



The Lost Thing

In this animated short, a young boy struggles to find a suitable home for "The Lost Thing," a unique pet-like contraption he finds on a busy beach.

Recommended for all ages

(Understood on a thematic level by a more mature audience 13+)

Themes: coming of age; conformity; childhood

Director(s): Andrew Rehumann & Shaun Tan | **16 min** | **Animated** | **2010**

Country: Australia | **Language:** In English

Official film website: www.thelostthing.com



SET THE STAGE | THOUGHT-STARTERS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This animated short film is adapted from the highly acclaimed picture book by Shaun Tan. A modern fable with a unique aesthetic; the story is at once idiosyncratic and universal in its appeal to all ages.

It took over three and a half years to produce this film, which features over 74 individual characters and 22 computer generated sets. In order to produce a true representation of the painterly style of the original work, the filmmakers used actual painted textures along with detailed color scripts.

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Animation:** The appearance or illusion of movement when a series of drawings, computer graphics, or photographs of objects (such as puppets or models) are viewed in sequence.
- **Conformity:** Behavior in accordance with socially accepted conventions or standards.

For more film terms, refer to the PCFF Film Glossary (pcfFri.org/FilmHub).



Clues and Cues

Pay attention while watching

- Notice the way the directors use colors to signal a change in mood.

TALK ABOUT IT | DISCUSSION

- What are some benefits of an animated film as opposed to a live action film (acted out with real people)? What are the disadvantages?
- Do you find it easier or harder to identify with animated characters? Why or why not? What are some characteristics of the Lost Thing? In what ways does this strange object seem human?
- As the boy is walking along the beach, he passes a sign that reads, "Tomorrow is the tomorrow you expected." How does his encounter with the Lost Thing challenge that attitude?
- Why do you think the boy notices the Lost Thing while others do not? What separates him from others in the film? Do his character traits change over time?
- In the film, what is the goal of the Federal Department of Odds and Ends? What happens to the main character at the Federal Office when he's trying to get help for the Lost Thing? What does he learn about attitudes toward the weird and the wonderful? What are examples of real-life situations like this?
- When the boy and the Lost Thing find the place where odd things are free to be what they are, does the tone of the film change? What makes it feel different? Think about what elements the filmmakers used to change the tone.
- What does the term "lost" mean in this film? Does it have multiple meanings? Have you ever "lost" something important to you? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt lost?
- Think about the scene with the boy and his friend Pete sitting on the roof with the Lost Thing among endless identical houses. According to Pete, "some things are just plain lost." What is the message of this scene? Who else might be lost?
- Does the film have a happy or a sad ending? Think about it from the perspective of the Lost Thing, and think about it from the boy's perspective. At the end of the film, time has passed, and the grown-up narrator tells us, "There aren't any lost things around anymore. Or maybe I've just stopped noticing them. I'm too busy doing other stuff, I guess." What do you think this means?

GET CREATIVE | EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



For Activity Reel details, downloadable storyboard template and more, visit the the Film Hub website: www.pcfri.org/FilmHub

• Writing Prompt

Think about or go through some of your old stuff that you may have put away into storage or buried in a closet. Find an object that has become one of your “lost things.” Recall the last time it was important to you and why it was important. Was it something you enjoyed when you were younger, but that you grew out of? Rediscover that lost thing and write a journal entry about its history and your connection to it. See if you can recall when it became “lost” to you.

• Lost Poster

Materials: Paper, art supplies (optional: “Publisher” app available on iPhone/iPad)

Pretend you just found another Lost Thing. Create a poster of your lost thing so you can help it find a home. Use your imagination to create a wonderful creature all your own! Write some physical descriptions and characteristics underneath your drawing.

MAKE CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources complement the film and inspire further discussion or programming.

BOOKS

• The Lost Thing

by Shaun Tan

The illustrated storybook that inspired the film.

• The Animator’s Survival Kit

by Richard Williams

A how-to book explaining the basics of animation techniques for beginners.

• Acting for Animators

by Ed Hooks

This book provides animators with the information they need to know about acting to be effective at their craft.

• Directing the Story: Professional Storytelling and Storyboarding Techniques

by Frances Glebas

A structural approach about how to clearly and dramatically present visual stories.

FILMS

🎯 Scared is Scared (2013)

A short film about overcoming fear which combines animation with live action.

• The Iron Giant (1999)

A classic film which uses both hand-drawn and computer animation.

• The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)

A stop motion animation directed and written by Tim Burton.

🎯 Indicates PCFF festival selection

BEYOND THE FILM | RELATED INTERNET LINKS

• The Lost Thing wins an Oscar:

www.examiner.com/article/the-lost-thing-wins-best-short-film-animated

• The Lost Thing commentary:

www.slashfilm.com/votd-the-lost-thing-academy-awardnominated-animated-short-film/

• Notes on the Film with trailer:

alisashortfilm.wordpress.com/tag/the-lost-thing/

• Shaun Tan’s *The Lost Thing*: From Book to Film Education Resource:

www.acmi.net.au/media/428194/shaun-tan-ed-kit.pdf

