

# Operation Cuckoo

Director: Pierre M. Trudeau  
Producer: Jean-Jacques Leduc

Mr. Edgar, a mechanical cuckoo, loves the spring since it signals the return of his adopted family, three wonderful little birds he loves with all his heart. But the joyous reunion is followed by a terrible catastrophe: an essential gear in Mr. Edgar's cuckoo clock has fallen off! With the help of Fifi, a resourceful firefly, and his bird family, Mr. Edgar once again sets everything right.

This touching animated short for young children shows how friendship can light up your life, how it's easier to solve problems together and how giving can be as good as receiving.



13 minutes 21 seconds

Pre-K to Grade 3

Subject Areas: Storytelling,  
Language Arts, Parenting

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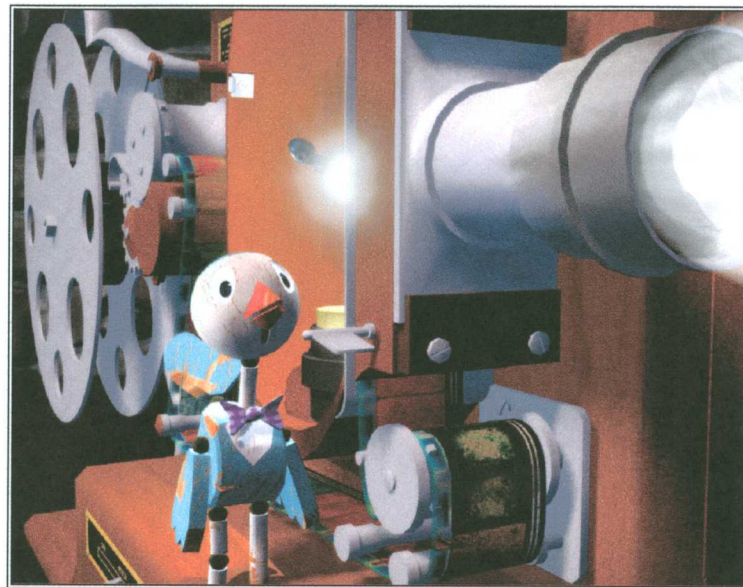
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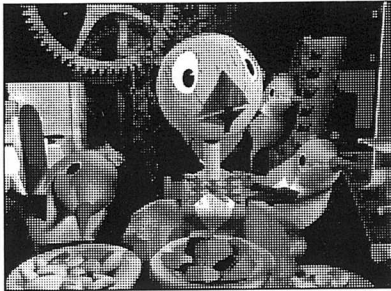


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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### For general viewers:

1. Before beginning a discussion of the film, take the children through a brief discussion of Mr. Edgar's home. Point out that the clock is hanging on the chimney of a fireplace and that the fireplace, a stone floor, and a basement are all that remain of a house. Ask the children what they think might have happened to the family that once lived there and what might have happened to the house. Allow them to speculate freely and encourage imaginative responses.

2. This film includes a load of magical, over-the-top, suspension-of-disbelief detail and events. Although Mr. Edgar reports that "Fifi the firefly had a sort of clock that put pictures into motion," the ancient 8mm film projector in the film has some basis in reality. Let the children know that such antique devices were still in use in schools and homes as recently as the last century. The use of Fifi's light to illuminate the frames of the film and thus project them through the lens is a simple way to explain how these old projectors worked. The fact that there was no electricity to drive the projector is explained by Fifi's ability to put pictures in motion - in short, magic meets machines. Ask the children to cite other such delightful and farfetched examples from the film. (Mr. Edgar converting his clock into a movie projector, Fifi eaten by the frog but not eaten, the young "real birds" raised by a wooden cuckoo clock bird, Mr. Edgar variously drinking lubricating oil and eating a bowl of metal nuts, and much more.) Encourage the children to discuss their examples and to tell what they liked about that particular flight of fancy. There are no wrong answers.

3. This film offers an excellent opportunity to discuss friendship and all of its remarkable variations. In the film, Mr. Edgar, the cuckoo clock bird, and Fifi, the fanciful firefly, form an unlikely friendship. Ask the children how this friendship developed. (First Fifi helped Mr. Edgar escape from the basement, then Mr. Edgar rescued Fifi from the bullfrog, then Mr. Edgar found a way to show movies from his clock that Fifi and all the critters from the "neighborhood" could see.) Then ask the children to talk about their own friends. Encourage them to tell how they met, how the friendship developed. Ask the children if their friends are very like themselves or if they have friends who are not their own age, who live in other countries, who are different from them in some significant way. Discuss the benefits and obligations of friendship with the children.

### Recommended related reading:

*Make Your Own Animated Movies and Videotapes (Film and Video Techniques from the Yellow Ball Workshop)* by Yvonne Andersen. Here are the complete instructions for making animated movies - including cartoon drawing, camera operation and sound synchronization, as well as describing the required equipment.

*Lights, Camera, Action! (Making Movies and TV from the Inside Out)* by Lisa O'Brien and Stephen MacEachern. This book is precisely what the title tells you it is and comes with excellent bibliographical references.

*Making Movies* by Perry Schwartz. Want to know what happens during the making of a motion picture and who does what? This is the book for you.

*Horror Movies* by Tom Powers. This book explores the appeal of horror movies as well as discussing the plots and insider stories about some of the most famous horror movies.

### Recommended related viewing:

"Cuckoo, Mr. Edgar!" This is the first Mr. Edgar film and in it he establishes his credentials as an innovative single parent. Available from the National Film Board of Canada.