

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects

Spring 5-1-2006

Pirate Story

Jake T. Powell

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Powell, Jake T., "Pirate Story" (2006). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 601.
https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/601

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Pirate Story

Jake T Powell
Candidate for BFA Degree
in Film Art with Honors

APPROVED

Thesis Project Advisor: _____

Dr. Dale Hudson, Jr.

Second Reader: _____

Thomas Friedmann

Honors Director: _____

Honors Representative: _____

Date: _____

Abstract

What is children's cinema? This thesis explores this question by identifying three codes of children's film and illuminating them through a short film entitled "Pirate Story." The film is about a boy and his grandfather, and the pirates that inhabit a bedtime story. The pirates compete with the grandfather to have narrative authority over their own existence. This film examines the role of the narrator, use of animation, and absence of the parental figures as elements that are signifiers of children's cinema. It was shot on HD video, with animation created in After Effects. Production also involved creation of a life-size pirate ship set, costumes, and musical score. This film serves to show that children's cinema contains unique codes that inform the audience's viewing experience and are important in the development of spectatorship into adulthood.

Table of Contents:

Advice to Future Honors Students.....i

Acknowledgements.....iii

Thesis Essay.....1

Endnotes/Sources Cited and Consulted.....14

Appendix: The Script.....15

Advice to Future Honors Students:

If you are anything like me you are a sophomore or junior sitting in the cozy honors office pouring through huge books of past theses and wondering how you got here, what on earth you are going to do, and why you took on this endeavor in the first place. First, take a deep breath and stop worrying because if you are here then you are in fact deserving and capable of completing a project worthy of this department. If you are reading my thesis I am also assuming you are an art student; as such don't let the academic aura of the honors department intimidate you because your work is just as vital as a thesis in chemistry or psychology.

My first piece of advice is a practical one. Find out all the deadlines, requirements, and guidelines now. Print them up and post them in a very conspicuous place, being sure to check them often; they exist to provide you with the most efficient way to complete your project. It is incredibly easy to get caught up in the development of your thesis body and forget a simple requirement that will make you scramble to get six signatures at the last minute. If you double check to make sure everything is done and turned in on time your job will be simple; if you miss anything you increase your workload tenfold.

On a similar note, be very organized. I produced a short film; if you are doing the same you are charged with a very complex task. As an artist you spend your best time in the stratosphere cultivating beautiful and powerful ideas, however as a film producer you must realize that you need

many people and resources here on earth to complete your project and all of these elements need to come together in a specific way. Communicate with your crew, actors, and representatives often. Write everything down and save every receipt. Plan two extra weeks to finish anything and budget 20% more than you think you need. No matter how good you are something will always go wrong; in fact, several somethings will go wrong, and planning for that now will allow you to maintain the integrity of your project no matter what comes up.

Finally, realize that you are a creative problem solver. You aren't just crunching data here; there are no rules or formulas for you to follow, yet there is clearly a line between projects that succeed and ones that fail. You must define very clearly what it is you are trying to do, and this will direct your actions through the whole process. When you come up with one solution to a problem, try to find a second one: it will probably be more interesting and exciting than the first. Seek out things you've personally never attempted and never be afraid to take a risk. Your finished project may not be Oscar worthy; in fact it probably won't even be festival worthy. Don't worry: this is a university and you are here to learn, not produce! The best thing for your honors thesis is to inform you so that when you leave here your real work will be brilliant because of your effort, not your final product.

Acknowledgements

There are so many who have helped the completion of this project I cannot possibly name them all here. First and foremost, I give much thanks to Dale Hudson, my advisor, for holding a gun to my head to make sure that I finish everything on time, and thanks to Tom Friedman for keeping him from pulling the trigger.

For invaluable academic input I thank Miso Suchy, Owen Shapiro, and Henry Jankiewicz.

For many hours of blood, sweat, and tears I thank Jordan Manwaring, Aimee Esce, Drew Taurisano, and Patrick Scanlon. Also Lauren Shaw, who is possibly the only person who has ever designed a life size pirate ship made entirely out of cardboard.

For physical resources I could not possibly obtain myself I thank Syracuse Stage, LeMoyne College, SUNY ESF, Southern Containers, and the Barbour Family. Let the records show that I promised you all that if you helped me out our basketball team would do well this year, and that promise is made good.

For this reason, thanks to the Syracuse Orangemen.

Finally, for undying support and love, gratitude must go to Micha Crook and Monica Hoge. None of this would have happened without you.

What is a children's cinema? This is a question that is seemingly simple, for everyone has some recollection of childhood movies. The dictionary defines cinema as a collection of motion pictures; children's cinema includes many different genres connected by their specific audience, ranging from educational shorts to feature cartoons. Children's cinema has existed in commercial media since penny arcades and through weekend theater matinees, cartoon shorts, and both animated and live action features. This is the cinema that most people are introduced to, and it lays the foundation for our reading of film as adults; however, the concepts that form children's cinema are rarely discussed in the academic world, and their unique structure, themes, and codes are largely untouched. Developing an understanding of the particular properties of children's cinema is important: this cinema has a wide market and is instrumental in affecting a specific audience. Children are unique in that, unlike other societal groups, they are impermanent, changing into an adult audience in the span of a few years. Therefore, the effect of children's cinema carries over into all other cinemas and genres.

In this thesis, I explore the nature of children's film in the format of a short film titled *Pirate Story* that uses and deconstructs the codes of this cinema. I illuminate the presence and usage of these codes, showing that they have an important impact on our perception of cinema as a communicative form. This is only a small part of the issue of children's cinema; to tackle the entire topic of what a children's cinema is, or might be,

would take more time and resources than is possible in this project. Instead, I am attempting to only touch on an issue that is of practical importance to filmmakers and spectators in this field. This is not an exhaustive examination of film codes; rather I look at three specific techniques and make their use apparent with the intended effect of developing a critical viewing experience.

The significance of children's cinema

Because children's film is a significant part of US culture the understanding of its codes and conventions is an important part of filmmaking. I define a film code as any element of film style or technique, which may include performance, cinematography, editing, and narrative or thematic elements, that serves to identify a specific genre or cinema through knowledge of past experience. For example, a thematic code in horror films might be disguised identity, while one in film noir would be the femme fatale. In contrast, a cinematographic code of film noir is the heavy use of chiaroscuro lighting.¹

Pirate Story expresses these concepts, but to gain a fuller understanding of the film as a thesis we must embark on a short history of its creation. My thinking about this project has undergone many changes in both concept and form from the initial stages to the final product. The discoveries and changes are substantial parts of the thesis as a whole as they bridge the gap between the original idea and its completion. Had I begun with the final concept, and had I shot the film with this concept in mind,

Pirate Story would have been different; however, my final concept could not have happened had I not traveled through the creative process. As it stands those familiar with the production of this film can see the path it has taken, and the initial script in the Appendix makes the difference obvious. I made these changes out of necessity as I discovered that my initial understanding of the concepts was flawed and as I experimented to develop solutions to these problems.

My initial idea was simply to create a short children's film. I had done some research into the similarities of children's film to propaganda, and in doing so discovered that there is very little writing on children's cinema that evaluates its properties or criticizes its form. Creating the film I first had to face the question of what is a children's cinema? I began by reviewing various children's films produced over the past fifty years that have either succeeded in holding multiple generations of spectators or received critical acclaim. Using many films including *Mary Poppins*, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, and *The Princess Bride*, I developed a script and production plan to create a linear narrative that utilized what I felt were conventions of children's cinema.²

My ambition for this film was greater than my available resources; I needed to create a fantasy world that included pirates, a ship, and an ocean. I am very proud of the extent of my success in solving these problems; working with a few designers I was able to construct two twelve foot square

sets for a pirate ship, fabricate colorful costumes, as well as create a detailed musical score and complex animations. In spite of my accomplishment, poor performances and irresolvable production problems made the realization of the original narrative impossible. More importantly, my use of the cinema codes was not working, and I had difficulty understanding why. Setting aside the project, I began to think in depth about the problems I had met. I realized that I didn't use the codes properly because I didn't understand the meaning or effect of these codes; following this I began to question the nature and importance of children's cinema and used the footage I had shot to experiment with the techniques I had used.

I began to deconstruct the image in various ways, experimenting with the form of the film. I went through several trials of abstracting the footage, and discovered that in doing so the codes that I had been using stood out more when isolated from a traditional narrative and I was better able to tell my original story. The experimental form became a medium through which I could explore the nature of the genre without straying from the concept. Moreover, the production value increased as I manipulated the image to mask production mistakes and shortcomings. I didn't want the film to become self-reflexive, a format in which the audience becomes aware of the film as a medium, in terms of cinematic form alone; rather, I wanted to keep the discussion within the context of the film's story, so I added the competing voices of the narrators. Because the voices are characters within the story the audience is never taken out of the film world while still

examining the nature of that world. The film is reflexive about the storytelling process, as well as about the codes and conventions for storytelling in children's cinema.

I still had not answered the question "what is a children's cinema?" Why, I thought, might this cinema be excluded from scholarly research? Children's cinema has influence everywhere: walk into a McDonalds and you are bombarded with Happy Meals that promote the most recent Disney film, or note that at every movie theater the biggest cardboard cutouts are for the next Pixar animation. Yet search through academia and you find these films are barely present.³ You will, of course, find a good deal on child psychology and some work on children's literature, but children's cinema is largely untouched.

There are a few reasons for this lacuna. First, critics and scholars are not the intended audience for this cinema; rather, they are secondhand spectators primarily fulfilling the role of guardian to the intended audience. This leads to a second reason, which is that children's film holds a sacred mystique in US culture, and to break the aura of a perfect childhood is taboo. Thus far, the only appropriate way to approach children's film has been through nostalgia, a way of dealing with it as a part of the past rather than an active element of the present. Therefore, the effect of children's cinema in adult film criticism and analysis is distorted through the lens of memory. In spite of this, the practical application of the codes of children's cinema, such as knowing the difference between a film appropriate for a

four year old and one appropriate to a ten year old, are apparent to parents, librarians, teachers, and the businesspeople who run the entertainment industry. The reasons and effects of these issues are not discussed in an academic setting, except in terms of child psychology. What I find lacking are answers to the questions relating to the cinema itself: “What is children’s cinema?” “What are the specific elements unique to this cinema?” and “What are the effects of this cinema?”

Codes and conventions for children’s cinema

In this examination of children’s films I will point out a few codes and conventions. The first is the strong presence of an omniscient narrator who explains the story world in an expository or interactive mode. Often this narrator is a part of the world itself, although she or he may be distanced in various ways. *The Princess Bride*, for example, begins with an image of an old man reading a book that tells the story of the princess bride to his grandson. The grandfather exists in the diegetic world of the film, however he is not present as a character in the story itself. He has control over the story and may skip narrative elements (the kissing parts are “gross”), return to previous sections, or stop the story altogether if he wishes. Another example is the recent *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events* in which the character of Lemony Snicket narrates the series of unfortunate events. His presence has a different effect as he speaks in voiceover and is never seen on screen; therefore, he has no context in which he may stop or

alter the narration for there is nowhere for the viewer to go in suspension of the story; however, it is still understood that he is the story's narrator and has power over it. *Mary Poppins* is a very different situation, in which the film begins with the character of Bert narrating the story through direct address to the camera. His role as narrator changes: in contrast to the other two films, he loses power over the story by becoming a part of it. When he becomes a character in the film, he ceases to narrate the action and is instead subject to it.

A second convention is the substitution of the parental figure. This code is borrowed largely from Western fables,⁴ upon which the narratives of many Disney films are based. In this situation the parents are absent either physically or affectively from the story; in *Mary Poppins*, for example, the two children are neglected by their parents and must rely on the title character, their nanny, instead. Often the substituting character serves as a catalyst to reestablish the nuclear family; however, they can also function as villains, such as in *Cinderella* or *Snow White*. While this code has been solidified through Disney films and the popularization of fairy tales as children's literature, it is a thematic technique widely used in contemporary children's cinema and can be found in films such as *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *Monsters, Inc.* and *Spirited Away*.

It might be assumed that because the intended audience is children, children should also be the main characters. This is not necessarily true; while children are more often protagonists than in any other genre, they are

not the only heroes. In *The Princess Bride* and Disney's *Robin Hood*, for example, the main characters are adults. Often in the case of cartoons the age of the characters is masked or made unimportant by the simplicity of the facial characteristics or the replacement of human characters with animals. In Understanding Comics, Scott McCloud points out that simplified representations of the face are more identifiable; our perception of our own facial features is not detailed, however we are aware of simple characteristics such as the presence of two eyes, a mouth, etc.⁵ Therefore a simplified representation, such as a cartoon, is identifiable to a young audience because the visual differences resulting from age aren't apparent. In live action, protagonists are rarely adults, however children don't seem to have a problem identifying with young adult characters if the film is highly stylized, such as *The Princess Bride*.

Another common association is the use of animation and exaggeration. Although the original Bugs Bunny cartoons were directed to an adult audience, the media now classifies them as children's films. Recently through the use of digital techniques the imitation of animated style in live action has become heavily associated with children's cinema, particularly in films such as *The Cat in the Hat* and *Garfield*. This is a recent phenomenon, as evinced by *Willy Wonka an the Chocolate Factory*; and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, produced in 2005. The more recent version of this film uses much wilder colors and more heavily stylized performance than the earlier version; even the facial features of the actors

are more caricature-like. Moreover, the use of modern digital technology allows the filmmakers to create visual effects that are blatantly outside the realm of physical possibility, imitating the form of Tex Avery cartoons, whereas the earlier version uses fantasy elements that still hold to realistic physical laws.

Why is it important to raise questions relating to the conventions of cinema? For myself, as a filmmaker, I must be keenly aware of the effect my choices have on an audience, and I cannot effectively use these codes and conventions without understanding them. When a particular style, theme, or motif is chosen, it has a great deal of relevance in determining the ideas that I develop and share with an audience; rather than a piece of entertainment, a film can also become a piece of art by exploring new concepts.

The significance of self-reflexivity in children's cinema

Why then is it important for the viewer to notice and question cinematic codes, conventions, and techniques? It may be enough for an audience to be unaware of the mechanisms of film as a medium, however without this knowledge an audience cannot become critical readers and must accept whatever the filmmaker gives them. In terms of art and ideology, this is problematic, particularly in a children's cinema as it is often a didactic form. By introducing children (as well as the adults who accompany them) to critical modes, they can become discerning spectators. Moreover, the nature

of children is to grow into adults, and their evaluative skills will carry into other forms of cinema later on.

This to me is the most interesting aspect of children's cinema: the impermanence of the audience. Conventions are developed through children's film, so that they become shorthand in adult film by which a viewer can rapidly access information from a single code. For example, *The Princess Bride* creates a very stylized version of romantic love that is overemphasized in the dialogue and narration. The characters consistently refer to their behavior as the result of "true love," and thereby the performances and actions become associated with this concept. In a film made for an adult audience the style is unnecessary, as a simple performance of body language will alert the audience to the idea of romance learned in the children's film. As children mature, they are introduced to new stimuli and eventually they cease to become an audience of children's film except in a nostalgic mode, or as guardians of their own children. Instead, they transform into viewers of other cinemas, but the perceptions that they learn as children remain and affect their adult spectatorship.

My short film, *Pirate Story*, takes these codes and conventions of children's cinema and alienates them from conventional style. The double meaning of the title comes from my use of the narrator concept: I use two narrators to create conflict. Either one may have control over the story; however, they must compete for dominance, thereby drawing the spectators' attention to their role. Is this a story about pirates, or is it a story told by

pirates? In the opening, I include a shot of one pirate whispering “once upon a time” to another, suggesting the latter, but the story she tells indicates that the pirates are fabrications of a bedtime story. Aurally, I include two storytelling voices: the whispering of the pirates and the mumbling of the grandfather. The primary concern of the characters is to remain “real,” that is to have authority over their own existence, which is challenged by the implication that it is the grandfather’s voice which creates their world.

The animation comparably serves thematic and stylistic purposes. It changes the aesthetic of the film from a traditional live action to a speculative form in which the physical possibilities of the film world are greatly stretched. They also indicate where the “real” and the “story” overlap. In the first shot, there are three screens, two containing the pirates and one containing the boy. All are live action with no animated effects, and may be construed as being “real.” In early scenes with the pirates, no animation is used, signaling reality; however, in scenes with the boy and grandfather various animation techniques are used including the illustrated frames and pixilated movement, signaling that they are the unreal story. These conventions switch near the end of the film as we see the magic charm sink into the ocean and become a part of the sky. Here all the characters become animated sketches, and in contrast to the film’s opening they all become story characters. Thereafter, the boy is live action and the pirates take on various qualities of the former animation, reflecting the relationship of narrative authority.

The story of the boy also uses the replacement of the parents by the grandfather. The parents are clearly absent from the boy's life, and although physically present their faces are always obscured. The influential figure is that of the grandfather, who serves as a teacher and mentor for the boy. The pirates may also be interpreted to serve as representations of the parents, and the distance between their world and the boy's world reflects the parents' distance from the child's life.

I have no concrete answers to the nature of children's film and the effect of its codes and conventions; the piece is intended to work as an exploration of these concepts rather than a conclusive study. I use a few of the major codes and conventions of children's film to tell my story; however, I also subvert these codes through deconstruction and confusion and in doing so I raise questions as to the nature of the film's dialogue with the audience. By placing these codes in a new context, I remove a level of comfort in which a viewer may assume knowledge based on past experience; therefore the viewer must be consciously aware of the techniques used. This does not create a distancing effect, nor is it an examination of the existential nature of cinema; rather it illuminates the placement of these codes and invites discussion and evaluation of their meaning after the film concludes.

In order to successfully approach my work the viewer must develop a critical attitude as to the process of the narrative. Although the questions pertain to the codes children's cinema uses as reference, the evaluation

cannot occur outside of the film's story. The exploration occurs within the characters, plot, and audio-visual elements of the film world itself. Because the questions of the thesis remain open, the story remains unresolved as well, leaving room for the audience to question and debate. My hope is that, like myself, my audience will develop a keener sense of awareness as to the possibilities of this cinema, and the importance of its unique properties.

¹ Codes are basically what clue the audience in to what genre they are watching. In terms of children's film, some thematic codes might include linear structure, the importance of the nuclear family, education, and didacticism; stylistic codes include use of saturated color, animation/exaggeration, lyrical dialogue, etc. The conventions I research in depth are the use of omniscient narrator, substitution of the parental figure, and animation/exaggeration.

² At the time my research into conventions of this cinema was not complete; I began with linear structure, didactic form, and the specific use of narrator that I discuss. During the shooting and editing process I discovered that in imitating films I have seen I was using many other conventions, and some of the ones I originally worked with were discarded.

³ The corporatization of cinema is another topic somewhat neglected by film studies, and although it affects filmmakers it is mainly of interest to economists. Children are unique to marketers because they draw a greater profit being accompanied by family and guardians; this strengthens the case for the importance of children's cinema as it is a crucial part of larger corporate strategy to sell a product on multiple platforms.

⁴ Some stories of particular interest: Hansel and Gretel, in which the mother is replaced by the witch; Snow White and Cinderella, which both use stepmothers as substitutes. Peter Pan is an especially complex story in which multiple characters serve as both children and parents at various points in the narrative, as well as being both villainous and heroic.

⁵ See chapter two of Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics, published in 1994 by Harper Paperbacks.

Sources Cited and Consulted

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." 1968.
- The Cat in the Hat*. Mike Meyers. Film. Universal Pictures, 2003.
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Tim Burton. Film. Warner Bros., 2005.
- Cinderella*. Walt Disney. Film. RKO Radio Pictures, 1950.
- Garfield*. Peter Hewitt. Film. Twentieth Century Fox, 2004.
- Limony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Brad Silberling. Film. Paramount Pictures, 2004.
- Mary Poppins*. Walt Disney. Film. Buena Vista Pictures, 1964.
- McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics. Harper Paperbacks, 1994.
- Monsters, Inc.* David Silverman. Film. Buena Vista Pictures, 2001.
- The Princess Bride*. Rob Reiner. Film. Twentieth Century Fox, 1987.
- Robin Hood*. Walt Disney. Film. Buena Vista Pictures, 1973.
- Rosenheim, Edward W. "Children's Reading and Adult's Values." Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature. Egoff, Sheila, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Walt Disney. Film. RKO Radio Pictures, 1937.
- Spirited Away*. Hayao Miyazaki. Film. Ghibli International, 2001.
- Townsend, John Rowe. "Didacticism in Modern Dress." Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature. Egoff, Sheila, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Mel Stuart. Film. Paramount Pictures, 1971.
- Wood, Robin. "Ideology, Genre, Author." Film Theory and Criticism. Braudy, Leo and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Appendix: The Script

Trinket

by Jake T. Powell

6th Revision

1. INT. A LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A GIRL, about ten years old, is playing with a marble track and some stuffed animals. The girl drops a marble in the track, and we see it descend back and forth before it shoots out of a jump at the bottom. The girl reaches under a chair to retrieve the marble. We see an old man sitting in the chair reading a newspaper. This is the girl's GRANDFATHER, a portly man with white hair and an old tattoo on his right wrist. He turns from his newspaper and watches the girl.

WOMAN (O.S.)

It's a wonderful place and you can meet people your own age. You need to get out of that chair sometime. At least it would get you out of my hair.

The grandfather waves his hand at someone offscreen. We see the FATHER, a man in his early 30's, kneeling next to the dining table with glue in one hand. The leg of the table is clearly unstable, and we can see that there is a gap where the leg should meet the top of the table. The woman enters and sits at the table, holding a bankbook. This is the MOTHER, also in her 30's and neatly dressed.

MOTHER

I need you to look at this bankbook. Will you listen for a moment?

FATHER

I'm sorry my sweet, I might not have heard you over the resounding crash of the house falling apart around us.

MOTHER

Of course, I only have a daughter and a senile father to take care of, one more child in the mix shouldn't hurt anything.

The girl lets out a loud sigh and falls back on the floor. She looks around her, and seeing that she hasn't gotten the attention of her parents sits up, sighs even louder and falls back again. She wanders over to her parents.

GIRL

Dad, come play a game with me?

FATHER

Not right now, your mother and I
are very busy.

GIRL

Please?

FATHER

I said no.

The little girl returns to her toys, kicking one of
them. Her grandfather watches her.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Don't kick your toys.

GIRL

I'm too old for toys. I want to
play a game!

FATHER

It's too close to your bedtime.

The girl stands rigidly in place. The old man sets down
his paper and gets out of the chair.

GRANDFATHER

I think I can tuck in my
granddaughter tonight.

We see the old man's hand come into frame next to the
girl, who takes it and follows him out.

2. INT. THE GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CU of the old man striking a match and lighting a
scented candle. The little girl is sitting in her bed,
the light from the candle sending shadows across both
their faces.

GIRL

Daddy never plays with me.

GRANDFATHER

He will. Now it's time to go to sleep.

GIRL

I'm not tired yet.

GRANDFATHER

What would you rather do?

GIRL

Tell me a scary story!

GRANDFATHER

After last time I don't know if your mother will let me.

GIRL

I won't tell.

The old man leans in close and WHISPERS in her ear.

GRANDFATHER

Have I ever told you about the man who was born with three fingers?

GIRL

Oh, that one. I want to hear a story about a girl!

GRANDFATHER

A girl? I don't really know if there are that many exciting stories about girls, except... Do you know about the wicked pirate queen?

QUICK CUT TO:

3. EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

We see the PIRATE QUEEN, a muscular, fair woman with a large scar across her right cheek, on a ship looking

out to sea then turning, raising her sword, and giving a war cry.

CUT TO:

4. INT. THE GIRL'S BEDROOM - THE SAME

GIRL

Tell me! Tell me!

GRANDFATHER

It's pretty gruesome.

GIRL

Pleeeeeeease?

GRANDFATHER

Alright.

CROSS DISSOLVE TO:

5. ANIMATION. THE OCEAN - DAY

Seagulls circle in the air and we hear the sound of cannons firing.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.)

There was once a ship called the *Chanticleer*, crewed by the most fearsome pirates on the seven seas.

We see A PIRATE yelling, cutlass in hand, OTHER SAILORS behind him fighting on the gunwale. Pirates are carrying off barrels and crates as others fight around them. We see a flag with the symbol of a fighting rooster being raised against the sky.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The pirates of this ship were excellent fighters, and had never lost a battle because they all worked together.

The Pirate Queen emerges with a pistol, firing it. A marble becomes embedded in the mast.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The captain of the ship was a courageous and terrible woman, known as the pirate queen.

The queen goes up to the wheel, gutting a sailor and taking command of the ship. A handsome young pirate named JUDAH turns and gives a cry of victory, which is echoed by the other pirates.

7. INT. THE CABIN - DAY

The cabin is dark. A table sits in the center with a candle and maps laid out on it; in the corner is a very small cage with a parrot in it. The Queen and Judah enter.

PIRATE QUEEN

You done good there, Judah. Fought like a man.

JUDAH

Aye, I've been taught well.

PIRATE QUEEN

Any dog worth his salt on this ship has been. And you've been with this ship a fair bit of your life. But you ain't no boy anymore. You're about the best sailor I've ever known.

JUDAH

The *Chanticleer* is my family. When I came here I had nothing. I don't know anything outside this ship, and I don't care for nothing else. I'd give my life for any of these men.

The queen pulls a small wooden box out and sets it on the table.

PIRATE QUEEN

This is my most prized possession.

She opens the box and the air seems to sing. Silver light bounces onto the faces of the two standing there, and Judah's eyes light up as he stares into the box.

PIRATE QUEEN (CONT'D)

It's made of magic. Anyone who has
it is loved by everyone. Buy my
pardon it will.

In the box we see a silver heart-shaped locket.

JUDAH

It's beautiful.

PIRATE QUEEN

It may be enough to buy pardon for
you, too.

Judah looks up at her and smiles.

8. INT. BELOW DECK - NIGHT

The pirates are gathered below. Judah enters with the
queen, but breaks from her and joins the other sailors.
The queen lifts a bottle.

PIRATE QUEEN

We drink tonight lads! Here's to
the *Chanticleer*!

GRANDFATHER (V.O.)

In her many years the Queen had
amassed a huge treasure; some say
she hid it all and others that she
spent it all up, but she portioned
it among her crew fairly, and was
planning to use it to buy her
pardon.

We see bottles of rum being clinked and sailors
drinking and playing instruments. CU of the candles as
they burn down and are extinguished. The ship rocks
back and forth in the blue moonlight as all the pirates
are asleep.

9. INT. THE CABIN - MORNING

The queen is sitting at the table looking over her
charts. She suddenly looks around her. She pulls out
the wooden box and flings it open. We see that it is
empty.

10. EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

The queen emerges out onto deck.

PIRATE QUEEN

Get out here dogs! All of ye!

The crew turns and looks at her as she draws her sword.
The box is in her other hand.

PIRATE QUEEN (CONT'D)

Who done it? Which of you sons of a
pennywhore took what was in this
box? Step forward now. Give it
back, and I'll forgive ye.

The sailors stare at her silently.

PIRATE QUEEN (CONT'D)

You all are portioned fairly with
what we win, but this one thing is
mine! Return it now!

The sailors look around at each other, no one saying
anything. She storms across the deck, swinging her
cutlass.

PIRATE QUEEN (CONT'D)

You dogs! You blackguards and
knaves! The devil take the lot of
you if you don't speak up! One of
you is a thief and a liar! You know
who it is. Speak up, tell me which
of your mates did this or he'll be
doing the same to you!

She goes up to one of the sailors.

PIRATE QUEEN (CONT'D)

Do you know? Which of your
neighbors is it? I'll give you a
fair reward if you'll tell me.

The sailors back away from her, glancing around. She is
sweating now with rage, and she throws the box down,
swinging her cutlass tearing apart crates and canvas,
anything lying on deck she destroys in anger.

PIRATE QUEEN (CONT'D)

Devils come down and curse this

ship! Blast these bloody scum! I'll
 come through and rip you all to
 shreds! I'll cut off your ears and
 feed them to the dolphins, every
 last one of you until I get back
 what's mine!

She SCREAMS and raises her cutlass, the other pirates
 pull out their swords but shrink back.

JUDAH

I did it!

The queen stops. All eyes are on Judah.

PIRATE QUEEN

Say it again.

JUDAH

I took the locket. Leave them
 alone.

The queen approaches him very closely, tears in her
 eyes.

PIRATE QUEEN

Give it back. Please.

JUDAH

I can't.

Everyone is watching the queen. Judah is tied at the
 wrists. We see the wind die down against the flag.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.)

Judah had saved the crew of the
Chanticleer, but the locket was
 lost. The queen couldn't kill him,
 so instead she left him alone on an
 island.

10A. EXT. A BEACH - DAY

We see Judah sitting on a beach.

10B. INT. THE CABIN - DAY

We see the queen in her cabin, brooding over the

charts.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After that, a curse fell on the ship. The wind failed and they lost course. It wasn't long before the food and fresh water began to dry up.

10C. EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

We see the sailors lying on the deck, green and yellow, moaning. The queen stares over the gunwale.

GRANDFATHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She knew it was because of the locket, so she decided to return to the island to find Judah and save her crew.

11. INT. THE GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The grandfather looks over the girl's bed; we see that she is asleep. The grandfather gets up and blows out the candle, and as he does so the girl seems to be falling. Her bed and sheets start to undulate as though she were floating on water, and we hear the spray of the ocean and seagulls around her.

12. ANIMATION. THE OCEAN - NIGHT

We see seagulls flying through a dark sky. We see the *Chanticleer* sailing over an ocean made out of the girl's bedspread; a golden sun shaped like a heart is sinking behind the silhouette of an island. We follow the sun below the horizon, where it turns silver and then transforms into a moon over a black forest.

13. EXT. THE ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

We see the crew of the *Chanticleer* marching in single file through thick undergrowth, the sound of the ocean far off. They are looking around left and right with the queen in front of the procession; they stop, cocking their heads to listen. We HEAR faintly a song. Shadows of men appear in the moonlight. Two DARK FIGURES jump out of the brush; they wrestle two of the pirates to the ground while we see the queen and the others scatter, running through the woods. We can still hear SCREAMING as we see the queen rushing off through the woods, the sounds of carnage getting further and further away. She is surrounded by Hemlocks, and it is

very quiet. She looks in the woods, which are very dark, and sees a figure standing in the trees. Suddenly they are both bathed in silver light, and they look up, seeing the clouds roll away from the moon, which is shaped like a silver locket. We see Judah facing the queen, and behind him we see the girl standing between the trees, dressed in her pjs.

PIRATE QUEEN

Give it back to me.

JUDAH

I can't.

The queen draws her sword and lunges at Judah. They spar for a bit, very formally, as if performing an exercise.

PIRATE QUEEN

Betrayed and steal from me, you did, and now you'll get your lot!

JUDAH

You would have betrayed your entire crew for that bit of silver.

They fence.

JUDAH (CONT'D)

Why does it mean so much to you?

PIRATE QUEEN

It would have bought me freedom. It was my greatest treasure.

Fencing, again.

JUDAH

You can't buy anything with a trinket.

PIRATE QUEEN

It was magic! Anyone who had it was loved.

JUDAH

It's brought only hatred and death
to the ship!

PIRATE QUEEN

And now tear the two of us to
ribbons!

They fight madly this time, swinging wildly at each other, yelling, running, biting at the air in fury. The girl runs through the trees as they fight, climbing one with low branches. Judah almost hits the queen, but she dodges him then draws blood from his arm. They swing wildly at each other again, clashing swords. The girl is high up in the tree, silver light washing over her as she reaches up into the sky. It goes very dark around the pirates, but still they fight. The girl is running toward them, locket in hand and yelling, but just as she reaches them they each deal a fatal blow to the other. The queen falls first, then Judah, their eyes looking up to the sky. Silver light falls across their faces as the girl moves between them. She looks down at them for a moment.

We see the hand of her grandfather enter the frame; he reaches out to her. She takes his hand, dropping the locket and follows him through the woods. They walk through a gap in the trees.

14. INT. THE GIRL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

ECU of the girl opening her eyes.

15. INT. THE LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Morning light falls across the floor from the window. We see the grandfather in his chair, watching the morning show on TV. The girl enters, wearing her pjs. The girl finds a discarded marble on the floor and walks over to the table, where her father is standing, reading a newspaper. We see her sit up at the table, her father behind her. She plays with the marble on the table.

GIRL

I had a dream last night. It was
about pirates. All my toys were in
it. My marbles. Grandpa was there
too.

FATHER

Sounds like everybody was there.

GIRL

No.

Her father sits at the table, and notices that it doesn't wobble. He reaches under and we see that the table leg is being supported by a marble wedged between the leg and the tabletop.

FATHER

Did you fix this?

The girl nods.

GIRL

Are you busy now?

FATHER

No. Lets go play a game.

GIRL

Only if Grandpa can come.

The grandfather turns in his chair, smiling.

16. INT. THE SAME - A LITTLE LATER

We see the empty living room, a few toys are scattered on the floor, the TV is on fuzz. Some bills are left on the table, and the newspaper lies on the chair. We can hear the family outside, playing a game together.