

## BRITFILMS #10 – Accompanying material for media education

### SONG OF THE SEA

Ireland/Denmark/Belgium/Luxembourg/France 2014, 93 min

FSK rating: 0

age recommendation: 6+

Language: English with subtitles in German

Director	Tomm Moore
Script	Will Collins
Art Direction	Adrien Merigeau
Editing	Darragh Byrne
Music	Bruno Coulais & Kila

#### About SONG OF THE SEA

Ben blames his sister for the apparent death of their mother who disappeared into the sea six years earlier after giving birth to Saoirse. Ben's father never recovered from his loss. Ben's grandmother thinks that the children would be better off living with her so one day they leave the island off the coast of Ireland and move to Dublin. There, Saoirse is whisked away by fairy. Ben follows her and discovers that his sister is a Selkie, a human changeling who can transform into a seal. The fairies hope that with her voice Saoirse can free all the fairies the witch Macha has turned into stone. Yet living so far away from the coast weakens Saoirse. When Macha kidnaps Saoirse, Ben is forced to act.

This magical fantasy animation film tells a story about grieving and coping with loss and at the same time takes the audience into the world of Irish mythology, underlining its importance for the present-day. In doing so, the director Tomm Moore combines the influences of different myths to create something new. The reference to Irish-Celtic mythology makes its way into the cinematic design: thus, spiral patterns serve as a symbolic leitmotif throughout the film.

The following worksheets will address

- the film's setting, which are located in actual places in Ireland as well as in a mythical world
- how the characters change throughout the film and how parallels are created between the real and mythical characters in the film's composition
- how Irish-Celtic symbols are included in the film's composition

## **Publishing information**

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Photo credits: New KSM

(All stills are from the DVD of DIE MELODIE DES MEERES, published in Germany by New KSM. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film's content, and not as illustrations.)

### The locations

SONG OF THE SEA is set in the north of Ireland. Off the coast of Donegal County is a (fictional) island where Ben’s family lives as well as the – likewise fictional – Mac Lir cliffs. Another place where the film plays is in Dublin, where the grandmother lives.

- Mark this place on a map.
- What is the distance between both places? \_\_\_\_\_ kilometres

### A journey through Ireland

SONG OF THE SEA tells Ben and Saoirse’s journey through Ireland. Not all places they visit are located in the “real” world.

Note down key words on the events in the film that happen at the following places. Describe also how these places are portrayed in the film.

Setting	What happens there	How the setting is portrayed in the film
On the island with the lighthouse		
In Dublin		
On the Irish countryside		
In the cave of the Great Seanachai		
In Macha’s house		
Back on the coast		

## The characters

Write down how Ben, Saoirse, their father and their grandmother change throughout the film.

	At the beginning of the film	At the end of the film
Ben		
Saoirse		
Father		
Grandmother		

## Similarities between the characters

Choose one pair of characters from the stills below: Describe what connects the characters and how this connection is illustrated in the image.



Mac Lir



Father






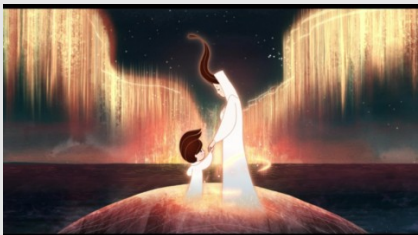
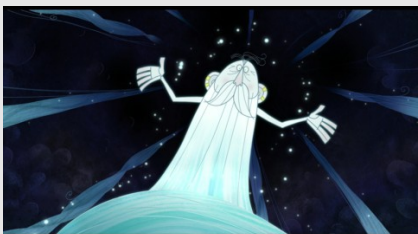
Macha



Grandmother

### Figures from Irish-Celtic mythology

In SONG OF THE SEA there are a number of figures drawn from Irish mythology. (Though the film makes up its own stories about the figures and doesn't re-narrate the familiar myths.) Below you see a selection of the figures. Describe how they look in the film and what you learn about them.

	What do they look like?	What do you learn about them?
<p>Na Daoine Sidhe</p> 		
<p>Macha</p> 		
<p>Mac Lir</p> 		
<p>Selkie</p> 		
<p>Great Seanachai</p> 		

In small groups make up a story that is set in the here and now featuring familiar mythological figures from well-known myths or fairy tales. Present your stories to the class.

## Forms and patterns

On important burial mounds in Ireland (like for example Newgrange) you'll often find the spiral symbol. At times you'll even find a number of spirals interlocked.



Triskelion (source: Wikipedia)

Take a close look at the following stills from the film.

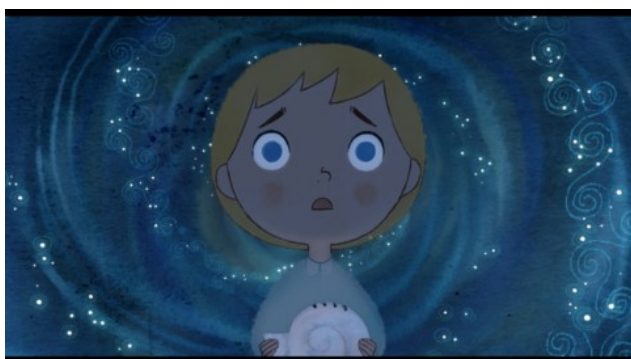
- For each picture, write down what you see.



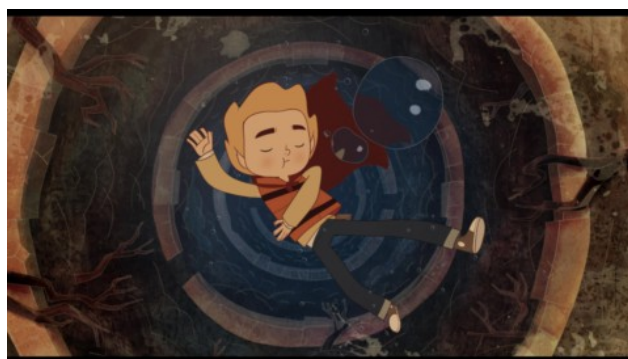
1



2



3



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- In the classroom discuss together:
  - How is the spiral pattern integrated into each image?
  - What meaning could this pattern have in SONG OF THE SEA?