Dreams"

Appendix 1 THE DIRECTOR

John Williams was born in St.Albans, England in 1962 but spent most of his childhood in Wales. He began making films at the age of 14 on a second hand 16mm Bolex, which he bought after seeing Werner Herzog's "Aguirre, Wrath of God." He studied French and German Literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he continued to make films and was active in student theatre. From 1986 to 1988 he worked as a French teacher in a comprehensive school in North London and began writing feature length screenplays. In 1988, he moved to Japan, where he has lived and worked ever since. During this time, he has travelled widely in Asia and Africa, and has written, directed and produced eight short films, including a video documentary shot in Sri Lanka and a video documentary about refugees in Japan.. In 1995 he established the production group 100 Meter Films.

Appendix 2 DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"A few years after coming to Japan, I was asked to give some advice to a pretty but extremely rebellious high school girl who was giving her parents hell. I had a lot of sympathy for the girl, because she reminded me in many ways of my own teenage troubles. I forgot about her for a long time but years later I started to write a screenplay about a rebellious schoolgirl and I realised that this central character was modelled on her.

That screenplay eventually became "Firefly Dreams". I think that it is through the experience of trying to imaginatively enter the life of someone else that we come to understand ourselves. We see ourselves mirrored in other people and we come to understand our shared predicaments. In the film, Naomi becomes gradually curious about Mrs. Koide and her past. I wanted to capture the awakening of this curiosity, the awakening of Naomi's capacity for empathy, which I think lies at the heart of all good films and all good fiction. I was interested in the idea that Mrs. Koide and Naomi were mirrors for each other in the same way that I had found a mirror myself in a rebellious Japanese schoolgirl. While we were location hunting for the film, we discovered an old globe and a dusty mirror in the junk-filled attic of an abandoned farmhouse.

When I saw the mirror and the globe,I felt as if I had stumbled onto a key image for the film. The globe represents the greater world and the desire to escape and lead a larger and more exciting life. Both Naomi and Koide know this desire and of course that is what brought me to Japan in the first place. The mirror represents self knowledge and that is what Naomi finds in Mrs Koide and what Mrs. Koide rediscovers through Naomi.

Another major element in the film is the countryside itself and the contrast between city and country. Travelling from the urban sprawl of Nagoya to the rural area where we shot is like travelling back in time. From the most modern place in the world it is possible to go back in time three or four hundred years in the space of a two-hour drive. I wanted to

catch this amazing contrast onfilm, a contrast that mirrors the gulf in experience between Naomi's age group and the pre-war generation of Mrs. Koide. And again I found a mirror for myself. Even though I now live on the other side of the globe I found numerous similarities between my home in Wales and the Japanese countryside.

While we were filming, the sounds, sights and smells took me back to my own childhood. I felt that I had come a long way but that I was in some strange way back where I had begun"

John Williams

Appendix 3 SYNOPSIS

City brat Naomi is packed off to work at her aunt's hotel after her mother runs off with another man. She hates the hard work in the remote hotel so her aunt arranges for her to look after an aging relative, Mrs. Koide, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Naomi hates this, too, but gradually becomes intrigued by the old woman and the mysteries in her past. As Naomi's summer romance with a local boy turns sour she grows closer to the old woman and they begin to share their secrets and their dreams.

Firefly Dreams is a film with deep resonance for contemporary Japan, where a huge gulf of experience separates the generation that experienced the war, and the younger rootless generations who have been raised in an era of peace but, spiritually empty materialism. The story also contrasts the divide between frenetic urban Japan and the warmth and human values found in the countryside.

Appendix 4 CAST

Naomi	MAHO UKAI
Mrs. Koide	YOSHIE MINAMI
Masaru	TSUTOMU NIWA
Yumi	ETSUKO KIMATA
Naomi's father	ATSUSHI ONO
Naomi's Mother	CHIE MIYAJIMA
Yumi's Mother	KYOKO KANEMOTO
Yumi's father	SADAYASU YAMAKAWA
Yumi's Great Uncle	HARUO NANAHARA
Tomoko	AYAKO SATO
Hotel Guest	TOMOHIKO HARA
Pornographer	Seiji
Yuji	SHUNSUKE KABEYA
Teru	DAI SAKURAI
Doctor	TOBAKO SAITO
Teacher	SHEHARU KAMIYA

Appendix 5 Minami Yoshie

Minami Yoshie is instantly recognizable to millions of Japanese TV viewers as the character actress who specializes in loveable grandmother roles. However, only diehard fans would know her name and many would be surprised to learn about her long stage career which began in 1934 as one of the “male” roles in the prestigious all woman “Takarazuka Review”. She left the Takarazuka in the late thirties but returned to work as a serious actress after the war. As a stage actress she has at one time or another won most of Japan’s major theatre awards and she is still working at the age of 85. During the fifties and sixties she was also in demand for film work and appeared as the teacher in Kurosawa’s “Ikiru” and in numerous other supporting roles. There are many parallels between Yoshie Minami herself and Mrs. Koide who she plays and during the filming dialogue was rewritten to incorporate Minami San’s own experience.

Maho Ukai

The majority of people who see the film assume that Maho is the real thing - a genuine 17 year old teenage rebel - but when she came to the first screening nobody, not even the director recognised her. In reality 21 year old Maho hated the peroxide blonde hair she had to dye for the part and her personality couldn’t be further from the directionless Naomi. She has been training as an actress since the age of 18, first in Nagoya Arts University and then with a talent agency in Tokyo. She was selected from over a thousand professionals and amateurs who auditioned for the role.

Appendix 6 ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Most Japanese films are conceived, funded and produced in Tokyo. Firefly Dreams is unusual as it was made completely independently and was mostly financed and produced in Nagoya. Casting began in October 1998. Auditions were held in Nagoya, Tokyo and Osaka to find three talented newcomers to play the roles of Naomi, Masaru and Yumi. Auditions were also held at the location to find local people to play supporting roles. Minami Yoshie, who is well known in Japan for her stage, television and film work agreed to play the role of Mrs. Koide. The film was shot over six weeks in Horaciho, a rural region rich in history, folklore and natural beauty, located in Aichi Prefecture, in central Japan. The area is famous for the "Hana Matsuri" in winter time, an ancient Dance of Devils to ward off evil spirits. The small town of Ikeba in which the scenes around Koide’s house were shot has a thousand year history, dating back to when the village was founded by scattered and defeated warriors from the Miura clan. Yuya Onsen, where the hotel scenes were shot is a popular and scenic hot spring town on the banks of the river Kansa, whose crystal clear waters are surrounded by gently wooded slopes, and craggy volcanic hills.

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THE DIRECTOR

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Filmography

In Britain

1982, Trapped, 8 mins, 16mm, silent, b/w, Experimental.
1984, The Audition, 12mins, 16mm, silent b/w, Experimental.
1987, The Haunting, 12 mins, 16mm, sound, b/w, Narrative Fiction.

In Japan

1991, Orpheus Pineapple, 30 mins, 8mm, sound, colour, Narrative Fiction.
1992, Sashimi, 10 mins, 8mm, sound, colour, Narrative Fiction.
1993, Promises, 30 mins, 8mm, sound and dialogue, colour, Narrative Fiction.
1994, Voices from Sri Lanka, 50 mins, High Eight Video, Documentary.
1995, The Man on the Platform, 20 mins, Documentary, Drama.
1996, Midnight Spin, 69 mins, 16mm, colour, Narrative Fiction.
1998, Ima Doko, 40 mins, Digital Video, Narrative Fiction.
2000, Firefly Dreams, 119 mins, 35mm, Dolby Stereo, Narrative Fiction.

