

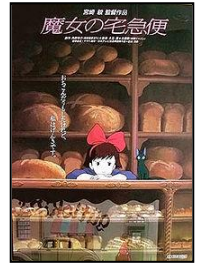
Kiki's Delivery Service

Majo no takkyûbin, 1989, Japan

Film Overview



Set in a time when airships still ruled the skies and World War II has never happened, *Kiki's Delivery Service* is a coming-of-age tale that explores the difficulties of being a young witch. On her thirteenth birthday, budding witch Kiki is in a hurry to leave her family and establish her independence. With only her talking pet cat as a companion, Kiki is attracted to the bright lights of a beautiful port city, but finds that making friends is not easy. Using her skill at riding a broom to start an express delivery service, Kiki quickly discovers that she cannot take her unique abilities for granted. The film is based on the book *Majo no Takkyûbin* by Eiko Kadono, a Japanese writer of children's books; the title literally means "Witch's Special Express Delivery." Like Miyazaki's *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki* is languidly paced--the better to appreciate the level of detail of the film's animation. *Kiki* differs from the typical "witch" film in that Kiki's abilities serve not as a symbol for evil or for ultimate power, but for the talents that lie within the reach of every girl. *-Adapted from yesasia.com*



Hayao Miyazaki is a prominent Japanese filmmaker of many popular animated feature films. He is also a co-founder of Studio Ghibli, an animation studio and production company. In 2006, Time Magazine voted Miyazaki one of the most influential Asians of the past 60 years. In 2005, he was named one of the Time 100 Most Influential People.

Cultural Notes

- **Takkyûbin** The "Delivery Service" of the title is *takkyûbin* (literally home-fast-mail). The Japanese title is a trademark of Yamato Transport, though it is used today as a synonym for *takuhaibin* (literally home-delivery-mail). The company not only approved the use of its trademark — though its permission was not required under Japanese trademark laws— but also enthusiastically sponsored the film, as the company uses a stylized depiction of a black mother cat carrying her kitten as its corporate logo. *Takkyûbin* is a special delivery service in which the customer can send items ranging from luggage to/from the airport to packages of fresh fruit and beef from one address to another, anywhere in Japan, for a relatively low fee, and with quick, reliable delivery (often within 24 hours).
- **The Setting** Rather than a Japanese setting, *Kiki's Delivery Service* takes place in a fictional northern European country, during an alternate 1950s in a world where neither World War has occurred. Miyazaki and the senior staff traveled widely to research landscapes and other elements of the setting. Their main stops were Stockholm, Adelaide, South Australia and the Swedish island of Gotland. The city's architecture also owes debts to Ireland, Paris and Tokyo's Ginza district.
- ***Majo no takkyûbin*: The book** The original children's book by Eiko Kadono on which the movie was based is very different from Miyazaki's finished film. Kadono's novel is more episodic, consisting of small stories about various people and incidents Kiki encounters while making deliveries. Many of the more dramatic elements, such as Kiki losing her powers or the blimp incident at the film's climax, were not present in the original story. Miyazaki made these changes to give the film more of a story, and make the film about the hardships that Kiki faces while growing up. He remarked, "As movies always create a more realistic feeling, Kiki will suffer stronger setbacks and loneliness than in the original." Kadono was initially unhappy with the changes that were made between the book and film, to the point that the project was in danger of being shelved at the screenplay stage. Miyazaki and Toshio Suzuki, the producer of Ghibli, went to her home and invited her to the film's studio. After her visit to the studio, Kadono decided to let the project continue.

