



## PINOCCHIO

Italy, France 2019 / 125 min.

Fantasy, Adventure

Recommended from age 12

Director: Matteo Garrone

Main cast: Roberto Benigni (Geppetto),  
Federico Ielapi (Pinocchio)

### Summary:

Geppetto, an old woodcarver, creates a puppet. But something magical happens—the cheeky puppet begins to talk and can walk, run, and eat like any young boy. Geppetto calls him Pinocchio and brings him up as his son. But Pinocchio finds it hard to be good. Easily led astray, he tumbles from one misadventure to another, as he is tricked, kidnapped, and chased by bandits through a fantastical world full of imaginative creatures, from the belly of a giant fish to the land of toys and the field of miracles. His loyal friend, the fairy with the turquoise hair, tries to make him see that his dream—to become a real boy—can never come true until Pinocchio finally changes his ways.

The director Matteo Garrone fell in love with the story of Pinocchio when he was five years old—he even has a storyboard from that time where he imagined how he would make a Pinocchio film. He tried to do it as realistic as possible with a strong focus on the setting and creating the fantastic figures.

His Pinocchio received many awards for makeup, costumes and production design like the David di Donatello 2020 and is now also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Costume and Make up.

Interview with Matteo Garrone: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyVZTZk3kX0>

**Background:**

Pinocchio is a worldwide popular children's book, written by Carlo Collodi in 1883. It was adapted to film at least 30 times. Oscar winner Roberto Benigni already directed and starred in an older adaptation of Pinocchio in 2002. Now, he assumes the dual role of director and actor, this time taking on the part of Geppetto, one more time. Pinocchio the wooden puppet that comes to life, goes through lots of scary and peculiar adventures, until his wish, becoming a real boy, finally comes true.

The underlying message of the story is that in order to become a real boy he has to listen to the adults, his father and his teachers, which today is viewed with a critical eye, given that such concepts are classified as black pedagogy. It is presumed that Carlo Collodi wanted to criticize and satirize the educational practices that were prevalent at the time.

More on this in Janick Nolting's film review:

*" 'Pinocchio' has basically always been a very dark story, full of shady characters and physically violent body humour. After all, one of the first misfortunes on his Odyssey is getting his legs burned off. The puppet then has to crawl on the floor while his mutilated legs are still smoldering. The subliminal message of the original—He that will not hear must feel—is still very much present in the new adaptation. Collodi's novel is full of black pedagogy and, seen from today's perspective, hopelessly outdated. There is no room for personal development, considering Pinocchio can only become a real boy if he obeys the rules of all the ever-instructive and preachy adults, submitting to the Enlightenment values of society, where childlike naivety and joy have no place. It is a controversial issue in literary studies, whether Carlo Collodi persisted on archaic values, like blind obedience, or intended to satirize the urge of people to control their children."*

The sometimes very graphic images shown in the movie, on top of Pinocchio's lively personality and the naturalistic look of the film, would generally be more easily digestible in media like literature or animated films, since they allow for greater levels of abstraction. Therefore, it is advisable to provide the jury with some strategies on how to deal with the more gruesome parts of the film (preferably watch during the day, watch with people you feel comfortable with).

**Trigger:** Horror film elements, dark and threatening images, lots of danger (burnings, kidnapping, hangings, being alone in the woods, beatings in school, turning into animals, drowning, being eaten alive), fantasy figures in a realistic setting can be deranging irritations: It is unclear who we can trust. Reversal of justice (truth is punished)

**Beginning/End:** set in a real village, apart from that fantasy world

Possible questions:

*In what time does the film take place? How can you tell?*

*What impression do you get from Geppetto's village?*

*Is it a realistic world or is it a fantasy world?*

*What fantasy figures appear? (half-animal half-human characters, talking puppets, fairies)*



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#### **Main characters:**

Strikingly Geppetto's village seems to be inhabited exclusively by older working-class men. There are few female characters, apart from the snail and the blue fairy.

**Geppetto** is the endearing, quirky carpenter. devoted to his craft, diligent, has no money. He is inspired to make his own wooden puppet when he sees the beautifully crafted puppets of itinerant puppeteers. He loves Pinocchio like a son and goes to great lengths to make sure he gets a proper education. It's interesting that nobody seems to wonder that the puppet is alive—everyone in the village accepts Pinocchio as Geppetto's son.

**Pinocchio** the wooden puppet that comes to live is of course the main character. He is eager to learn and discover the world around him and his curiosity and pig-headedness often get him in trouble. He behaves like a young boy and can be mischievous at times, much to Geppetto's chagrin. Despite his antics, he has a good heart and is willing to sacrifice himself to save others. His biggest wish is to become a real boy.



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### Other characters:

**The Talking Cricket** is the voice of reason in the film. She appears on multiple occasions to give Pinocchio advice, which is not always appreciated.

**Mastro Ciliegia** is Geppetto's master. He has a scary experience with a piece of block that starts shaking in front of his eyes. He gives his former apprentice the block as a gift, since he needs it for making a wooden puppet.

The **owner of the puppet theatre** is a very large, imposing figure, wearing a black hat, a black coat and a long black beard. He kidnaps Pinocchio and almost burns him alive just to rekindle a fire. But he is capable of showing mercy if others appeal to a soft spot in his heart. He changes his mind after Pinocchio would sacrifice himself to save another puppet.

So he lets Pinocchio go to reunite with his father and also gives him gold.

**The fox and the cat** are two vagrants who run across Pinocchio on his way home. They clearly are up to no good, offering their help only to later take advantage of Pinocchio and planning on stealing his gold coins. Later they turn out they are even okay with committing murder by hanging Pinocchio just to avoid being bitten.

**The blue fairy and her snail governess**, they save Pinocchio more than once and give him several chances to prove himself worthy of becoming a real boy. When Pinocchio and the fairy meet the first time, they are the same age, but the next time she is already grown up—so time is running faster for her, she seems to be amused by Pinocchio and at the end it's her who turns him into a real boy.

The boy **Candlewick** his first real friend who is talking him into joining him to go to the land of game, where they get turned into donkeys.

Possible questions:

*Pinocchio comes across a lot of different characters on his journey—who do you remember? Can you describe them?*

*What do they stand for?*

## The world of PINOCCIO

*During his journey, Pinocchio gets to know a lot of different places.*

*Do you remember some of them?*

*What did they look like?*

*How was the light there? How the colours?*

*What did they stand for?*

### **Geppetto's Village:**

People are friendly and help each other but there is a lot of poverty and also Geppetto is struggling with money. His home is small and dusty but when Pinocchio is coming to life, the light is getting warmer and you can see how welcome Pinocchio is.

### **The Puppet Theater:**

The puppets on the stage notice Pinocchio in the audience—and recognize him as one of them—a living puppet, but without any strings. They warn him, but it's too late, the puppeteer already got him.

### **The Field of Wishes:**

The cat and the fox are trying to convince Pinocchio that there is a field where he just has to dig a hole and put his gold in it—and the gold will multiply.

### **Home of the Blue Fairy:**

An old big and beautiful house and a safe space for Pinocchio, with a lot of light, air and warmth in it. The fairy is the friendly leader of a lot of fantastic creatures like the snail lady, the cat guard, or the bird doctors. They accept her lead in every age form that she is in, even as a child.

### **School:**

The fairy sends Pinocchio to a very dark school with a bad and strict teacher who has actually fun physically punishing his students when they don't know anything, but the kids stick together and find their small ways of revenge.

### **Land of Games:**

The boys want to escape the hard school and village life and get trapped in the Land of Games, which seems at first like a fun place where they can do whatever they want, but overnight they turn into donkeys and get sold in the morning.

### **More places:**

The sea

The circus

The belly of the whale (shark)

The empty hut

The farm where Pinocchio start to work to support Geppetto

### **Makeup and special effects:**

The characters' great looks are achieved through the craftsmanship of makeup artists. They work with lots of masks and body extensions and prostheses (like the bigger noses or the wooden skin of the puppets) mixed with digital SFX methods. The characters who are andromorph half-animal half-human, like the snail or the cricket, are really amazing, created with a lot of love for details that make the illusion perfect. It took over four hours every day to get the nine-year-old Federico Ielapi, who plays Pinocchio, ready for action.

A brief making of (just pictures): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJoLI18gW20>

Possible questions:

*What did you notice about the makeup and the look of the characters?*

*How do you think those looks were created?*

### **Camera/perspectives:**

The cat and the fox are filmed from a low angle, which makes them appear bigger and more menacing. The episodes begin and end often with a long shot.

### **Colours of the setting:**

The town is a very grimy, not too colourful place. Everything, including the town people, seems to be covered in a layer of dust, which is in keeping with their lives as hard-working people. The atmosphere is a little grim and the residents do not seem to be very kind to each other.

Throughout the film, dark colours are used to represent sinister characters or dangerous situations, whereas brighter colouring usually signifies a safe place filled with people and creatures who mean well.

Possible questions:

*What is the basic mood of the world the film takes place in?*

*How is the mood created?*

*What did you notice about the setting in different situations?*

*How is the lighting and how do the colours change with regards to different situations?*

### **Music:**

The score is minimalistic in its use of instruments and underlines the ongoing scenes with classically inspired sounds. It ranges from very chipper, happy melodies that sound like birds chirping away, to very dark, gloomy strings, giving you goosebumps.

Possible questions:

*What did you notice about the sound?*

*What emotions does the sound evoke?*

## Topics you could talk about:

### A “real” human boy?

What does it mean to be human, especially in a world that is full of non-human (or not only human) creatures and characters—why does Pinocchio want to change what he is? Where does this wish come from? Does it have something to do with growing up?

### Who is saving who?

From the moment on where Pinocchio goes missing, Geppetto tries to find him. But when they finally meet again in the belly of the whale, it is Pinocchio who refuses to give up. He saves Geppetto and himself (and a tuna fish who helps to bring the two back to the beach), and it is also Pinocchio who then starts to provide for Geppetto.

### What does Pinocchio has to do to get turned into a real boy?

Possible answer:

When the fairy recognizes that Pinocchio does not think about himself anymore but is selflessly committed to his father, she turns him into a real boy.

### Who can Pinocchio trust?

The whole journey is full of moments that are about the question who can I trust? Pinocchio seems to always trust or distrust the wrong people.

On the one hand, he won't listen to the green cricket's advice who tries to warn and help him, but in a rather blunt and direct way. On the other hand, he keeps believing the lies of the fox and the cat who just try to trick him right from the beginning but speak in sweet voices, pretending to be friends.

But the cat and the fox are not the only dangerous characters he meets. He is later led to the land of game along with some other boys, where, after a day of fun and play, they find themselves changing into donkeys! The old man who rules the land of game then sells the boy donkeys. Once transformed, Pinocchio has to work in a circus. The fairy sees him but decides not to help him this time. He gets hurt and the circus director immediately wants to get rid of him. Luckily, in this moment he turns back into his old puppet self and swims away until the whale swallows him and he is reunited with Geppetto. He gets himself from one bad situation into an even worse one, until he finally starts to trust his judgement and make his own decisions.

Possible questions:

*Do you remember who wants to trick Pinocchio and who tries to help him?*

*Do you remember whom Pinocchio is helping during his journey?*

*Why is it important to trust? And how do you notice if you cannot trust someone?*

Notice: No animals were harmed during the making of the movie!