



ABOUT THE FILM

In *The Mountain of Sgaana*, Haida filmmaker Christopher Auchter spins a magical tale of a young man who is stolen away to the spirit world, and the young woman who rescues him. The film brilliantly combines traditional animation with formal elements of Haida art, and is based on a story inspired by a old Haida fable.

Content warning:

Depiction of human getting swallowed by an orca [02:00–02:06]

Film length:
10 min

Recommended ages:
9–11 years old

School subjects:
Arts education,
Indigenous studies,
Languages

Keywords:
Storytelling, oral
tradition, Haida, Haida
Gwaii, biodiversity

Watch: https://www.nfb.ca/film/mountain_of_sgaana/

Licence: info@nfb.ca

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM

- What do you know about the Haida?
Note: The Haida are an Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America.
- Have you ever heard a fable or legend from your own culture or another culture? What was it about?

AFTER VIEWING THE FILM

- How did the film use Haida art to tell the story?
- What role did the spirit world play in the story? How was it different from the real world?
- How did watching this film change or add to what you know about Haida culture?

FILM VIEWING WORKSHEET - ANSWER KEY

- 1. At the beginning of the film, the main character is distracted by an object. What is this object? [00:30–00:50]**

The main character is distracted by his phone.

- 2. How does the mouse get the main character’s attention? [01:01–01:07]**

The mouse appears at the man’s teacup; it throws a small ball of yarn into the air, pops out from behind the teacup, taps the teacup with its knitting needles, and then motions to the man to watch as it begins knitting very quickly.

- 3. In the story that the mouse is knitting in the blanket, what animal is floating in the water? [01:40–01:55]**

An otter is floating in the water, then it disappears when a man tries to spear it and an orca appears from deep in the water.

- 4. In the story, the woman in red takes a boat and travels out into the ocean in the rain to find the missing man. What does she do to help her find her way? [03:05–03:30]**

After the woman is “gifted” two animal guides from the mouse (a small bird and a small weasel or lemming), she travels out to sea in the rain. Soon she pauses and begins singing and tapping her paddle, and then she smiles and continues.

- 5. After the woman is captured by a fish creature, she sings, and then it brings her somewhere. Where does the fish creature bring her? [05:15–06:45]**

The fish creature brings the woman to the underwater caves where the orca-spirit-lady is keeping the captured man.

- 6. When the main character wakes at the end of the story, he notices that the mouse is gone from his boat. He sees an animal outside of his boat window. What animal is it? [08:15–08:30]**

The little red bird from the mouse’s story gets the attention of the man on the boat, and then he notices that the man and woman from the story are just outside of his boat too. He reaches a hand down to help them, and the film ends.

Resource created in collaboration with:
Jillian Caron – Elementary teacher, Quebec, CA. 2025.

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As you watch the film *The Mountain of Sgaana*, answer the following questions.

1. At the beginning of the film, the main character is distracted by an object. What is this object?
2. How does the mouse get the main character's attention?
3. In the story that the mouse is knitting in the blanket, what animal is floating in the water?
4. In the story, the woman in red takes a boat and travels out into the ocean in the rain to find the missing man. What does she do to help her find her way?
5. After the woman is captured by a fish creature, she sings, and then it brings her somewhere. Where does the fish creature bring her?
6. When the main character wakes at the end of the story, he notices that the mouse is gone from his boat. He sees an animal outside of his boat window. What animal is it?

Once the film is over, answer one of the following questions.

1. How did the film make you feel while you were watching it? Did your feelings change during the film? Explain.
2. This film uses elements from Haida culture to tell its story. What did you learn about Haida culture or art that you didn't know before watching the film?
3. If you could ask the filmmaker, Christopher Auchter, one question about the film, what would it be?

PROJECT IDEA

Choose an animal from the film (an orca, a mouse, a manta ray, a weasel, etc.). Do some research to learn more about where the animal lives and what its life is like.

Then, write a short story about a time that your chosen animal helps or tries to stop another main character in their adventure.

