

STUDY GUIDE



SUMMER 1993

(ESTIU 1993)

a Film by CARLA SIMÓN
SPAIN/2017/96 MIN
Catalan with English subtitles



www.pragda.com

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

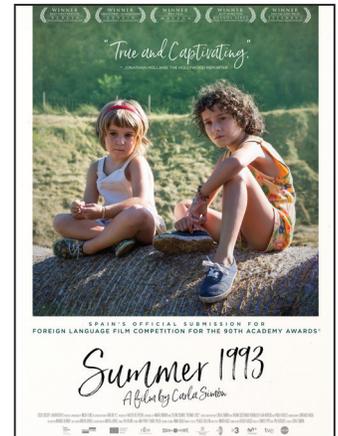
Before watching a foreign film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country where that film comes from. Find two or three articles on Spain during post-Franco era and write a brief summary on what was happening and what has happened in the country. Please use reliable sources.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this official synopsis for *Summer 1993*:

In Carla Simon's touching autobiographical film, six-year-old Frida looks on in silence as the last objects from her recently deceased mother's apartment in Barcelona are placed in boxes. Although her aunt, uncle, and younger cousin Anna welcome her with open arms, it's only very slowly that Frida begins to get used to her new home in the countryside. Punctuated by moments of youthful exuberance and mature ruminations, this coming of age drama, set amongst summery hues, is an extraordinarily moving snapshot of being a child in an adult world, anchored by flawless performances by its two young stars.

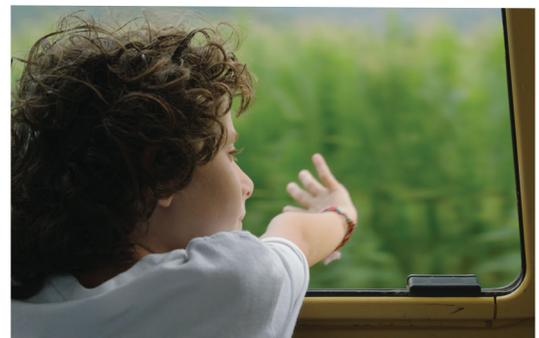
- ❑ From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main elements from the film's plot and the social background to the film.
- ❑ How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- ❑ Can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about just from the marketing materials (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images)?



AFTER WATCHING THE FILM

CINEMATIC ART/TECHNIQUES

- ❑ Keeping in mind wardrobe, dialogue, and any behaviors, how are the characters introduced to the audience at the start of the film?
- ❑ "In the opening scenes, Frida (Laia Artigas) is almost always alone how are in the frame, or if someone else is present, they're generally only partly visible."¹ What emotions do you think this cinematic technique portrays?
- ❑ The close up and medium shots of Frida function as a technique to focus on her emotions. What can you uncover regarding Frida's emotional state from these shots? Are they different from those emotions displayed by other characters?
- ❑ How does this film depict trauma? Think about the characters' behavior and the mise-en-scène,² and give examples from specific scene(s).



(continued on next page)

¹ Weissberg, J. (2017, February 22). Film review: 'Summer 1993'. *Variety*. Retrieved from <http://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/summer-1993-review-1201993688/>

² "Mise-en-scène...is used in film to refer to everything that goes into the composition of a shot--framing, movement of the camera and characters, lighting, set design and the visual environment, and sound."
"Term Index." *The Columbia Film Language Glossary*. <https://filmglossary.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/term/>

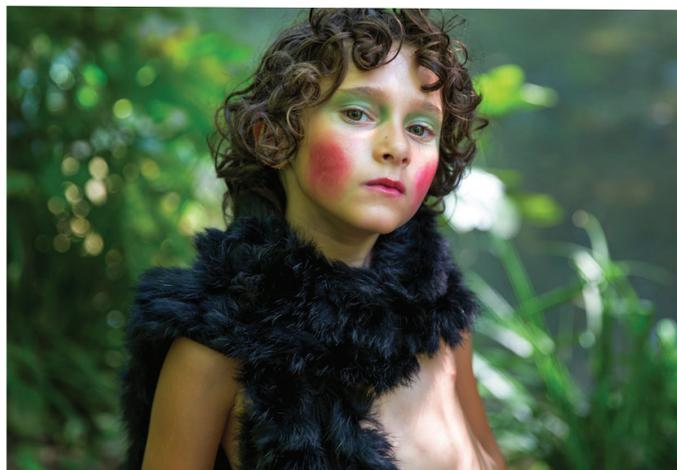
CINEMATIC ART/TECHNIQUES *(continued)*

- ❑ “Cinematographer Santiago Racaj...treats his camera as a living, breathing observer, often viewing the world at Frida’s level (with occasional p.o.v. shots)...looking out at her new, disorienting rural surroundings with uncertainty.”³ Select scene(s) that depict Frida’s new environment and explain what kind of emotions they generate for both you as the viewer and Frida.
- ❑ The director plays with the use of light throughout the narrative in order to transform the mood of the characters and tone of the scene. What shift do you notice in the narrative during scenes that use light versus those that occur at night?
- ❑ Carla Simón films Frida’s surroundings with a poignant beauty, but the tone of the drama is sad and often depressing. What calls for this juxtaposition?

³ Weissberg, J. (2017, February 22). Film review: ‘Summer 1993’. *Variety*. Retrieved from <http://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/summer-1993-review-1201993688/>

NARRATIVE

- ❑ How is Frida introduced to the audience in the opening minutes of the film?
- ❑ What assumptions can you make about the film from the opening minutes? What do you think the film is about? Do your assumptions evolve or stay the same as the film continues?
- ❑ What are the reasons for Frida’s parents’ death? How is this information displayed in the narrative? Do you think these reasons are important to understand Frida’s psychology?
- ❑ How do the dynamics change between Frida and her family members (Anna, Marga, Esteve, grandmother María, etc.)? Explain why you think they change throughout the narrative.
- ❑ The relationship between Frida and her new mother is very unique. They seem to be in constant struggle, but simultaneously very affectionate with each other. Can you find two or three examples of this dynamic -- at one moment feisty, at the other loving?
- ❑ Is there a difference between Frida and Anna regarding the treatment they receive from their various family members? If so, what effect does it have on the two characters?
- ❑ Why do you think Frida is so cruel with her new sister? Do you think Frida herself is aware of this cruelty? Do you find her behavior justified?
- ❑ What do you believe the significance of the ‘role play’ scene between Frida and Anna (22:35-25:37) is?
- ❑ What role do you think religion plays in Frida’s life? Do you believe these rituals really help to comfort Frida? Why or why not?
- ❑ What does the audience know about Neus without having been introduced to her?
- ❑ Is the narrative suspended, or is there a resolution in the final scene (1:31:46-1:35:44)? What can you conclude from the final scene?
- ❑ What tone does the film end on? Explain the significance of the tone and connect it to the director’s message about Frida’s future.



(continued on next page)

NARRATIVE *(continued)*

- Think about your responses to the characters. Did you like them? Is there one character in particular that you identify with? If so, explain how their character development makes them more relatable.
- What do you think of Frida? Do you justify her behavior? Do you justify the different family members' reactions to her behavior? Why or why not?
- The Hollywood Reporter writes, "the script's even-handedness...is one of [Summer 1993's] strong points: In such a situation, everyone's a victim."⁴ Do you agree with this statement regarding the characters in the film? Use specific scene(s) to explain why or why not.

⁴ Holland, J. (2017, February 11). 'Summer 1993' ('Estiu 1993'): Film review. *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved from <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/summer-1993-review-974763>

THEMES

- Explain the significance of the first scene (01:02-01:52) and connect it to the different theme(s) that emerge throughout the narrative.
- A major theme of this narrative is death and its effect on mental health. Select scene(s) that demonstrate the different stages of Frida's grief and mourning after the traumatic event(s) of losing both her parents.
- What are the different ways the director plays with the idea of death? How does Frida react to these portrayals and ideas of death? Select at least two different scenes to analyze in your response.
- The film focuses on the various generations' perspectives regarding the loss of a family member. What are the differences and similarities of these perspectives and attitudes among the different characters?
- In an interview with Director Carla Simón, she states, "Frida's grandparents represent the generation who lived through the Spanish Civil War as part of the upper class and have preserved their right-wing ideals even today. Neus, Lola, Angie, Marga, and Esteve represent the generation who rebelled against all these traditional values, including Catholicism." Find and analyze scene(s) that support this statement.
- How does the film demonstrate the passing down of behaviors and emotional patterns from one generation to another?
- Have you or someone you know experience loss? And how did you/they cope with it?
- What are the images and associations that come to mind when you hear the word family? What do you think the most important part of being a family is? Do you see your idea of family represented in this film? What message do you believe the director wanted to convey regarding the creation or transformation of a family?
- Does the last scene (1:31:46-1:35:44) give the audience a concluding message regarding the film's theme(s)? Explain why or why not?
- Considering that this film was directed by a woman and features two female protagonists (Frida and Marga), do you notice a difference between *Summer 1993* and other films of similar themes and topics that are male dominated?
- The region of Catalonia has a long history of struggling for its socio-political rights, and this fight includes the right to Catalan language and culture.⁵ Explain why a film such as *Summer 1993*, as Spain's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 90th Academy Awards, is important to the region's identity, keeping in mind the recent political events in Catalonia.



⁵ Frayer, L. (2017, September 29). For Catalonia's separatists, language is the key to identity. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/09/29/554327011/for-catalonias-separatists-language-is-the-key-to-identity>