

# Wolfwalkers



## VIEWING GUIDE

ABOUT  
THE FILM »

DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS »

ACTIVITIES »

MEDIA LITERARY  
RESOURCES »

## teaching the film

Join us for an online screening of the Apple Original Film **Wolfwalkers**, the beautiful and magical animated feature from the gifted storytellers at Ireland's Cartoon Saloon, and enjoy a fun and educational Q&A with the filmmakers. Our special guests will also be doing some live drawing that participants can follow along with at home.

Taught in conjunction with this guide, the film will encourage students to learn more about Irish culture while also developing their storytelling skills. This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators and families alike. Please feel free to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet your unique learning objectives and circumstances.

**Recommended for ages 7 and up.**

English Language Arts

Media

Peer/Youth Issues

Social Studies/History

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All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

## subject areas

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TEACHING THE FILM »  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS »  
ACTIVITIES »  
LEARNING STANDARDS »

## about the film

In a time of superstition and magic, a young apprentice hunter, Robyn Goodfellowe, journeys to Ireland with her father to wipe out the last wolf pack. While exploring the forbidden lands outside the city walls, Robyn befriends a free-spirited girl, Mebh, a member of a mysterious tribe rumored to have the ability to transform into wolves by night. As they search for Mebh's missing mother, Robyn uncovers a secret that draws her further into the enchanted world of the Wolfwalkers and risks turning into the very thing her father is tasked to destroy.

**Directed by Tomm Moore and Ross Stewart**

**(Ireland/Luxembourg/France 2020) English, 103 mins**

**Wolfwalkers on Apple TV+**

## presenter bios



Over Cartoon Saloon's history, Tomm Moore has worked as Director, Art Director, Story-boarder, Animator and Illustrator on a range of projects from commercials to service work for feature films and TV series, as well as a number of short films projects. Tomm has directed two universally successful feature films. Both were nominated for Best Animated Feature at the ACADEMY AWARD® **The Secret of Kells** in 2010 and the spiritual follow-up, **Song of the Sea** in 2015. Tomm also co-directed (with Ross Stewart) the "On Love" segment for **The Prophet**, a feature animation produced by Salma Hayek based on one of the best-selling books of all time. Tomm Moore received the Directors Guild of Ireland and America's Funder's Series Award in 2008 and European Director of the year at Cartoon Movie in 2009.



Ross Stewart has been painting, illustrating, designing and working in animation for over 20 years. Earlier in his career, Ross worked primarily in Visual Development and Art Direction including roles on 3 Oscar-nominated movies - Art Director and Concept Artist for **The Secret Of Kells** and **Song of the Sea** respectively, both for Cartoon Saloon, and Visual Development on ParaNorman with Laika Studios. More recently he has moved from art direction into directing, working with Tomm Moore on **The Prophet** and now the latest Cartoon Saloon feature, **Wolfwalkers**. As a freelance conceptual artist he has worked for many animation and film studios worldwide on award winning projects and has illustrated books and literature for a variety of publishers.



Maria Pareja is a Spanish born, Irish based Production Designer and Art Director. She studied Engineering for three years, realised that wasn't for her and transferred to an Animation Course at U-tad (Madrid, Spain) and hasn't looked back since! Maria moved to Kilkenny in 2018 to work for her dream studio, Cartoon Saloon. Initially as a Scene Illustrator, before moving into Design, and from there into Production Design on **Wolfwalkers**. Currently she is art directing a project for Greenpeace. She has also Illustrated Children's Books for Spanish Publishers SM, as well as pursuing her own animated projects. Maria is a keen musician, passionate about plants and loves to doodle in her sketchbook for hours on the train.



- ABOUT THE FILM »
- ACTIVITIES»
- LEARNING STANDARDS »
- MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES »

# discussion questions

## Characters, Setting and Story

- Take note of the beginning of the film. What is the setting? What things do you observe in the setting that are important to Robyn?
- Who are the main characters of this story? How are they introduced to us as an audience?
- How did Robyn's relationship with her father change throughout the film? How did they both change individually and together?

## Themes and Lessons

- When discussing **Wolfwalkers**, director Ross Stewart said that "Robyn's story is about a little girl who is stuck in this Puritan world. She can't express herself, she can't do what she wants to do. When she meets Mebh and the wolves, suddenly this whole other world of being free and wild and following her instincts is open to her." What specific things in Robyn's life made her feel trapped? Do you relate to Robyn's inkling to feel free?
- In her town, what standards was Robyn held to specifically because she's a girl? Do the young boys in this film get treated differently than the young girls? Do you think Robyn would have had the same conflict with her father around hunting if she was a boy?
- The film's director, Ross Stewart says that another theme at the heart of this film is "that the enemy is no longer the enemy once you make friends with them, once you understand them." Have you ever had an experience like this before, where you made a judgement about an idea, person, or group of people before you completely understood them? If so, did you change your mind after getting to know the idea, person, or group of people better?

- How does the relationship between the townspeople and the wolves change throughout the film? Who are the predators in the beginning of the film, and who are the predators at the end?
- In his films, director Tomm Moore, often explores the connection we humans have to nature. How do you see that theme reflected in **Wolfwalkers**? What were Robyn and Mebh's personal connections to the forest?
- Are there any lessons you personally learned while watching **Wolfwalkers**?

## Visual Style

- According to the directors, it was important for the visual style of the film to back up the central theme of wildness and instinct versus being caged and repressed. They developed a visual style for the forest that was whimsical and wild, and contrasted it against the town which was rigid and oppressive. Did you notice a difference in art design between these two places? Did the colors, lines, and shapes differ in the town and in the forest? How did the artwork of the town make you feel? How did the artwork of the forest make you feel?
- Director Tomm Moore says that "2D animation can sometimes look like it still has the limitations of the 1940s, where it looks like cell painted characters on watercolor backgrounds rather than all the things that it can be. I think for animation fans it's going to be a celebration of what hand drawn animation can do and really pushing the hand drawn medium as a valid medium in itself as opposed to something you start to see CG movies now trying to replicate. We're trying to show that hand drawn can still do something that CGI can't." Do you think the style of animation added anything to the film? Would it have changed the feelings and emotions of the film if it was done with 3D CG animation?



- DISCUSSION QUESTIONS »
- LEARNING STANDARDS »
- MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES »
- ANIMATION GUIDE »

# activities

## Research the “Wolves of Ossory”

Mebh is a Wolfwalker, the last of the famous “Wolves of Ossory,” a tribe of pagans who St. Patrick cursed with the ability to leave their human bodies and roam the woods as wolves with magical healing powers. Read the poem “On the Wonders of Ireland”, an 11th century Latin poem that scholars believe is the root of this legend. Then do some of your own research on the Irish folklore about the “Wolves of Ossory”. Ask yourself:

- What are the different versions of this famous folktale?
- How does this folktale relate directly to the film, and where do the stories differ?

## Write your own story

Now that you have read the folklore that inspired this film, write or tell a story based on a different folktale of your choosing. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Look up a different Irish legend
- Have you ever been told a myth of legend by a family member, friend or teacher? Do more research on that myth or legend to create your story.
- Search for folklore that relates to your cultural heritage.
- Choose a country or culture that you want to learn more about, and do some research on their myths and legends.

Will Collins, the screenwriter of **Wolfwalkers**, said about his

screenwriting process, “I also had great research assistants in the form of Tomm and Ross [**Wolfwalker’s** Directors], as anytime I visited them in the studio the walls were covered in concept art and drawings of the period so it made my life a lot easier when trying to imagine the world of the story.” After you have chosen the folktale your story will be inspired by, take Will’s advice and draw or print out some concept art for yourself. Use the art to help create the story universe!

Once you have found a story that inspires you, reimagine how you would retell that story today through your own lens. Have fun and use your imagination to draw or write about your reimagined folklore, or simply tell the story out loud to your friends, family, or classmates.

## Read about Ireland’s History

Read about the history of the British rule over Ireland. How do you think Britain’s occupation of Ireland affected the Irish people’s ability to keep their culture alive? Based on what you’ve learned, how do you think the Irish used storytelling to pass important parts of their culture from generation to generation?

## Draw the main characters

Want a detailed explanation of how the Wolfwalkers crew drew the characters and set? In [this video](#), Tomm Moore and Maria Pareja give you a step by step guide to do just that!

## On the Wonders of Ireland

There are some men of the Irish race,  
Who have this wondrous nature from  
ancestry and birth:

Whensoever they will, they can  
speedily turn themselves

Into the form of wolves, and rend  
flesh with wicked teeth:

Often they are seen slaying sheep that  
moan in pain.

But when men raise the hue and cry,  
Or scare them with staves and  
swords, they take flight [like true  
wolves].

But whilst they act thus, they leave  
their true [i.e. their own] bodies

If any man harm them or any wound  
pierce their flesh,

The wounds can be seen plainly in  
their own bodies:

Thus their companions can see the  
raw flesh in their jaws

Of their true body: and we all wonder  
at the sight.

A Translation from Elizabeth Boyle, “On the Wonders of Ireland: Translation and Adaptation,” in Authorities and Adaptations: The Reworking and Transmission of Textual Sources in Medieval Ireland



- ACTIVITIES »
- MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES »
- ANIMATION GUIDE »
- TEACHING THE FILM »

# common core state standards

## Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1  
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2  
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4  
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## History and Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2  
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4  
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

## Writing

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.6  
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.7  
Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

## Anchor Standards for Language

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4  
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.



LEARNING STANDARDS »

ANIMATION GUIDE »

TEACHING THE FILM »

ABOUT THE FILM »

# media literacy resources: screening with meaning

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best

be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

- (1) Medium: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
- (2) Author: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
- (3) Content: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
- (4) Audience: the target audience to whom it is delivered
- (5) Purpose: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

## common core standards

### MEDIUM

All Media Is Constructed.

- What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

### CONTENT

Media Is A Language For Information.

- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

### PURPOSE

All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.

- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?

### AUTHOR

All Media Is Constructed by Someone.

- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

### AUDIENCE

All Media Messages Reach an Audience.

- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

More info at [sffilm.org/education](http://sffilm.org/education)





MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES »

TEACHING THE FILM »

ABOUT THE FILM »

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS »

# what is animation?

Animation is a process used to create motion pictures through the combination of still images (e.g., digital graphics, photographs of drawings, photographs of objects, etc.) which, when played in sequence, create the illusion of movement. All television cartoons, for example,

are animations, and are made up of thousands of still images (drawn by hand or on a computer) that are played sequentially, along with a soundtrack, to tell a story.

# types of animation

- Classic animation (e.g., Disney's **The Lion King**, most TV cartoons)
- Rotoscope (e.g., **Star Wars** lightsabers)
- Flip books
- 3D animation (e.g., **Pixar's Toy Story**, **Wall-E**, **Up**)
- Stereoscopic 3D (e.g., **Avatar**)
- Cut-out / Silhouette animation (e.g.,

## South Park)

- Claymation (e.g., Nick Park's **Wallace and Gromit**)
- Puppet animation (e.g., Tim Burton's **The Nightmare Before Christmas**, **Coraline**)

# history of animation

The world's most famous animator, Walt Disney, began making short animated cartoons based on children's stories in 1923. In 1928 he introduced Mickey Mouse in the first animated sound cartoon, **Steamboat Willie**, which became an immediate sensation. Throughout the next decade, Disney would add such elements as carefully synchronized music (**The Skeleton Dance**, 1929), Technicolor (**Flowers and Trees**, 1932), and the illusion of depth with his multi-plane camera (**The Old Mill**, 1937), a device that allowed for animated cells to be photographed against a three-dimensional background. Although not the first animated feature, **Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs** (1937) was the first to use up-to-the-minute techniques and the first to receive widespread release. The film's success can be attributed in part to Disney's willingness to use animation to create a profound dramatic experience. He strove for photographic realism in films such as **Pinocchio** (1940),

**Dumbo** (1941) and **Bambi** (1942). The success of television cartoons led to the virtual disappearance of animated shorts produced for theatrical release. Animated featurelength films, however, flourished, especially after the release of Disney's **The Little Mermaid** (1989), regarded by many as the studio's best animated feature in decades. Other Disney blockbusters followed, including **Beauty and the Beast** (1991), **Aladdin** (1992), **The Lion King** (1994) and **Lilo & Stitch** (2002). The development of computer animation was another great advancement in the form and resulted in feature films of astounding visual sumptuousness. In 1995, **Toy Story** was the first film to use only computer generated imagery (CGI). In 2001 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences added a new Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. The first recipient of the award was **Shrek** (2001).