

The Witch of the West Is Dead

By Solomon Guy-Goddard

Young, sensitive Mai hates school and refuses to attend, much to the distress of her mother. Her mother thinks that if Mai spends some time with her grandmother in the country she will be inspired to go back to school. When Mai arrives, her grandmother reveals the skills of a witch, such as gardening and cooking. But really her grandmother is trying to teach Mai to take control over her emotions and be more responsible. Mai's training doesn't continue smoothly, however, because of her grandmother's interruptive and bizarre next-door neighbour, Kenji. Mai must overcome her emotions and take control of herself or she will not advance through life.

The beautiful Japanese countryside scenery seems so appropriate and complements the storyline immensely. Along with the great filming and gorgeous lighting, it sets the mood very well. The filming and lighting are some of the most beautiful you will ever see.

It is a beautiful and touching story. Unfortunately, the movie progresses much too slowly, with no real connection to the main plot. Many scenes reveal nothing about Mai's character or the story. The film could be edited from 115 to 45 minutes and still have the same plotline.

The Witch of the West Is Dead has morsels of great acting and beautiful filming, but its storyline generally lacks density. Mai's grandmother is played brilliantly, but Mai needed a bit more depth of character to be believable. Strong sub-characters, such as the local postman and Mai's father, improve the film experience.