

STUDY GUIDE



I GIRL (YO NIÑA)

a Film by NATURAL ARPAJOU

ARGENTINA / 2018 / 85 MIN
Spanish with English subtitles



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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. Research the history of preservation and living conditions in Argentina's Patagonia. Also, research about neo-hippies and their ideas about rejecting mass-consumer culture throughout XXI century and now.

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 synopsis for *I Girl*:

Based on the director's autobiographical experiences, *I Girl* tells the story of Armonía, a little girl who lives with Pablo and Julia, who seem to be her parents, in an idyllic landscape of lakes, rivers, and forests in southern Argentina. They are neo-hippies, vegetarians, promiscuous, questioners of the system, and have problems with the law. They consider that deviating from the consumer society is a form of decontamination, although that means -among many other things- no schooling and scandalous reactions to a gifted Barbie doll.

But their existence is more precarious than it seems; their cabin has no light, gas, or running water, and they are underprepared for the life they envision for themselves. Armonía is often left to her own devices in a way that seems neglectful.

After a tragic incident forces them to leave their idyllic dwelling and actually interact with the bourgeoisie, Armonía's world starts to gradually open up as she discovers concepts that notions she'd never experienced in her short life.



- From this same text, try to identify the film's main elements and sociopolitical background.
 - 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)? What stands out in the still images?
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AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

CINEMATIC ART/TECHNIQUES

- Analyze the opening shots of the film -- Armonía looking up at a tree as she speaks to her walkie-talkie. How are these shots thematically relevant for what's coming next in the film? Why are they significant? How do they foreshadow the events that follow?
- Think about the colors in the film. How do the colors in a scene reflect the emotional tone of that scene? Cite two different examples where the filmmakers use color and lighting to convey mood. How does this lighting scheme complement, to the natural and idyllic landscape they live in?



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CINEMATIC ART/TECHNIQUES *(continued)*

- How do the first ten minutes of the film introduce you to the setting of where the film takes place? Analyze the different aspects of the ***mise-en-scène***.¹
- Analyze the shots of nature in the film -- how do the filmmakers render the Patagonian landscape? Cite two specific aspects of the filmmaking that speak to you.
- Think about the moments where the film was shot using a handheld camera -- what effect does this have on you as the viewer? How does it contrast to the moments in the film where the camera is still? Cite an example where the scene is shot in handheld and one that it is not and explore how that changes your reaction to the scene. Why do you think the filmmaker decided to use both these cinematic techniques?
- How does the camera focus on the physicality of things? Think about the scenes shot in the house in Patagonia.
- Whose point of view does the film follow? How does the film portray the point of view of a child? Analyze two distinct scenes where the perspective of the child is prioritized over the perspective of the adults.
- How is the film framed in a way that shows us Armonía's internal world alongside the chaotic reality she lives in?



NARRATIVE

- Do you think Armonía likes living in Patagonia? Do you think she longs to live in a city? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Pablo was arrested? Why do you think the filmmakers partly conceal this part of the narrative? How is this concealment symbolic of Armonía's relationship with the "real world"?
- Think about Pablo's ideological speech in the opening of the film: "I think that us humans, as a race, are screwing it up. Historically, we screw it up. Why do you we have to follow someone else's precepts? Nobody asked us if we agreed. And all those ridiculous laws and rules they invented only give power to a few, and oppress and scare a lot of people. People are scared, so they follow those rules... I don't want all the shit from the city to affect us." He tells Armonía that he doesn't want her to rot alongside "rotten apples." What do you think he means by this? How is it relevant to the narrative and do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- How would you characterize the relationship between Julia and Pablo? How does it develop? In what ways have their problems as a couple affected their daughter?
- Do you think Julia and Pablo are good parents to Armonía? Why or why not? Cite specific examples in the film to support your argument and consider both sides.
- Why do you think Armonía never refers to her parents as "mom" or "dad"? Why does she call them by their first names, Julia and Pablo? How is this reflective of the way they reject modern capitalist society?



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¹ "Literally translated as "staging in action," *mise-en-scène* originated in the theater and 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." *Columbia Film Glossary*: <https://filmglossary.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/term/mise-en-scene/>

NARRATIVE *(continued)*

- ❑ What is the significance of the doll scene? Why do you think Julia is so opposed to Armonía owning a Barbie? What does the doll symbolize to this pair of neo-hippies?
- ❑ How is Armonía alienated from her peers once she moves to the city?
- ❑ Who or what do you think Armonía is trying to reach through her walkie-talkie over the course of the film? What purpose does this have on the film's narrative? What does it tell us about Armonía's character and her attitude about her living conditions in Patagonia?
- ❑ How do you interpret the film's ending? How did you feel about the final reveal?
- ❑ Did you know Pablo was not Armonía's biological father? If so, cite specific examples where the filmmakers give subtle clues that hint at this.



THEMES

- ❑ Does the alternative lifestyle that the family lives in the first half of the film appeal to you? Why or why not? Do you think it's beautiful, tragic, or both? Use examples and consider both sides of the argument. Consider how this idyllic landscape serves as background for Armonía's isolation.
- ❑ Do you think the alternative lifestyle the family lives is more pure than living in the city? Why or why not? Compare Armonía's living situation to her cousin's. How are they different? How are they similar?
- ❑ Think of the different anti-system movements of the 20th and 21st centuries. What are the similarities and differences of the hippie movement from the 60's to today? Research how different movements have tried—and many times failed—to create their own communities with little to no contact with the outside world. Imagine and describe your perfect social order.
- ❑ Do you think the film criticizes the main family at all?
- ❑ Do you know some people like Pablo and Julia? If so, How are they active creating a different life for themselves?
- ❑ What do you think the film is trying to say about innocence and childhood? Why is the film a tragedy? Explore the definition of "tragedy" and what it means to cinema.
- ❑ How is the environment and climate change relevant to the film? Do you think the characters "give back to the land," so to speak? Why or why not?

