

#9472

# THE WATER GHOST

CAROUSEL FILM & VIDEO

1998

Grade Levels: 8-12

30 minutes



## DESCRIPTION

A young Chinese American girl, mourning the death of her mother, accidentally falls into a nearby lake. There she encounters a mysterious beautiful woman and feels compelled to help her.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

### Subject Area: Life Sciences

- Standard: Understands the structure and function of cells and organisms
  - Benchmark: Knows that plants and animals progress through life cycles of birth, growth and development, reproduction, and death; the details of these life cycles are different for different organisms

### Subject Area: Language Arts: Reading

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
  - Benchmark: Understands how themes are used across literary works and genres (e.g., universal themes in literature of different cultures, such as death and rebirth, initiation, love and duty; major themes in American literature; authors associated with major themes of specific eras)

## INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To depict one girl's response to her mother's death.
2. To illustrate how death influences life.
3. To examine the ways a family and a friend can help a young adult deal with the death of a family member.

## VOCABULARY

1. catching pneumonia
2. cemetery
3. dork
4. going through your mother's things
5. gross
6. haunting
7. look of death
8. offering
9. The One
10. pay respects
11. rumors
12. seaweed
13. silk slippers
14. spirit, soul, ghost
15. unwilling to go against his family

## BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss what it might be like to lose a family member to death. Consider typical emotions that a person might experience after the death and how long the feelings might continue.
2. List people known personally who have died.

## AFTER SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss Ling Ling.
  - a. How might Ling Ling's bilingual home influence her view of life?
  - b. Why does Ling Ling quickly close the case with her mother's necklace inside?
  - c. Why is Ling Ling so interested in the ghost?
  - d. Why was it either wise or dangerous for Ling Ling to invite the water ghost to "come to my dreams anytime"?
  - e. Why was Ling Ling angry at Winston for scaring the ghost away?
  - f. Why does Ling Ling ask her grandmother what it was like when she met her husband?
  - g. How has Ling Ling built her own prison?
  - h. How might the following quotes from Ling Ling apply to both the water ghost and her mother?
    - i. Where are you?
    - j. You don't belong in the water.
    - k. Dad, I wanted to save her.
    - l. How may Ling Ling's visit to her mother's grave be connected to the water ghost?
2. Discuss Winston.
  - a. What is the relationship between Ling Ling and Winston?
  - b. What does Winston do and say to show his feelings toward Ling Ling?
  - c. What does Winston do and say that show his immaturity or lack of empathy?
  - d. What does Winston's playacting of choking on the boat show about him? What does Ling Ling's response show about her?
  - e. Why did Winston not want anyone at school to know that he and Ling Ling were paying respects to the water ghost?
3. Discuss Ling Ling's father.
  - a. Why does Ling Ling's father offer her a choice of going to visit her mother's grave?
  - b. How do her father's words and actions help or not help Ling Ling?
  - c. Why does Ling Ling's father give her the necklace that belonged to her mother?
4. Discuss Ling Ling's grandmother.
  - a. Why does the garden that Ling Ling's mother loved make the grandmother smile?
  - b. Why is Ling Ling's grandmother no longer sure that she saw a ghost as a child?
  - c. Why does Ling Ling's grandmother believe the water ghost exists?
  - d. How realistic is it that Grandmother would call Winston when Ling Ling runs to the lake at night?
5. Discuss the ghost.
  - a. What is the symbolism of the ghost being in water?
  - b. What is the connection between Ling Ling's grief and the ghost?
  - c. How does unrequited love cause the ghost to haunt the lake?
  - d. Why might the ghost have been stuck in the water?
  - e. What is the difference between the following descriptions of the water ghost?

- i. Ling Ling: She's trapped, and she's so sad.
  - ii. Grandmother: Maybe she's trapped because she's so sad. You know we build our own prisons.
- f. How accurate is Grandmother's comment about the ghost that "without love, there was nothing left for her but sorrow"?

### Applications and Activities

1. Survey the local community regarding death and bereavement.
  - a. What are some common responses to the death of a loved one?
  - b. What are the stages of bereavement?
  - c. How long does it take a person to complete the grieving process?
  - d. What can friends and family members do to help a person who is grieving?
  - e. How does losing a parent impact a child?
2. Examine a local or national newspaper. Find articles indicating the death of a person or persons. Imagine that for each person who has died that their lives will be affected like Ling Ling's was.
  - a. Write a letter of condolence to the family members.
  - b. Read the sentiments on sympathy cards. Choose ones that seem the most and the least helpful.
3. Investigate common symbols for death and sadness. Consider rain, deep water, oceans, rivers, drowning.
  - a. "There's holes in the floor of heaven and the rain comes pouring down. That's how I know she's watching; wishing she could be around."
  - b. "Tomorrow's another day and I'm thirsty anyway, so bring on the rain."
4. Imagine ways that reminders of a loved one who has died can be both comforting and painful. Consider the necklace that the father gives Ling Ling, the garden that made the grandmother smile.
5. Compare various ghosts in popular literature and media. Consider ghosts that are humorous, evil, helpful, bumbling, wise, comforting or frightening.
  - a. Why are death and the afterlife such common topics in stories (oral tradition, written stories, movies, television programs, jokes, novels, videos)?
  - b. What are the purposes of ghosts in religious and cultural heritages? What lessons do ghosts teach children and other learners?
6. Research ways of paying respects to the dead. Consider burning offerings to the ghost, modern funerals, bringing flowers to the gravesite, the Catholic belief of purgatory, the Taj Mahal and Egyptian tombs.
7. Graph responses to the following questions.
  - a. Do ghosts really exist?
  - b. Have you ever seen a ghost? If so, what kind of feeling did you have when you saw the ghost?
  - c. What is your favorite ghost story?
8. Investigate famous literary ghosts. Consider the following.
  - a. The ghosts of Christmas past, present and future in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.
  - b. The ghost of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.
  - c. Macbeth's vision of Banquo's ghost in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

9. Research courting rituals. Consider the pros and cons of dating, arranged marriages, and courtship.

## RELATED RESOURCES



### Captioned Media Program

- Blackberries in the Dark #2257
- Carnival of Souls #8670
- The Chasm #7831
- A Family Again #2380
- Ghost Story Classics #2612
- Going for Glory #7841
- Hamlet #2288
- Letting Go #7850
- Macbeth #2310
- Through the Tunnel and Beyond #8924
- The Watcher in the Woods (Edited) #2139



### World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **CHILDREN AND GRIEF**

<http://www.death-dying.com/children/>

A subpage of a fully searchable site on death and dying. Dedicated to helping children and teens through the difficult process of grieving the loss of a loved one, friend, pet, or relative.

- **KIDS AID**

<http://kidsaid.com/>

This site is billed as a safe site for students to share and to help each other deal with grief about any of their losses.

- **TEEN AGE GRIEF**

<http://www.smartlink.net/~tag/index.html>

This site is run by an organization devoted to helping teenagers deal with the death of a loved one.

- **RAINDROP: DEATH EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES**

<http://iul.com/raindrop/>

Explains to children what happens when a person dies.