

Question an animated film

Anne Marie Filho

I teach with cinema





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by Anne Marie Filho

The screening of an animated film should allow students to meet a work, to question it, to formulate a critical judgment, to express a opinion, an argued point of view, to debate, to compare, to put into perspective, to build links with other works, other arts, other media which have seized the same object. This is the opportunity to students to acquire knowledge and build skills which they can put to the test at other times.



Rain and Fish © Risa Kimpara

Two ordinary but different modalities of questioning

When classes are invited to study an object, whatever it may be, offered by the nature or produced by the artifice of creation as are, for example, a text or a film, two methods of questioning can be adopted.

- A set of carefully organized questions, often by degrees of complexity, is submitted to the students who respond to it.
- The questioning is not stopped in advance but is constructed according to students' reflections when they discover the object to be studied and react; the organization of these reflections and their development will allow necessarily to achieve the objectives set for analysis, for the apprehension of meaning, which remain identical in both modalities; the interest of this second approach is to create the conditions for the progressive acquisition of a method, of autonomy, including by gradually making people aware of students of the existence of invariants in their observations. While adapting to their age and level, it is up to the teacher to invite students to reflect on the strategies they implement to question, analyze, understand, so that they can criticize them, assimilate, be able to appropriate them, reuse them and develop them.

To illustrate the point, we will now imagine that students are invited to discover Risa Kimpara's film, "Rain and Fish".

Maintain the goal of image education

Showing an animated film is always the opportunity to offer students a meeting with a work, creative work artistic, according to the approach of artistic lessons, and this whatever the objective pursued.

It is appropriate to recall here the teaching approach artistic such that she is formalized in the various publications available on the Eduscol website, in the section devoted to these teachings¹. The emphasis is on quality expected from these meetings with artistic works. The study of animated films can usefully draw inspiration from proposals contained in these accompanying documents.

¹ <https://eduscol.education.fr/cid99287/ressources-accompagnement-enseignements-artistiques-aux-cycles.html>

In particular "Within reach of the hand, within reach of words, within reach of the eye: the encounter with works of plastic arts for ages 6 to 9" and "The encounter with the works in the training of the student from 9 to 12 years old: dare to explore, question, research, question... become an art explorer".



From the mobilization of personal experience to that of knowledge

The children are moved and understand the film in the light of their experience. If the work here is formally different from those with which the students are familiar, it refers, basically, to an experience shared by all, that of the rain, of its noises, that of the umbrella, big or small with which we want to have fun, that of the school bus perhaps. It engages memory, is easily anchored in personal history and encourages the play of perceptual connotations.

Depending on the project, we can prepare for the meeting by addressing, before the screening, this theme of "rain". Who loves, who doesn't love not ? For what ? What memory(s)? What images? We will be able to write, draw, stage ourselves, explore vocabulary imagined rain, before discovering what the director imagined and told.

Perhaps the work will also resonate with children's culture. A large number of works, suitable for all ages, deal with rain. Depending on their age, books were read to them or they themselves read in which the characters were confronted with the rain, classics of children's literature such as Agnès Rosenstiehl's album, "Mimi Cracra, the rain, she loves it!".

They will remember the nursery rhymes in French, "It's raining, it's wet, it's a frog party.", "It's raining shepherd", in English, "Rain rain go away"... Will they have had the opportunity to see Gene Kelly singing in the rain? Anyway, for multiple reasons, personal, cultural, social..., the students already have within them the resources to understand the film.

Unconsciously or not, students will also mobilize their knowledge and experience of the very construction of stories, which base their expectations and which allow them to anticipate the adventures to come. In Risa Kimpara's film, the unfolding of the story is original in its sobriety. It could thwart the aspirations of young students, those who may have nourished these previous experiences, laying the foundations of an early culture of literature and cinema. This film is both narrative, with a very refined narrative thread, and contemplative. It could be confusing.

Rue de Paris, rainy weather, Gustave Caillebotte, 1877, Art Institute of Chicago





Exploration

To encounter the work is also to meet its author, it is to situate the context of its creation and its distribution. Students should be trained to pay attention to this information. The meaning of this identification will only be affirmed with its repetition, expanded to meet other works, pictorial, musical, literary... It is modestly a question of teaching them respect for an author, for his work and that of his team. Beyond that, they will be able to build learning about cultures step by step. whose works bear the marks of eras, discover, over time, the "schools" as has been said for a long time for other arts by grouping, if relevant, artists into schools according to their country of origin, according to their century, according to the artistic movement to which they belong.

The animated films offered on the platform are steeped in the culture of their authors but they are also widely open to other influences and the composition of the production teams themselves is often multicultural. We will notice that most films have titles in English, that depending on their age and the cycle, students will learn to translate. Without entering into controversy here, this use of English for films produced in countries where it is not the language official underlines the address to an international audience whose culture will also influence the reception. Depending on the year's project, we will be able to keep traces of this identification work on the "context" of the works.

In the case of the film "Rain and Fish", the information offered in the film itself is systematically written in two scripts: Japanese alphabet then Latin alphabet. Information in Japanese is thus translated into English.

Title	Rain and Fish	The title appears after 43 seconds, in Japanese and in English. English title names do not begin with a capital letter as required by convention. The Japanese characters mean "goldfish" and not "rain and fish". They are not unlike small boats standing out against the misty horizon. 雨 = red. 魚 = fish.
Author	Risa Kimpara	Japanese director
Team and distribution of functions		This information appears at the end of the film.
Script, design, editing and animation	Risa Kimpara	4.22
Animation assistant	Yusuke Kazuta	4.22
Music	Yusaku Masuda	4.28
Sound effects	Takuji Oe	4.28
Audio mixer	Yoshito Morita	4.28
Production	Tokyo University of the Arts	4.28
Directed by	Risa Kimpara	4.34
Production	Tokyo University of the Arts	4.34
Place of production	Tokyo University of the Arts	Appears on screen from the start.
Country of production	Japan	Induced by Tokyo University of the Arts
Completion date	2010	Date at the bottom of the black screen, last image.

Other information may be provided.

Length of movie	4.47 seconds
Technical	2D movie
Additional information on production	Film directed by Risa Kimpara1 as part of her 1st year at the Tokyo University of the Arts.

Taking all of these elements into account depends on the project carried out in the class and the level of the students. However, it seems essential that students methodically get used to naming at least the author, without ignoring that the making of a film involves a team, and to identify the year and place of production.

If the teacher plans to make an animated film with his class, he can already observe here with his students the different functions carried out by the members of a team, so many roles which can then be distributed.

The difference between the form of this film and that of the Japanese productions they have seen may appear to older people. We are here closer to the founding work of the Chinese Te Wei (1915-2010) and his animated washes or to the singularity of Isao Takahata in The Tale of Princess Kaguya (2013). Elements of Japanese culture are evident in the director's choices.



The narration. Pitch, summary, synopsis

It is interesting to invite students to work, orally and/or in writing, on a presentation of the proposed story.

We may prefer the term "hook" to that of "pitch" borrowed from commerce (sales pitch, commercial argument) and today commonly used to evoke a presentation in one or two sentences, which must arouse interest, usually without revealing the ending. In general, this presentation, this "hook":

- . outlines the initial situation
- . specify the characters
- . reports the first event which starts the story and which can change the life of the character(s) by opening them the field of possibilities, creating a more or less strong suspense.

The film "Rain and Fish" was the subject of several of these brief presentations.

Here are three, taken from sites that cite the work, to which is attached a fourth pitch proposed on an English-speaking site:

"One rainy day, a little boy waits for the bus and lets his imagination run wild. Images come to his mind."

Films pour enfants Platform

"During a downpour, a little boy waits for the bus sheltered under his umbrella and leaves in his thoughts."

cinemapublic.org

"On a rainy day, a boy is waiting at a bus stop. Drops of water patter and make waves in a puddle. Suddenly, a start. A goldfish in the pond..."

3dvf.com

"One rainy day a boy was waiting sulkily at a bus stop. Pitter-patter, raindrops leap and make waves in a puddle. Watching it, he saw something [jump]. When the boy looked into the puddle, there was a red fish swimming. It is a story of a red fish a boy saw on a rainy day.»

Letterboxd, the social network for film lovers

The composition of this hook and the choice it implies is demanding and allows for formative reflection on the part of students. In the examples presented above, rain is mentioned in the first words. It is she who is the driving force behind the action, which redoubles in intensity, which creates puddles, mirrors for the child. When it stops, the film stops too.

We can also work on even shorter forms, a noun phrase or a slogan accompanying the title.

Writing the "pitch" can be a first or a new opportunity to question the chosen title.

Students will observe the difference between the Japanese title which means "goldfish" and the English title which translates to "rain and fish". Why this difference, assumed by the director? What is the interest of the first, that of the second?

What other title would the students imagine? In the manner of La Fontaine, "The child, the rain and the fish", which refers more to the story, without explicit moral here? Or, very different, "The Wait", "Reverie in the Rain" which translates the situation of the child, his mindset. Students can come up with many answers.

The class will also be able to compare the title of the film to titles given by other creators, poets, painters, musicians... to works they dedicated to rain, such as those cited at the end of this document.

The summary is longer and tells the entire story. The term "synopsis", included in the lexicon of cinema, can be considered as a synonym and presented as such to students aged 9 to 12. The summary of "Rain and Fish" will present some easily surmountable difficulties, on the one hand due to the interweaving of daydreaming in real experience, on the other is due to the plurality of interpretations regarding the characters and the links that unite them. The summary asks students to identify the place, the characters, the links that unite them, the action in which they are engaged.



The place, the decor

The film does not show a specific setting. Rare clues support hypotheses:

Visual clues:

- . A white barrier (in 0.23)
- . The oblong sign (0.48) which we understand indicates a bus stop
- . A bus or coach
- . Sketched trees and buildings (from 3.29)

Sound cues:

- . The sound of cars driving
- . The sound of the bus and its pneumatic doors.

Depending on their personal experience, students will indifferently recognize a town, a village, a hamlet, a road, a campaign, but will hardly be able to go further and confirm their hypotheses. The action could take place in places, in different countries.

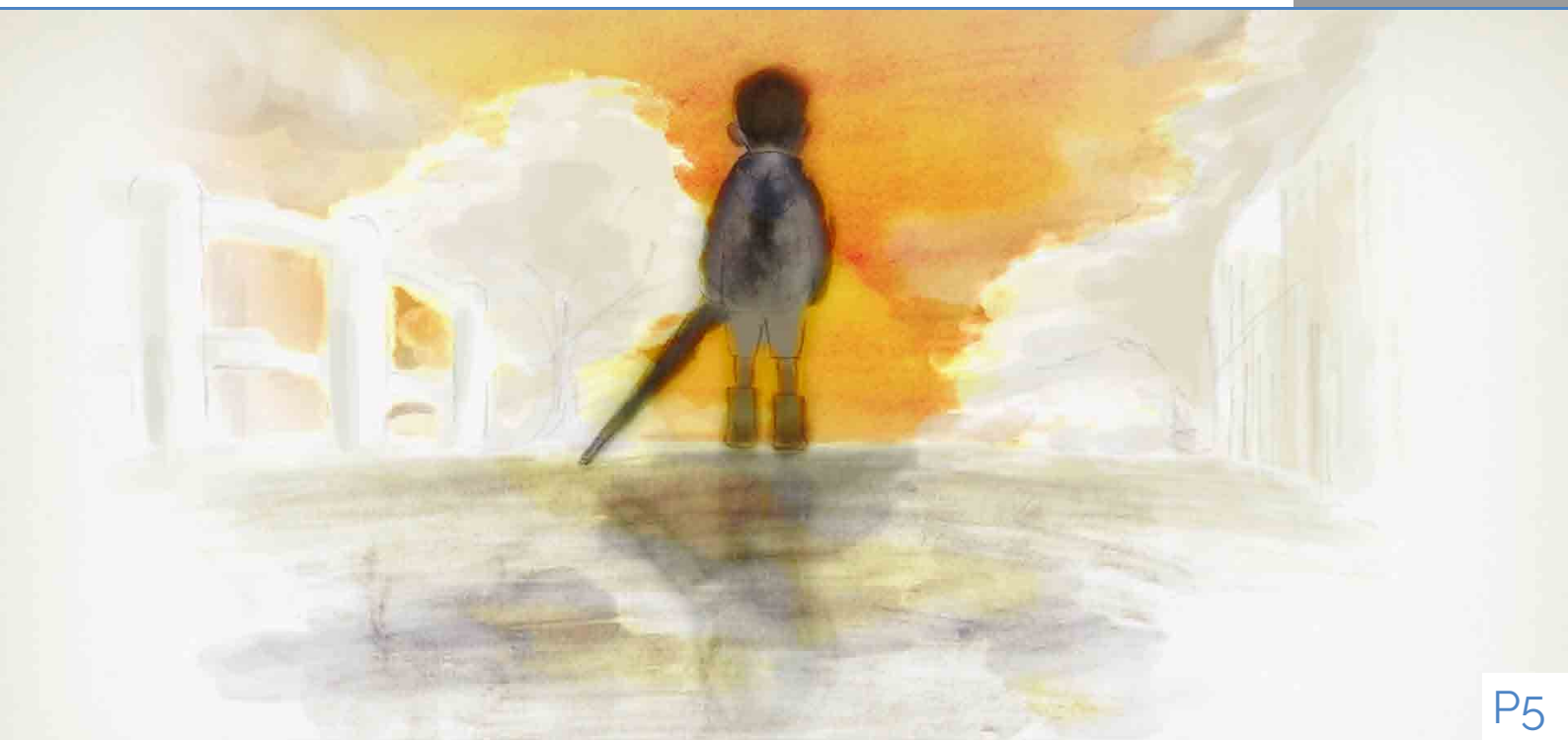
The rain then the glare caused by the return of the sun hide or overwhelm the elements of the decor. Attention is like this focused on the child, the umbrella, the bus, a few essential elements for the story, and, above all, on the rain then the sun who are essential actors and who nourish the child's emotions.

During the first meeting between Satsuki, Mei and Totoro in the film "My Neighbor Totoro" (Hayao Miyazaki, 1988), the rain curtain also hides the gray-colored decor by fragmenting it. Did the director remember this episode of the film?

Rain and light have dissolving powers. The dissolution of the elements of the decor enhances the chosen colors. precise shapes disappear and the child evolves into an omnipresent gray color, then into the clarity of orange-yellow. A few shades barely distinguish the little boy's boots, his slightly bluish clothing, like variations of gray.

The world of rain is as monochrome as Te Wei's washes. The red fish, gold fish, brings the golden color which then reaches the entire sky, at the moment when the expected adult finally arrives. The colors of the decor coincide with the feelings, the child's emotions, mean them as much as they are the cause.

Rain and Fish © Risa Kimpara





The characters

In this decor of impressions, the main character is identifiable. He's a child. Its small size is signified by:

- . Child/umbrella proportions
- . Child/bus stop sign proportions
- . The child/adult proportions, in the bird's eye view of him in the last part, (image showing him alongside the adult).

It's probably a little boy, if we interpret it in this sense:

- . His clothing, which is that of a child and is more commonly worn by a boy, but the class may have want to discuss it

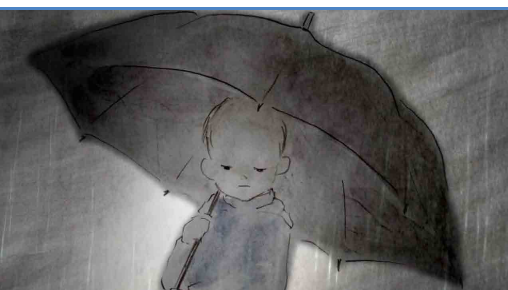
- . His short hairstyle, but the students will be able to discuss that too.

The authors of the pitches cited above unanimously recognize a little boy.

The drawing also provides clues about the child's state of mind.

- . His face: the eyes, the mouth are expressive.

The mouth is drawn, "crunched" with a line that can express sadness, gloom, joy, surprise.



The child goes from sadness to the pleasure of discovering the cat, then to wonder daydreaming before joyfully finding the expected adult. All these feelings are signified in one line. The way he drags his umbrella accentuates the impression of sadness.

Around the child, the other characters are imprecise.



- . Animals, real like the dark-colored cat that meows and flees the water; real and unreal at the same time, like these goldfish which multiply throughout the daydream and who fly.

- . A female figure, like the metamorphosis of one of these fish, which poses a kiss on the child's eyelid.

- . A male figure, who intervenes at the end, caresses the hair of the child, before resuming his journey with him.

Adults, in the child's daydreams as in reality, are tender and protectors. Their presence is associated with pleasure and happiness. The students will formulate hypotheses. They will no doubt want to recognize in man the father that the child is expecting and will have to justify this interpretation. Will they also judge that the dreamed woman is an image of the mother of whom the child thinks? A mother absent in reality but present in the little boy's imagination.



The female figure seems born from the metamorphosis of the goldfish, fish d'or as we say in English, "goldfish". She, whose golden hair unfolds like the veiled fins of fish, disappears quickly.

The metamorphosis of animals into humans and vice versa is a universal theme and appears in many legends, in Japan as in other countries.



Reader of Ovid and open to Western culture, Hayao Miyazaki exploited this imagination by composing "Ponyo on the cliff" (2008), the story of a goldfish little girl, not without being inspired, from a long way, by Andersen.



The action

It's raining. A child, dragging an umbrella behind him, walks towards a bus stop.

From 0.15 to 0.39 the child crosses the field from left to right, looking sad, dragging an umbrella. The movement is underlined by the alternation of shots, showing the child in close-up then in medium shot. Each change of plan allows us to replace Move the child to the left of the image and repeat this movement from left to right.

The 0.30/0.31 shot superimposes the two shots.

On several occasions, the film will superimpose two images, signifying the transitions with great fluidity.

From 0.31 to 0.39, the child crosses the field and disappears, leaves the frame on the right, leaving empty space for them to appear and then the title characters disappear.

In 0.47 and up to 0.54, the film shows the child standing at the bus stop.



The child is standing at the bus stop. A bus comes, stops then leaves.

From 0.55 to 1.07, the bus enters the field from the left, crosses then stops, before exiting the frame to the right.

The soundtrack provides information about the pneumatic doors opening then close without us seeing them in the image.



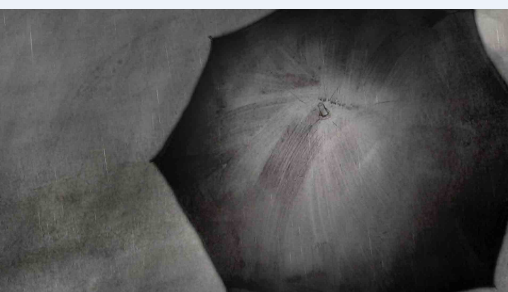
The child did not get on the bus. He stayed, he waits under the persistent rain.

In 1.08, the disappearing bus reveals the child, still standing at the bus stop. We may have thought he would get on the bus and be surprised to see him.

The downpour increases. The child opens his umbrella which resonates.

From 1.09 to 1.16, the child is busy opening his umbrella.

In 1.17, the umbrella covers almost the entire field, then the child is seen in close-up (1.18) and medium-shot (1.19), the two images being superimposed in 1.19.



A cat joins him and takes refuge near him under the umbrella.

The child waits and a few seconds are devoted to showing him like this, immobile, idle. The idea then comes to him (1.31, superimposed images) to play with his umbrella (1.31 to 1.42). While the shot is still close up, the child is seen little gradually dipping slightly, as if the view of him was gaining height, in a tracking shot that is both rear and vertical. From 1.42 to 2.05, the child's attention is absorbed by the meow of a cat which remains off-screen. The child is now in the center of the image and, in 2.00, a new vertical movement allows you to discover the cat.

2.05 reveals the child at the bus stop, as we saw before (cf.1.19) but under his umbrella, the cat took refuge. The child is no longer alone.



Rain and Fish © Risa Kimpara



The child and the cat observe their reflection in a puddle. The child discovers a goldfish which begins to fly around him, accompanied by a swarm of other twirling fish. A female figure appears laughs, places a kiss on the child's face before disappearing.

The following image (2.20/2.11) is surprising. It looks like a low angle, but it's the reflection that explains this effect. The characters are split in the reflection of a puddle (2.12-2.20), two worlds then coexist and, in the water, a universe will unfold unusual.

The goldfish appears in 2.25 as if born from the drop of water which occupies the image from 2.21 to 2.25. He appears to die in 2.38 and is reborn of the two hands which take it, shelter it then let it escape as one does with a bird (2.39-2.45). These two hands do not seem to be those of the child who becomes the amazed spectator of the flight of the fish, then of all the fish around him. The image places him in the center, in close-up, in close-up, in medium shot also to discover the ballet of the numerous fish around him (2.55-3.03, superposition). In 3.10, the close-up allows us to capture the kiss that the woman with light hair poses on his eyelid, before disappearing (3.13, several images superimposed to signify the speed of the movement). The child stays alone then fades away.

The empty field, swept with increasingly yellow and pink colors, is crossed by a goldfish from bottom to top and from the right left (3.20). The fish disappears into the depth of the field (3.21).

The sun came back. The fish have disappeared but the sky, sunny again, is their color. The cat leaves. An adult, probably off the bus, is now with the child. He caresses her head tenderly. The adult and the child leave together.

A sky gilded by the sun fills the entire field from 3.22 to 3.28. The orange shapes in the sky recall the shape of the fish red, the roundness of its body, the elongated triangularity of its tail. The silhouettes of the child and the cat, with their backs facing the sky and in the decor, reappear, duplicated in their reflection on the ground, while the gaze placed on them recedes, as if under the effect from a rear tracking shot. The closed umbrella confirms that the rain has stopped. The cat leaves the child (3.36). In 3.55, the images are superimposed and the child is seen from above, his head down in the center and his face as it appears reflected in the puddle that the child, still fascinated, continues to watch. A shadow behind him appears in the reflection (4.05). The child widens them eyes. He turns around and faces the arrival (4.08) whose gaze the film adopts and who remains off-screen. The child is thus seen in diving, surprised, without smiling. A hand, large and broad, enters the frame from the top of the frame and rests on his head (4.12) which it covers. The child closes his eyes and opens them again, smiling now (4.14), even blushing more and more (4.15). His happy face is superimposed on the bus (4.16) which leaves the frame by exiting through the frame on the right and which, in doing so, reveals the child and the adult now holding the umbrella. The adult extends his hand to the child (4.18) and the two silhouettes which confused in profile (4.20) move towards the left now and fade away. The field is empty (4.20/4.22) until the credits appear. The adult and child reappear in the center, behind the names of the team members. Their backs are and seem to be heading towards the depths of the field.

Off-camera is the space of the story that does not appear in the frame. The field is the visible space inside the frame. The author uses the off-camera to hide from the viewer for a moment what the child sees: the cat, the adult.

Extensions:

Based on the clues found in the film, students may be asked to imagine what happened before, to give a first name to the child, to invent his story, the one which leads him to experience the moments recounted by the film.



The theme

The definition of the theme can give rise to discussion in the class here.

The theme of waiting seems to be at the heart of the narrative here. However, it may be interesting to characterize it: idle, solitary...

The theme of rain is also significant. The title, which contains the word "rain" in English, attests to this.

The theme of childhood is also treated: the ability to dream, to imagine, the ability to leave reality for its reflection, to deploy around you a universe discovered in yourself and/or in legends, tales... but also the relationship with adults with these feminine and masculine figures. The father figure is recognizable, the mother figure is dreamed of. Would the mother be absent, sick like in *My Neighbor Totoro* by Miyasaki where the two little girls, Satsuki and Mei, live alone with their father?

Koinobori in Japan, Dmitri Popov



Hiroshige, 1895. Brooklyn Museum



The flying fish pattern

Flying fish play an important role in Japanese culture. They are represented in the Koi Nobori, literally "carp streamers", which are windsocks in the shape of a koi carp, made for "Tango no sekku, "the boys' party (sekku). The vigorous carp swim upstream with a courage that earned them this tribute. This "flying fish" pattern, whose title Japanese, "goldfish", underlines the importance, puts daydreaming at the heart of the film, the inner life of the little boy, revealed for a moment by the appearance of the fish.



The soundtrack

The film's soundtrack is completely devoid of dialogue. Determining, it does more than support, it reinforces the visual perception, it orients it. It underlines the composition, the movement, defines the moments, supports, supports the meaning, helps to understanding. It can reduce the polysemy of images.

Listen without seeing

If the project is to draw the students' attention to the importance of this soundtrack, it is possible to suggest that they listen to it before seeing the film, for herself, and then letting the students formulate hypotheses based on this listening. The Rain and Fish soundtrack is made up of three parts that are obvious to the ear.

. In the first, we hear that it is raining, someone is walking, cars are driving, a "car" stops and starts again, but children may recognize the sound of the pneumatic door of a bus, a bell preceding a meow.

Will their personal experience also allow them to be attentive to the pounding of rain on an umbrella?

. In the second, music, like that of a xylophone, covers the sound field, punctuated by the sound of rain.

It is slow at first, then very fast, then changes again.

. Finally, in the third, the rain is no longer audible. The bell rings faintly then disappears.

Cars drive with the noise that their movement produces on wet ground, a vehicle stops, someone walks, birds cry, vehicles are still driving, several steps, then the last sound, that of a drop of water.

This soundtrack is composed of noises familiar to young students who will be able to formulate hypotheses that the film will confirm or will invalidate. The second part can arouse perplexity and no sound clue, apart from the persistent rain, refers with certainty to reality. Where have the walker, the cat, the vehicles gone?

The disappearance of these sound elements raises the question of whether it signals the disappearance of a real and familiar world.

Listen and identify the origin of sounds in the image

During the screening, with students, it is interesting to get used to distinguishing:

. The sounds that belong to the represented reality.

(Ex: the rain that I see in the images).

Are they exactly the ones we usually hear? Is there a difference

between the ordinary experience of these noises by children and their restitution in the movie ? Here, the sounds are realistic but it is their discrimination that attracts attention, highlighting the fall of a drop of water for example.

. Sounds whose origin is not in the reality represented.

(Ex: music that no one plays in the reality represented).

So the director added this music. It is interesting to ask why especially since, in this film, she only appears at a very specific moment, progresses from slow to fast then decelerates again. The students will undoubtedly see that it accompanies the dance of flying fish, that the sound of the instruments is very close to that of raindrops.

Music coincides with reverie, with the movement of the imagination that is born, arises from the childhood experience of rain, exacerbated by the loneliness of waiting idle. It underlines the metamorphosis of a reality which nevertheless remains the starting point of the reverie: the very real sound of the rain, associated for a moment with the cat's bell, becomes crystal clear music. Water becomes the instrument of music and the falling drops resonate like the blades of a xylophone.

On sounds in cinema, we can refer to the clear and illustrated explanations on the site:

<http://upopi.ciclic.fr/vocabulaire/glossaire>

Watch the movie without sound

It is an exercise often practiced, which allows us to propose one or multiple soundtracks and analyze how they influence the reception of the film.

Students are always attentive to variations in meaning and emotions perceived according to choices sound implemented.

The students will also make a difference between music and sound effects.



The network film

Children's literature

There is a plethora of works dealing with the experience of rain.

Why not choose works that offer a positive vision of rain?

Poems on the theme of rain...

"It's raining", Les Ziaux, Raymond Queneau (1943), a poem full of cheerfulness that students will be able to imitate as young Oulapiens.

"Pluie", À la borde du temps (1984) and "Le loup vexé", Enfantasques (1974), Claude Roy, poetic and amusing texts.

"Pluie", Les Stances, Jean Moréas (1899), eight melancholy verses which can echo the child's reverie.

"The rain", The bias of things, Francis Ponge (1942), unusual evocation attached to sounds and forms, in a progression close to that of the film.

"He cries in my heart", Romances without words, Paul Verlaine (1874). "Barbara", Lyrics, Jacques Prévert (1946).

Animated cinema

"My Neighbor Totoro", Hayaho Miyazaki (1988). "Ponyo on the Cliff", Hayaho Miyazaki (2008)

Paint

"Rain, Steam and Speed", William Turner, 1844, National Gallery, London.

"Rain on the city", Takeushi Seiho, between 1864 and 1942, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

"Seascape Study with Rain Cloud", John Constable, 1828, Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Comparison between the works of the Japanese painter Hiroshige and the works he inspired, the "japaneries" of Vincent van Gogh:

"Sudden shower over Shin-Ōhashi bridge and Atake", 1857, Hiroshige, United States Library of Congress and the

version of Vincent van Gogh "Bridge in the rain, after Hiroshige", 1887, Museum, Amsterdam.

"Wheat Field in the Rain", 1889, Vincent van Gogh, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Sheltered from the Rain, Hanabusa Itchō, 1709, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Music

"The drop of water" (Prelude opus 28 No. 15), 1838, Frédéric Chopin.

"Gardens in the Rain" (Prints), 1903, Claude Debussy.

Claude Debussy declared that he had looked at paintings by Turner in London before composing these Prints.

<https://admin-ressources.philharmoniedeparis.fr/0769180-estampes-de-claude-debussy.aspx>

"Rain Tree, for two marimbas and a vibraphone", 1981, Toru Takemitsu.

This Japanese composer dedicated several works to rain, particularly in the 1980s. This one, played with percussion instruments, is "imitative" and can awaken the imagination of students.

<https://edutheque.philharmoniedeparis.fr/doc/CIMU/0962799>