

The Witch of the West Is Dead

By Felicity Honnef

The Witch of the West Is Dead is a film of understanding and love. Mai, a school dropout, is sent to live with her grandmother in the country. After discovering her grandmother is a witch, Mai is desperate to gain supernatural powers. She must learn that a true witch sees what she wants to see and does what she wants to do in order to achieve full and complete happiness. Mai continues to show her seemingly undying love for her grandmother throughout the film by saying, 'I love you', to which her grandmother replies, 'I know'.

The film incorporates many different and exciting characters, from the unfriendly neighbour Genji to Mai's English grandmother, the 'witch of the west', who is 'more Japanese than the Japanese are'. This stirring introduction entrances the viewer.

On hearing that her grandmother has died, Mai remembers the time she spent with her. Like so many other girls her age, Mai has trouble deciding whether to pretend to be happy as one of the pack or to be the lone wolf. She learns that the simple things are sometimes the most difficult.

With a slow and relaxing pace mirroring the seemingly unchanging Japanese forest of its setting, *The Witch of the West Is Dead* is a clever film entwining many different symbols. It epitomises the relationship between a girl and her grandmother. Mai stands as a symbol of all young girls and the lengths they go to to be part of something amazing. It shows the importance of showing others you love them and the joy you feel when that love is returned.