

the Hungry Squid




Dorothy Sue Ann Murguson isn't having the best of times. Her bodybuilder mother and food-additive salesman father are constantly on the road. Her hair is either flat and limp or tangled in knots. Her pet fish keep keeling over. And if that's not enough, a caterpillar, cat, rabbit, dog, turtle – and a ravenous enormous squid – are devouring her homework.

When the squid rampages through town, Dorothy's misguided school counsellor finally realizes that the homework-eating creatures aren't all in her head – and that magnets, crystals and sundry wacko therapies won't make them vanish. Thanks to Dorothy's quick thinking, the squid is captured and the town is saved.

A madcap tall tale from Oscar winner John Weldon, *The Hungry Squid* will make anyone pause before saying, "The dog ate my homework."

Director: John Weldon
Producer: Marcy Page

14 min 21 sec
Order number: C9101 185

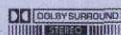
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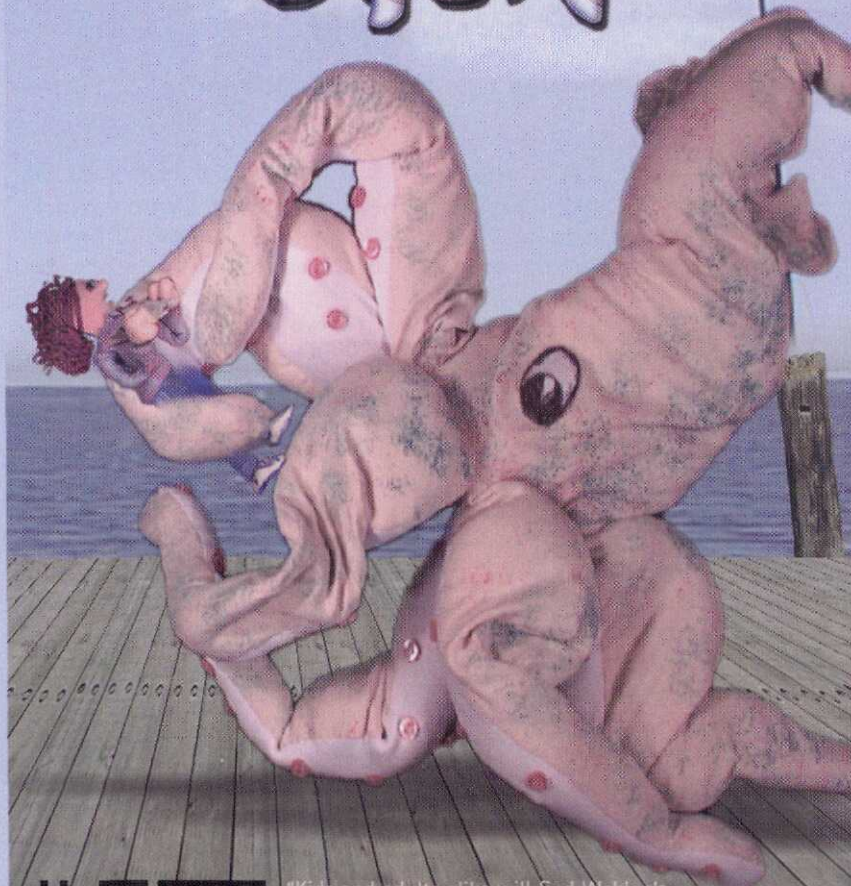


VHS

C9101 185

A National Film Board of Canada Production

the Hungry Squid



"Kids and adults alike will find Weldon's *The Hungry Squid* to be a wonderfully dark delight with more than a little wisdom at its whimsical core. Highly recommended."

— Video Librarian



the Hungry Squid

Discussion Questions for Children

1. Be sure to retell the story with the children since the action and plot move quite fast. In fact, children will probably enjoy seeing the film again.
2. Ask the children to list the main characters while you write the names on the board. (Dorothy, her classmates Alfred and Amelia, the school counsellor, Dorothy's parents – her father, who sells food additives, and her bodybuilder mother.) Have children say who their favourite character is and explain their choice. If their favourite character had more "screen time," how might the story change?
3. Remind the children of the classic line "The dog ate my homework." Do they remember the ridiculous explanations used by Amelia and Alfred? (Alfred's untranslatable linear B or Amelia's wicked step-mother erasing all her work.) Invite the children to make up the most preposterous and silly excuses they can think of.
4. The animals and birds (*and* the school counsellor) were driven to eat Dorothy's homework because of the special ink in her pen, the ink from her father's cupboard! Does anyone remember the special ingredient (squid ink)? The ink was called YUM-17 and was also made from hormones from cats and caterpillars and cattle from Kathmandu! What was YUM-17 intended for? (To make kids eat broccoli.) Any other speculation about the additive is perfectly acceptable. Make this discussion fun for all.

About the Filmmaker



John Weldon is known for his darkly funny sensibility. He started his working life as an actuarial trainee, but gave it up in favour of writing and producing a comic book. Eventually, he wound up at the National Film Board, where he has collaborated on

Story, direction and animation:
JOHN WELDON

Puppet and costume design:
LILIAN KRUIP

Digital imaging specialist:
PIERRE PLOUFFE

Narration:
DEREK McGRATH

Original music and sound editing:
CHRIS CRILLY

Music recording:
GEOFFREY MITCHELL,
PATRICK VIEGAS

Foley:
ANDY MALCOLM,
GORO KOYAMA

Foley recording:
RON MELLEGRS,
DON WHITE

Re-recording:
SERGE BOVIN,
SHELLEY CRAIG

Executive producer:
DAVID VERRALL

Producer:
MARCY PAGE

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50 productions and directed over a dozen films. *Special Delivery* (1978), co-directed with Eunice Macaulay, took home an Oscar for Best Animated Short. Other titles include *Scant Sanity* (1996), done with a dazzling array of techniques; *Of Dice and Men* (1988), animated on a standard office computer; *The Lump* (1991), a technical tour-de-force with 3D backgrounds and cut-outs; and the award-winning *Frank the Wrabbit* (1998), a festival favourite.

Discussion Questions for General Viewers

1. Encourage viewers to briefly retell the story of *The Hungry Squid*.
2. Ask how the film creates a feeling of such mad fantasy and silliness. (Examples: Dorothy Sue Ann's hair and its knotting problem; the pet fish that escapes its bowl and leaps through the grass to the neighbour's house for sanctuary and dinner.)
3. Point out that one way of creating a tall tale is to pair the perfectly normal and commonplace with the bizarre. Ask for examples. For instance, Dorothy seems like a girl from a perfectly normal home yet her parents leave her alone most of the time, and they both have extremely unusual professions. Or the school counsellor – normally a rational person who helps students – is a character who uses magnetic fields,

crystals, and electroshock as therapy! Exaggeration and hyperbole heighten the antic and goofy details as the story careens along.

4. While many animated films succeed without dialogue or narration, *The Hungry Squid* revels in rich, witty language. Ask for examples. Remind viewers of Dorothy's school assignments ("Ethics and Proper Conduct," "Intransigent Post-perfect French Verbs"), the names of the knots that her hair tied itself into. Offer, too, the lyrics of the closing song:

*So if ever you're feeling inclined to go squidding,
Leave white shirts and collars behind in the town.
And if you get cranky without your silk hanky,
You'd better steer clear of the squid-jigging ground.*

NFB Related Videos

- **John F. Weldon's Lighter Lunacy:** A compilation of seven animated gems, including *Frank the Wrabbit*, Oscar winner *Special Delivery*, *Log Driver's Waltz* (sung by the McGarrigle sisters) and more!
- **Tall Tales and True Stories:** A compilation of five animated short films appropriate for children.
- **AnimaFeast 95 Volume 2:** This collection of eight animated shorts was compiled especially for young viewers.