S.P 2.1

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*Spirited Away* by Miyazaki Hayao

**Primary Claim:** Spiritied Away can be simply seen as a Japanese traditional children’s folktale in which a young girl journeys from her childhood to adulthood. However, a close examination of her journey provides the audience with a reflection of today’s society. The obstacles she encounters in her journey make us ponder upon the modern society’s problems such as consumerism, greed and environmental pollution.

**Outline:**

1. Introduction

a. brief summary of the movie

2. Introduction, cont.

a. explain why it can be seen as a dystopian world

-provide my own definition of dystopia

-the vertical power hierarchy in the bathhouse

-Yubaba controls workers by seizing their name (explain the importance of keeping a name (identity)

2. Greed/ consumerism/ materialism

a. Chihiro’s parents

-dependence on credit cards, car (audi)

-orgy of food consumption

-transformed into pigs (lost all memory of their human existence)

-support: “Matter Out of Plcae…Spritied Away” by Napier, Susan

-Include statistics of credit card debt

b. No Face monster

-unable to communicate/connect with others

-continuously feels emptiness

-desire to consume to fulfill its emptiness

-explain what Miyazaki is trying to show through this... prove that consumerism is not the solution..

3. Environment: consumer capitalism causes environmental pollution

a. Example 1: Stink God

-Nature suffering from pollution

-Support: Miyazaki’s own interview

b. Example 2: Haku

-even though he remembers his name, he cannot go back because his river was paved over to build an apartment complex, and the ancient river

-make a relation to consumerism theme

4. Conclusion

-this could be the audience's own journey that they learn life lessons from the film and grow a litter wiser...

**Annotated Bibliography**

1) Noriki T. Reider. “Spirited Away: Film of the Fantastic and Evolving Japanese Folk Symbols.” Film Criticism 29, no.3. 2005.

Reider provides definitions of the fantastic and situates the film as an exemplary work of the fantastic. She then examines Japanese folk elements (beliefs, imagery and symbolism) in the film. She examines the significance of the Japanese title, Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi. She explains that Kamikakushi is the spirit that takes a person away to the spirit world. She then explains the importance of the protagonist’s name, Chihiro and Sen. She then examines each character, Yubaba, Kamaji, Haku, No-Face, by making connections to old Japanese folktale figures. For example, she explains how Yubaba’s bathhouse has a strict vertical hierarchy and Yubaba lives on the top floor where she controls her employees. Also, she explains that Kamaji, an old man with six long arms and two ordinary length-legs who controls a boiler room resembles Tsuchigumo that were considered as a spider in later generations. They both rebel against authority figures. The article itself is very interesting and gives me an aspect of the film that I had never known. I can use this article to define the alternate universe in the film as a dystopian novel.

2) Napier, Susan. “Matter Out of Place: Carnival, Containment, and Cultural Recovery in Miyazaki’s Spirited Away.” The Journal of Japanese Studies, Volume 32, Number 2, Summer 2006, pp. 287-310. Article.

In the latter part of the essay, Napier provides close readings of significant episodes in the film and make connections to the larger issues raised by the film. For example, she points out Chihiro’s father’s dependence on credit cards, imported cars and their insensitive reaction to daughter. She also explains the obstacles that Chihiro faces and has to overcome while working in the bathhouse (i.e. the episode with the Stink God and the one with No Face). Napier claims that Miyazaki uses these episodes to criticize the modern Japanese society’s materialism/consumerism or pollution. For instance, she says, “No Face suggests a Japan that is out of control, lacking in subjectivity, unable to connect with others and animated only by the empty urge to consume” (Napier 305). However, instead of limiting the criticism to only Japanese society, I want to take it further and make connection to modern society in general.