I'm not a robot

A curse is a type of spell used for evil purposes to inflict harm or punishment on someone or something.Examples[]The Witch of The Waste puts a curse on Sophie in the movie and novel of Howl's Moving Castle, turning her into a 90-year old woman.The Witch of the Waste also puts a curse on Howl in Howl's Moving Castle, to force him to return to the Waste so that she can have his head for her human puppet. I said, Michael shouted, that Calcifers come back! That did get Howls attention, and Sophies too. They looked at the grate where, sure enough, the familiar blue face was flickering among the logs. You didnt need to do that, Howl said. I dont mind, as long as I can come and go, Calcifer said. Besides, its raining out in Market Chipping.9Howls Moving Castle, directed by Hayao Miyazaki, is an enchanting and beloved animated film produced by Studio Ghibli. Based on Diana Wynne Joness novel, the story follows Sophie, a young woman cursed to live in an old womans body. As she embarks on a journey of self-discovery, she crosses paths with Howl, a mysterious wizard also burdened by a curse. The nature of Howls curse is central to the plot and themes of the film, affecting his behavior, his interactions with Sophie, and ultimately his journey toward emotional growth and redemption. In this article, we explore Howls curse in detail, its significance, and how it shapes the narrative of Howls Moving Castle.What Is Howls Curse?The Origins of the CurseHowls curse stems from a pact he made with a powerful fire demon named Calcifer. In his youth, Howl, a talented yet reckless wizard, found Calcifer when he was a fallen star. Howls encounter with Calcifer led to the formation of a binding contract, linking their fates together. The curse itself is a manifestation of Howls struggle with his emotional and personal development, as well as his unwillingness to fully embrace responsibility and love.Howls curse manifests in two ways: first, in his physical transformation into a bird-like creature, and second, in his emotional and psychological turmoil. Howls curse causes his outward transformation when his emotions become too overwhelming, and it also affects his ability to control his magical powers, making him volatile and unpredictable.The Emotional Nature of the CurseUnlike a traditional magical curse that can be easily broken, Howls curse represents his inner conflict and the fear of confronting his true self. The curse can be seen as a direct result of Howls inability to accept emotional vulnerability and his desire to avoid responsibility. When he becomes emotionally distressed or faced with difficult situations, the curse manifests physically, and he turns into a monstrous creature that reflects his turmoil.This physical transformation symbolizes Howls struggle to reconcile his inner desires with the consequences of his actions. At his core, Howl fears intimacy, love, and attachment, believing that he is unworthy of happiness. The curse reflects his reluctance to be open with others and to confront his emotional baggage.Howls Personality and the Impact of the CurseHowl as a Complex CharacterAt the outset of Howls Moving Castle, Howl is portrayed as a charming yet self-absorbed wizard who avoids responsibility. His eccentric personality and carefree attitude disguise a deep fear of facing his true self and his past mistakes. The curse is a reflection of Howls emotional avoidance; it is not just a magical affliction but an outward manifestation of his unresolved internal conflicts.Howls curse limits his potential and keeps him from fully realizing his powers. The inability to control his transformations further isolates him from others, making him reluctant to form close relationships. This emotional distance, however, begins to change as Sophie enters his life.Howls Fear of VulnerabilityThe curse is also deeply connected to Howls fear of vulnerability. He keeps people at arms length because he believes that forming emotional connections will expose his weaknesses. He tries to control every aspect of his life, but the curse shows him that he cannot escape from his emotions or from the consequences of his past. This fear of intimacy and vulnerability is what makes Howl such a complicated character, and his journey throughout the film is about learning to overcome this fear.Howls personality and his curse reflect the idea that personal growth often requires confronting the very things we fear mostlove, commitment, and self-acceptance. As Howl learns to let go of his emotional defenses and allow himself to be loved, the curse begins to lose its power over him.Sophies Role in Breaking the CurseSophies Transformation and Its Effect on HowlSophie, who is cursed by the Witch of the Waste, undergoes her own transformation into an old woman. Sophies journey parallels Howls in many ways, as she, too, learns to accept herself and embrace love. As Sophie steps into Howls life and begins to take care of him, she unwittingly plays a significant role in helping him break free from his curse. Through Sophies care, compassion, and persistence, Howl begins to confront his fears and emotional turmoil.Sophies ability to love unconditionally challenges Howls emotional walls. She is the first person to offer him the acceptance he so desperately craves but is too afraid to receive. Over time, Sophies influence on Howl becomes profound, and their relationship helps Howl open up emotionally, leading to the gradual dismantling of the curse.How Sophie Helps Howls GrowthSophies actions are pivotal in Howls emotional growth. As Sophie helps him, she also learns more about Howls inner struggles. Their relationship transforms from one of distance to one of mutual understanding, where Sophie becomes a mirror that reflects Howls own emotional development. Howl begins to trust Sophie, and this trust allows him to confront his past and his fears, ultimately breaking the hold that the curse has over him.Their connection shows that healing can only happen when we are willing to let others into our lives and trust them with our vulnerability. Sophies unyielding support gives Howl the courage to face the parts of himself he has long ignored.The Role of Calcifer and the Curses Connection to HimCalcifer as a Key Element of the CurseCalcifer, the fire demon who powers Howls moving castle, is more than just a magical creature; he is a central character in the curse that binds Howl. When Howl and Calcifer made their pact, Calcifer became tied to Howls life force, creating a symbiotic relationship. Calcifers energy is directly linked to Howls well-being, and the curse can only be broken when both Howl and Calcifer are freed from their mutual dependency.Calcifer represents Howls emotional conflictjust as Howl is bound to Calcifer, he is also bound to his own fears and insecurities. Calcifers existence is a reminder that Howl cannot escape the consequences of his pact, nor can he fully control his life until he addresses his emotional issues.The Transformation of Calcifer and Its MeaningThroughout the film, Calcifer undergoes his own transformation, symbolizing Howls personal growth. In the beginning, Calcifer is depicted as a fiery, impetuous being that keeps Howls castle moving. However, as Howl begins to confront his past and embrace responsibility, Calcifers role evolves. Eventually, through Sophies intervention, the two are able to break the curse, signifying the healing of both Howl and Calcifer.Calcifers eventual release from the curse represents Howls ability to let go of his emotional baggage and accept the consequences of his choices. The breaking of the pact between Howl and Calcifer mirrors Howls own journey toward self-acceptance.Thematic Significance of Howls CurseTransformation and GrowthAt the heart of Howls curse is the theme of transformation. Howls journey is one of personal growth, as he learns to accept love, responsibility, and his own emotions. The curse reflects the idea that true change can only happen when we confront the parts of ourselves we fear. Both Howl and Sophie undergo physical and emotional transformations throughout the story, showing how love and self-acceptance can lead to healing and growth.The Power of Love and Self-AcceptanceAnother key theme in Howls Moving Castle is the power of love. Sophies love for Howl is unconditional and transformative. Her acceptance of Howl, despite his flaws and the curse, helps him learn to embrace his own imperfections. Through their relationship, Howl learns to be vulnerable, and this emotional openness allows him to break free from the curse. The film suggests that love is the key to healing and growth, both for individuals and for relationships.Personal Responsibility and ConsequencesHowls curse is also a commentary on the importance of personal responsibility. The curse is a direct consequence of Howls past decisions, and it is only when he accepts responsibility for his actions that he can free himself. The film highlights the need to face the consequences of our choices and the importance of owning up to our mistakes.ConclusionHowls curse is not just a magical plot device in Howls Moving Castle. It is a rich, multifaceted element that represents Howls inner struggles, fears, and emotional growth. The curse serves as a symbol of Howls reluctance to confront his vulnerabilities and his fear of love and commitment. Through his relationship with Sophie and his bond with Calcifer, Howl is able to break free from the curse and undergo a profound transformation. Howls Moving Castle is ultimately a story about growth, healing, and the power of loveboth self-love and the love we share with others.Related topic: By the time "Howl's Moving Castle" was released in 2004, director Hayao Miyazaki was an Oscar-winning filmmaker, notable for animated films such as "Spirited Away," "My Neighbor Totoro," and "Princess Mononoke." Miyazaki's films are packed with directorial trademarks and are highly regarded for their visual beauty and exquisite art style. But as the years have passed, they have become even more well-known for their deeper themes about humanity and its various shortcomings. "Howl's Moving Castle," Miyazaki's ninth feature, was no exception to this.Based on Diana Wynne Jones' 1986 novel, "Howl's Moving Castle" focuses on Sophie Hatter, a young hat maker who is cursed by an evil witch and transformed into an old woman. Sophie seeks out the help of the mysterious wizard, Howl, who resides in a moving castle where Sophie eventually takes a job cleaning and taking care of Howl and his companions. Miyazaki's film diverges greatly from its source materialto deliver an ending that is romantic, yet critical of militarization, 21st century imperialism, and technological innovation.Although the film's ending features many spectacular elements from war machines to monstrous transformations many viewers might miss what is lying beneath the surface of this unforgettable film. Here's everything you need to know about the ending of "Howl's Moving Castle." Like many of Hayao Miyazaki's films, there are a lot of characters and intertwining narratives in "Howl's Moving Castle" that might be difficult for viewers to keep track of. For the most part, the audience follows Sophie, who lives a peaceful yet mundane life in the kingdom of Ingary, who war with the neighboring kingdom of Strangia over the disappearance of their prince. After a brief encounter with the wizard Howl, Sophie is visited at her shop by the Witch of the Waste, who curses Sophie to appear older in age out of jealousy for Howl's attention towards her.In search of a cure for the curse, Sophie travels to the titular wizard's abode. There, she hires herself as a cleaning lady as part of a deal with the fire demon Calcifer, who powers Howl's castle with his magic. Meanwhile, Howl ignores pleas from the kingdom of Ingary to aid the war efforts, despite his disappearing at night to transform into a bird form and intervene with both sides in the hopes it will bring peace.During Sophie's visit to Ingary to refuse the call on Howl's behalf, the king's sorceress Madame Suliman drains the Witch of the Waste of her powers and threatens to do the same to Howl if he doesn't fight for the king. Howl rescues Sophie and the Witch, while Sophie's town is attacked by Suliman's henchmen searching for Howl. Although Sophie begs Howl not to go back into the war, Howl has found the courage to fight, now that he has Sophie to protect. While trying to rescue everybody else, Sophie accidentally douses Calcifer trying to remove him from his hearth, causing the castle to collapse as Sophie falls down a chasm. She awakens in the past, encountering a young Howl and Calcifer, before she's returned to the present and finds Howl.With the help of the Witch of the Waste who recovered Howl's heart from Calcifer's flame Sophie revives Howl, who awakens and remarks that his chest feels heavy. Sophie retorts, "A heart's a heavy burden," before professing her love for Howl. Even though Sophie has been freed from her curse, having returned to her younger form, she decides to stay with Howl.Calcifer, who has also been freed from his link with Howl, also decides to stay, having begrudgingly learned to care for the wizard over their time together.Meanwhile, the war between Ingary and Strangia ends when the prince of Strangia is recovered and decides to return to cease fighting, as Suliman also watches the events and pulls back her troops in retreat. In the film's final shot, Sophie and Howl share a kiss atop the moving castle as it heads off in a new direction, away from the ongoing warfare. It's no surprise that change is a major theme of "Howl's Moving Castle," and several of the characters make severe physical transformations over the course of the film from Sophie's curse that turns her into an old woman to Howl's magic transforming him into a bird creature to fight in the war. However, these are metaphors for the emotional transformations occurring inside each of these characters. As film analyst Adam Dobay described it, it's the opposite of a coming-of-age film, featuring characters who "are actively trying to avoid adulthood for most of the runtime."For instance, Sophie's old age is something she quickly has to embrace, making her a more confident and assured person in her interactions with others. Meanwhile, Howl's cowardice and immaturity pertaining to both his role in the war and the color of his hair is a comfort zone he's more eager to break out of the more he falls in love with Sophie. Even the Witch of the Waste whose insecurity and vanity prompt her to curse Sophie at the beginning of the film is humbled when her powers are stripped from her, making her helpless and sympathetic.Even though Sophie eventually returns to her younger age by the end of the movie, she still retains her grey hair from the curse. This is the true mark of change in Sophie, and her experiences as an older woman have permanently altered her both emotionally and physically. For most of "Howl's Moving Castle," Calcifer plays the role of comedic relief particularly in the English dub where he's voiced by American comedian Billy Crystal. However, by the end of the film, viewers might have come to the realization that Calcifer is the emotional crux of the film; as John Lasseter describes it in the"Behind the Microphone" DVD extra, "Only Billy could take fire and give it heart."Calcifer's connection to Howl originated during the wizard's adolescence. The fire demon arrived on Earth as a falling star, and Howl saved him by giving him his heart. Once Sophie realizes that Howl's heart and Calcifer are one and the same, it explains a lot about how important their connection is throughout the film. Earlier, Howl even calls Calcifer "his weakest point," alluding to Howl's overall journey of needing to find love to force him out of his immaturity and into responsibility.Even after getting on each other's nerves the whole movie, the bond between Howl and Calcifer is incredibly strong, and it's not just because of the magic. By the end of the film, Calcifer's decision to stay with Howl isn't because of a contract between them, but out of genuine care for his longtime friend. One of the most iconic characters from"Howl's Moving Castle" is Turnip Head, a living scarecrow who helps guide an older Sophie to Howl's castle. Given the similarities between "Howl's Moving Castle" and "The Wizard of Oz," it would be easy to compare Turnip Head to the scarecrow in L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel. However, that scarecrow's transformation from brainless to intelligent is replaced here with regaining consciousness, as Turnip Head returns to his original form at the end of the film.After Sophie plants a kiss on Turnip Head's cheek, the scarecrow surprisingly transforms into Prince Justin, the missing prince from Strangia whose disappearance sparked the war that plagues both kingdoms. This plays into the film's overall themes of the pointlessness of war, given that Strangia had assumed that Prince Justin had been abducted by the kingdom of Ingary. In actuality, he had simply been cursed into becoming a voiceless scarecrow who could only express his love for Sophie through his actions.Turnip Head's transformation also embodies the idea of loyalty, given that he's unfailingly protective of Sophie throughout the film. Although Sophie's heart lies with Howl, Prince Justin gracefully accepts this loss and vows to return after putting an end to the war. It's a storybook ending for a character who seems straight out of a traditional fairy tale. For the most part, Hayao Miyazaki's version of "Howl's Moving Castle" stays faithful to many aspects of Diana Wynne Jones's original fantasy novel. Although the book contains many narrative threads that were dropped from the movie, Miyazaki had a lot of elements he wanted to add to the original story to enrich it and make it more personal for him. A big one was the addition of the war between Ingary and Strangia as a major set-piece throughout the film, even though it's only briefly mentioned in the book.Another major change Miyazaki made between the book and film was making the Witch of the Waste a more sympathetic character, draining her of her powers during the film's midpoint. In the original book, the Witch of the Waste is the main antagonist, whose goal is to create the perfect human by assembling parts of other wizards and needing Howl for the head.The character arc of Howl is also entirely different in the movie. In Jones' novel, Howl is a womanizer whose ways are changed when he meets Sophie. In the film, however, Howl's appearance may be flamboyant but it is something he uses as a mask to hide his own cowardice. While many of these changes were necessary when translating prose to animation, lots of them give the film an identity that fits in well with the rest of Miyazaki's filmography. As Hayao Miyazaki's follow-up to his critically-acclaimed masterpiece "Spirited Away," expectations were high for "Howl's Moving Castle," and for the most part, reviewers felt satisfied. Upon its release in the United States in 2005, The New York Times heralded the film as "wildly imaginative, emotionally intense and surpassingly gentle," while other publications praised its beautiful art style, thematic resonance, and fantasy worldbuilding. These reviews, more or less, were par for the course when it came to Miyazaki's consistent and careful work.For some reviewers, the second half of the film especially the ending wasn't as enchanting as the film's visuals would have you believe. In a less-than-generous review from The Washington Post, reviewer Stephen Hunter criticized its plot, writing, "When it finishes, you wonder why it went where it went, if it can even be said to have gone there."However, some reviews from this time indicate that the critics didn't fully understand Miyazaki's intent behind the film. In a criticism from Variety that complained about its second half being too long and narratively incoherent, they wrote, "What's missing perhaps, is a more driving sense of Sophie's quest to regain her youth." This interpretation of the film's meaning, while understandable given Sophie's transformation back into a young woman at the end of the film, misses the point of her having changed and accepted adulthood through her experiences with Howl. Although Hayao Miyazaki's films are mostly beloved for their visual beauty, they also have some of the best film scores of all time. For "Howl's Moving Castle," the score was composed by Joe Hisaishi, who has worked with Miyazaki on every single one of his films except for "The Castle of Cagliostro." For "Howl's Moving Castle," Hisaishi made use of leitmotifs short musical phrases assigned to various characters or moments throughout the film.One of the musical pieces that appears throughout the film chronicles the love story between Howl and Sophie, and is titled "Merry-Go-Round of Life."The instrumental song's title has also given credibility to one interpretation of the film's ending as causing a time loop. When Sophie mysteriously ends up traveling back in time and encountering a young Howl, she tells him and Calcifer to find her in the future before she's whisked away back to her present.If viewers go back and re-watch Sophie's first encounter with adult Howl in the film, Howl tells her he's been looking all over for her. In a way, this time paradox of Sophie's creation was a necessary occurrence for Howl to regain his heart, making their love story a true merry-go-round of life. Perhaps the most significant of Hayao Miyazaki's many changes to "Howl's Moving Castle," is the inclusion of the war between the kingdoms of Ingary and Strangia, something that plagues Sophie's hometown and inevitably draws Howl into the conflict. The centrality of this plot point was very deliberate for Miyazaki, given the film's release only a year after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The director expressed his discontent for the war by choosing not to be present at the Academy Awards the year "Spirited Away" won Best Animated Feature.As "Howl's Moving Castle" developed into a movie with strong themes of anti-war and pacifism, Miyazaki was convinced the film wouldn't be received well by a Western audience. This is especially present in the film's final scene, where Howl's castle heads off in a direction away from flying warcraft, signifying that while the central characters are escaping to peace, the threat of war will continue to linger over the kingdoms.However, Miyazaki has confirmed that compared to some of his other films his intent behind "Howl's Moving Castle" was to create a film that was more optimistic about the world. In one interview, Miyazaki stated, "The reason that we made "Howl's Moving Castle" is that there are too many unhappy matters in the world, such as wars and economic crises. We hope that, through the movie, people can keep up their courage and see the hope." You don't have to see Hayao Miyazaki's entire filmography to know the director has a soft spot for the beauty of flight. Thematically, flight appears in most of his films, particularly in "Porco Rosso" and "The Wind Rises," and there are also iconic flying scenes in films like "My Neighbor Totoro" and "Kiki's Delivery Service." "Howl's Moving Castle" is no exception, as the film depicts flying machines and aircraft, as well as Howl's monstrous bird form.From Miyazaki's perspective, flight has two separate meanings. AsSlashFilm put it, Miyazaki's view is "that the power and magic of aviation and flight is both to be treasured and feared." Flying through the sky in Miyazaki's films, or even walking through it as depicted in "Howl's Moving Castle," is a source of freedom. Despite the film's other themes of modernity and militarization, the way it views flight is more positive than some of his other works.And yet, Miyazaki's philosophy on flight may be the key to his wider philosophy of filmmaking, especially when it comes to projects like "Howl's Moving Castle." In an interview with Animerica in 1997, Miyazaki was quoted as saying, "At one time, flight, too, was something that just took place only in the world of imagination." In a sense, the dichotomy between the reality of flight as a weapon versus the dream of soaring freely through the sky is inspiring for Miyazaki.Static Media owns and operates SlashFilm and Looper In 2013, Hayao Miyazaki attended the Venice Film Festival to screen "The Wind Rises," which was originally set to be his final film before he came out of retirement (again) for "The Boy and the Heron" in 2023. There, when asked which of his films is his favorite, Miyazaki answered, "Howl's Moving Castle," noting "I wanted to convey the message that life is worth living, and I don't think that's changed" (Cavallaro 2015).For those familiar with Miyazaki's work, it's easy to draw conclusions as to why the director says that "Howl's Moving Castle" is a personal favorite. In an article from The Spool, they compared the film to the titular fortress, writing, "Like Howl's castle, this movie is cobbled together from mismatched parts; it looks unstable and threatens to tumble over as it rambles along, but master wizardry holds it together." It combines loads of Miyazaki's influences, from his political rage to his visual affection for European aesthetics, into one gloriously beautiful film about true love."Howl's Moving Castle" was made in Miyazaki's fourth decade as a filmmaker, so it's easy to see why the director felt compelled to make a film about how even those who have aged a long time, whether by a curse or by time, still have a lot of growing up to do. When Sophie tells Howl, "A heart's a heavy burden," audiences can hear the wisdom of a filmmaker who's learned how to appreciate the simplicity of life. Cast & crewUser reviewsTriviaFAQWhen an unconfident young woman is cursed with an old body by a spiteful witch, her only chance of breaking the spell lies with a self-indulgent yet insecure young wizard and his companions ... Read allWhen an unconfident young woman is cursed with an old body by a spiteful witch, her only chance of breaking the spell lies with a self-indulgent yet insecure young wizard and his companions in his legged, walking castle.When an unconfident young woman is cursed with an old body by a spiteful witch, her only chance of breaking the spell lies with a self-indulgent yet insecure young wizard and his companions in his legged, walking castle.Sign in to rate and Watchlist for personalized recommendationsSign inSuggest an edit or add missing contentYou have no recently viewed pages119min - Japanese, Norwegian Synopsis Sophie (Emily Mortimer) has an uneventful life at her late father's hat shop, but all that changes when she befriends wizard Howl (Christian Bale), who lives in a magical flying castle. However, the evil Witch of Waste (Lauren Bacall) takes issue with their budding relationship and casts a spell on young Sophie, which ages her prematurely. Now Howl must use all his magical talents to battle the jealous hag and return Sophie to her former youth and beauty. Director Hayao Miyazaki Producer Rick Dempsey, Toshio Suzuki, Ned Lott Screenwriter Hayao Miyazaki Distributor Walt Disney Pictures Production Co Studio Ghibli, Walt Disney Pictures Rating PG Genre Fantasy, Anime Original Language Japanese Release Date (Theaters) Jun 10, 2005, Wide Rerelease Date (Theaters) Sep 23, 2024 Release Date (Streaming) Dec 15, 2019 Box Office (Gross USA) $4.7M Runtime 1h 59m Sound Mix SDDS Aspect Ratio Flat (1.85:1) Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. Jump toSummaries (5)Synopsis (1)EditSuggest an edit or add missing contentYou have no recently viewed pages This post includes a brief plot summary, an analysis and an explanation about the ending of the film Howls Moving Castle / Hauru no Ugoku Shiro (2004). Beware of spoilers. Note: The 2004 Japanese anime is loosely based on a 1986 novel with the same name written by Diana Wynne Jones. Howls Moving Castle (Novel) Shop Now A curse transforms a young girl into an old woman, leading her to discover her inner beauty in unexpected ways. Join Sophie Hatter on her adventure through Hayao Miyazakis wonderful world of Howls Moving Castle. The protagonist of this story, Sophie Hatter, is a shy girl with very low self-esteem. One day, she runs into Howl, The Wizard, who rescues her from two royal guards trying to harass her. However, her day is about to get worse. One of Howls old flames walks into Sophies hat shop and transforms her into an old woman. Afraid, Sophie runs to the countryside. During her journey, she meets a scarecrow with a turnip head who leads her to a magic castle powered by a fire demon named Calcifer. Since they both share a common problem, being cursed, they agree to help each other out. By the way, the place belongs to Howl, the wizard Sophie met before. From then on, Sophie inadvertently embarks on a spectacular adventure in the company of Howl, his apprentice Mark, and Calcifer. She also meets another pivotal figure, Madame Suliman, the kings wizard and Howls former mentor. This woman intends to strip Howls powers away to prevent him from using them for evil, like The Witch of Waste. Suliman is serious about her intentions and transforms The Witch of Waste into an old and senile lady. Before she could harm Sophie, Howl steps in and takes her away, along with the witch. Then Howl gives Sophie a ring that points to Calcifer (the castles location). At this point, Howl and Sophie are slowly becoming an item. During an enemy attack, Sophie tries to evacuate the moving castle. In the process, Sophie accidentally causes it to shutdown when she removes Calcifer from the fireplace and douses him off. After falling from the collapsing castle, the charmed ring gives Sophie a glimpse into the past. She realizes that Calcifer is the key to reviving Howl because he is his heart. After putting the heart back where it belonged, Howl regains his senses, and Calcifer is finally free from the curse. Although the fire demon flies away, he eventually comes back. Sophie regains her youth and reanimates the seriously injured Turnip Head by kissing him. The ending of Howls Moving Castle reveals that Turnip Head is, in reality, Prince Justin. His disappearance is the reason behind the ongoing war. Therefore, his return leads both parties to stop the conflict. After that, Howl, Sophie, and the other crew members fly into the air in a new moving castle. Right when the film starts, Sophies nation is already at war with another kingdom. The origin of the conflict lies in Prince Justins disappearance, who is from the other nation. That kingdom assumed that Sophies nation had done something to the prince and decided to declare war. For those who are curious about Howl and The Witch of the Waste, these two met many years ago. However, Howl met the witch as a young and beautiful woman. And of course, he was infatuated with her good looks, which led these two to have a fling. Nonetheless, when he found out it was all a faade, he ran away. The Witch of the Waste is also one of the most powerful magicians in the kingdom. However, fifty years ago, the king sent her to The Waste. The king banned her from the kingdom because he deemed her dangerous. Despite Howls complete disinterest in her, she insists on stalking him and does everything in her power to win his heart. Madame Suliman is the kings advisor and the maximum authority amongst wizards. Howl used to be her apprentice when he was younger, but he never completed his training. Suliman has the power to strip wizards powers away if she deems them selfish and unfit for magic. During a flashback, Sophie sees Howl catching and then swallowing a falling starCalcifer. So, contrary to the rumours, it wasnt a woman that stole Howls heart, it was the fire demon. Now, what prompted Howl to do that? Its not that clear in the film, but the novel explains it better. When Howl was younger, he spotted a falling (dying) star, Calcifer. At the time, Howl felt terrible for the fire demon and decided to give his heart to Calcifer. This would allow the fire demon to live longer, and in exchange, Calcifer granted Howl additional powers and agreed to aid him with whatever he required, including powering the castle. Calcifer and Howl are tied by this mysterious bargain, in which their lives are intertwined. If Calcifer dies, Howl will also die, and vice versa. Madame Sulimans comment on Howls heart (or lack of it) stems from the deal that the wizard made with the fire demon. Gaining new powers came at a cost. Howls growing powers have steadily eroded his humanity (both emotionally and physically). Every time Howl transforms into a bird-like creature, it gets increasingly difficult for him to return to his human form. That is why Suliman wants to take Howls powers away; she is terrified he will end up like The Witch of Waste. Initially, The Witch of the Waste cast a spell on Sophie and turned her into an elderly woman. However, Sophies age keeps changing throughout the film, which has to do with the nature of the spell. Sophie didnt age with the spell, the curse was only limited to her physical appearance. The real reason why Sophies physical appearance keeps changing is her mindset. Before meeting Howl, Sophie was a painfully shy young woman who kept most of her thoughts to herself. That attitude was what made the curse work, as she was already acting old. The turning point came when Sophie began to stand up for herself and others. That is when she was finally able to break the curse and return to her true age. In the end, Sophie comes to terms with who she is and who she loves. Howls Moving Castle (DVD) Buy Now As the story unravels, there are a lot of instances showing that Sophie has special powers. When Sophie met Turnip Head, he was just a thing. However, when Sophie spoke to Turnip Head, he suddenly came to life. Having said that, Sophies powers are mainly related to her ability to give life to inanimate objects. So, how did Sophie break Howls curse? When Sophie accidentally poured water on Calcifer, she put him in a weakened state. That explains why the castle fell apart and Howl became unconscious. Before returning Calcifer to Howl, she made a wish, which turned out to be a spell. She actually succeeds, therefore, Howl and Calcifer are now able to live independently, breaking their curse. War is ugly and, most of the time, unnecessary. The disappearance of Prince Justin proves exactly that. The neighbouring kingdom started a war without concrete evidence and caused havoc in another nation for no reason. Another interesting theme in Howls Moving Castle is ageing. Actually, ageing was a beneficial curse for Sophie. As an elderly woman, Sophie stopped worrying about what others thought, which allowed her to be more spontaneous. Young Sophie wouldve never entered Howls castle without permission, but old Sophie doesnt really care. The film also shows that compassion is not a weakness. When Madam Suliman took the powers of The Witch of the Waste away, Sophie did not take the opportunity to exact revenge on the woman who cursed her. Instead, she took care of her. Sophies strength lies in her ability to feel compassion for other people. Howls Moving Castle is a beautiful coming-of-age tale that challenges the audience to explore the unknown and become more brave. Now, this might sound like blasphemy to some, but personally, I enjoyed watching Howls Moving Castle more than I did Spirited Away. Overall, Howls Moving Castle is a beautiful piece of art from Hayao Miyazaki that lingers in the audiences heart. In addition, its possible to watch the film over and over again and still find new details or nuances. Hands down, Howls Moving Castle is a timeless masterpiece. If youve found this, youve probably just watched Studio Ghiblis Howls Moving Castle and are thinking, huh?. Well fret not, friend, for I was also fairly confused the first time I watched what is now one of my favourite films. Heres a breakdown of the plot of the fan-favourite Miyazaki film, and perhaps a few things you may have missed that have left you confused. The movie starts with Sophie creating beautiful hats quietly in her store while looking at Howls castle passing. Shes your average girl and doesnt think much of herself (the scene of her trying her hat on & cringing is honestly Me IRL). As the other ladies prepare to leave the store, one of them remarks that Howl once tore a womans heart out. Sophie gets sick of working (same) and leaves to find her sister. As she moves around Town, we see that there is some sort of military celebration happening. She then gets hit on by 2 soldiers when a handsome blondie appears. A very extravagant-looking Howl comments that hes been looking for her (this is very important) and that shes with him, so back off bitches. He offers to escort her to her destination, and this is where we learn hes being followed for some reason. Me WHEN This is where we get the most iconic scene of the movie, no plot relevance but it establishes that Howl is the hottest Ghibli man. Everything about this scene is perfect, please take a moment to respect that. Sophie finally meets her sister Lettie, the local hottie & we once again see that Sophie has low self-esteem. We learn that she doesnt even like making hats but feels responsible for the shop as the oldest. Lettie informs her that the Witch of the Waste has also been out & about recently. We then see that the things following Howl came from a person being carried around in a palanquin (!!). Sophie returns to her shop & a mysterious, oddly terrifying woman appears. She turns out to be quite the bitch so Sophie tells her to get out. She reveals herself as the witch of the waste & we see the figures carrying her palanquin by the door. She curses Sophie & part of the curse is that she cant reveal that shes been cursed to anyone. But whats the curse? SOPHIES OLD AF. The next day, Sophies mum comes to visit but Sophie isnt at the shop. She pretends to be sick & here we really see that mentally, Sophie IS old. She says stuff like its not easy being old and my clothes finally suit me; we dont condone hate of the chic grandma aesthetic in this household, Sophie. She then heads for the hills to find a way to break the curse. In town, theres chatter of a war brewing. While eating, she finds a big ass stick, which she thinks will make a good walking stick. As she pulls it out of the bush its stuck in we see that the stick actually a sentient scarecrow (why not). Again, we are shown battleships signalling an impending war. The sentient scarecrow literally brings Sophie Howls Moving Castle as thanks when she asks him to find her somewhere to sleep, what a plot-driving king. During this whole process, we see how Sophie has kind of accepted being old. Also, could we take a moment to appreciate how much work it must have taken to animate this collosal mess Howl calls a castle. Sophie manages to hop on board & settles in next to a small fireplace. But its not just a flame at the fireplace, its a sentient flame that can tell Sophies under a curse, hmm. He calls himself the fire demon (awfully cute for a demon), Calcifer and offers Sophie a deal: break the spell that traps him in Howls castle & hell break the curse on her. But to do that, she has to figure out a secret contract Calcifer has with Howl, HMMM. The very next day, we are introduced to Howls apprentice, Markl. We also are introduced to a very important plot point: the door is actually a portal to 4 different spaces & the black ones Howls door. Authorities knock on the door to inform that Howl (and his various aliases) has to undergo mandatory conscription, orders from the big boss lady. BREAKFAST SCENE, love it. Howl returns from the black door & cooks breakfast, LOOK AT THOSE EGGS. Anyway, Howl can tell the witch of the waste has left a spell in Sophies pocket and it wouldnt be unreasonable to assume he can tell Sophies under a spell as well. The spell says He who catches a falling star, oh heartless man, your heart will be mine. CLEANING SCENE, this scene is so satisfying. Anyways, while transferring Calcifer, we can see he has an oblong butt (core), yes, this is important, alright? Pay attention to the way it moves when Howl blows on it. Calcifer says if he dies, Howl dies. We also see that Sophie, who previously had trouble even walking, suddenly has no problem cleaning the whole house after getting riled up. Scarecrow also makes a return at this point and we see that the war has begun, and that Howl isnt fighting on the same side as the rest of the Wizards. While sleeping, Sophie returns to her original form. Howl has a complete meltdown when Sophie mixes up his potions and spells, causing his hair to turn orange, ok drama queen. Sophie has an outburst and looks physically younger while crying, but soon realises that Howl is just throwing a tantrum. We see Howls obsession with pretty things and that hes a bit of a hoarder. As with all meltdowns, there was something else bothering Howl Hes been trying to evade the Queen (technically the Kings chief wizard, but imma call her queen), who has been chasing him for conscription, and the witch of the waste, whose heart he seems to have broken in the past. Thats when Howl gets the genius idea of sending Sophie to pretend to be his mum to decline the Queen in participating in the war, like that would make any difference. Me IRL She meets a dog along the way, whom she mistakes for being Howl in disguise. The Queen also seems to have summoned the Witch of the Waste to participate in the war and the two comically bicker up the stairs. Sophie is led to the Queen, who is revealed to be Howls teacher, while some sort of spell in performed on the witch of the waste. The Queen claims a demon stole Howls heart and that she can teach him to break the contract if he works for her. She reveals that she has removed all the Witch of the Wastes powers and threatens to do the same for Howl if he doesnt submit. It seems her care for him came at a price, she wants some investment returns. But Sophie realises that this would come at the cost of Howls freedom and would force him into committing war crimes. While defending Howl, Sophie turns back to her younger self in an honestly magical sequence. Whenever she gets passionate or is full of life, she always seems to turn time backwards. Howl shows up in the single stupidest disguise ever (as the King) and the Queen immediately sees through him. She begins the process of striping him of his powers but they manage to break free and escape, with Howls ring showing her the way to Calcifer. When Howl finally returns home from the fighting, Sophies her younger self again. She searches for him in his man cave & she confesses that she wants to break his spell because she loves him, but he remarks that shes very late. Sophie threatens to murder Calcifer but he refuses to reveal what Howl has given him, alright asshole. The next day, they have a bunch of fun eating & cleaning again, god, I love this movie. Howl also reveals the scarecrow is under some sort of spell. Howl rebrands his castle to a much simpler, cleaner look and moves it to evade to queen to the spot where Sophies shop is! As the movie progresses, we see how Howl changes from a superficial, pretty thing lover to someone who loves more deeply and values substance, cleverly illustrated through the design of the castle & his outfits. He then shows Sophie her present he takes her to his secret, GORGEOUS garden where he used to spend his childhood running around. As she frolics about, she turns young again but when her negative mentality sets in she reverts back to old age. When a battleship flies past them, Howl decides to mess with it, causing him to suffer from side effects. The two quickly run away and Sophie returns home. Then, out of nowhere, Sophies mum finds her in their home and leaves a little purse as directed by the Queen (that bitch). The witch of the waste finds a magic slug in it and FEEDS IT TO CALCIFER (psycho lady, shes the only character I still dont quite like) reducing his powers and letting the magic through his protection. As the air raids bombard the town, Howl returns and restores the integrity of the castle and Calcifer. Sophie pleads with him to run away, but Howl refuses as he wants to protect the home they have (melting). In a bid to draw him away from the war and run from the Queen, Sophie removes Calcifer from the castle and it collapses. Having successfully lost the Queen, Sophie begs Calcifer to move the castle once more, but a weakened Calcifer requires her to give him something of hers in exchange for power. She gives him her hair and Calcifer goes wild. He says, imagine what I could have done with your heart and the damn old lady grabs Calcifer, realising he has Howls heart. This, along with Sophie splashing water on him, weakens Calcifer further and the remaining castle collapses entirely, sending Sophie falling. The ring that Howl gives her then leads her through the black castle door, and she arrives at Howls secret garden. She sees shooting stars falling and a young Howl Shes travelled back to his childhood. Why? Because thats the door where Howls heart (mind/soul both figurative and literal) lies. Its Howls door, after all. We then see the deal made between Howl & Calcifer he saved a dying star by giving it his heart. The ring breaks and shes whisked away, but tells the two to wait for her in the future, saying shell come back for them. When she returns, she sees a dishevelled Howl, tired from war and barely keeping it together with his heart being severely weakened. She apologises for making him wait and asks that he take her to Calcifer. Sophie asks Calcifer if returning Howls heart could possibly kill him, but Calcifer realises that they were fine even when Sophie poured water on him and that she could probably be the one to return his heart (perhaps as her ownership of his heart is unconditional). She then says something that sounds a little like a spell that wishes both Howl and Calcifer long lives as she returns his heart. The contract breaks and as they fall, are saved by the scarecrow for a last time. Sophie kisses him as thanks and that breaks his spell too! He is revealed to be the Prince of the neighbouring country and promises to end the war. Calcifer and Howl are both finally free and they all live happily ever after as one big family. How fitting that in a movie all about giving and taking hearts, pure selfless love is what sets everyone free. Throughout the movie, we see that her physical appearance changes with her mental state. When shes full of life, happy or passionate, she reverts to her younger self. But when negativity consumes her, she speaks badly of herself to others or thinks of herself as being unworthy, she appears older. While up to interpretation, I feel that her curse was that her physical appearance reflect her mental state. As the movie progresses, she learns to be kind to herself, as she is to others and not talk down to herself. She too, is worthy of love and happiness. When she finally gains real confidence in herself, remains as her young self from that point forth. I really love Howls Moving Castle, and as with all Ghibli movies, implore you to re-watch this movie if you havent. All Ghibli movies, and especially this one get better on re-watches, trust me. Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. 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