Plot
Ten-year-old Chihiro Ogino (荻野 千尋, Ogino Chihiro?) is moving with her parents to a new town when they become lost and find what appears to be an abandoned amusement park. Chihiro's father decides to explore it while a reluctant Chihiro and her mother accompany him. They soon discover a stall with food, and Chihiro's parents sample the food, but find themselves unable to stop eating. Chihiro soon realizes that she is in a magical world when she sees her parents literally turn into pigs.

Running to get help, Chihiro finds a boy, Haku, who smuggles her into a large bathhouse and tells her to find a job so she can stay there until he can help her recover her parents and escape. Haku also hints that he knew Chihiro when she was little. Haku instructs Chihiro to see Kamaji at the boiler room to ask for work. Kamaji, a six-armed, grumpy, but kind-hearted fellow, says he has no work for Chihiro and entrusts her to Lin to take her up to Yubaba. Yubaba, the cranky, elderly witch who runs the bathhouse, agrees to let Chihiro work for her, but takes all of Chihiro's name except the first
character of her first name (千), which Yubaba calls "Sen." Sen later learns that Yubaba controls her servants by taking their names.

While working, she sees a masked spirit, named "No Face", outside of the bathhouse. She leaves the door open and he enters the bathhouse. Sen’s first customer is a heavily polluted river spirit that all of the other workers avoid. When Sen successfully cleans the spirit, it rewards her with a dumpling-like object. Afterward, Sen discovers that Haku is actually a dragon, and when he is attacked in this form by shikigami in the form of paper birds, leaving him seriously wounded, she feeds him the dumpling. Haku coughs up a gold seal and an odd black slug, which Sen squishes. When Haku remains unresponsive, Kamaji tells Sen to visit Zeniba, Yubaba's identical twin sister, who owns the seal, so the curse on the seal can be lifted. Kamaji gives Sen train tickets for her to be able to travel to Zeniba’s swamp. She is accompanied by Boh, Yubaba's giant baby son, whom Zeniba had turned into a mouse.

During this time, No Face swallows a spirit in order to use his voice and makes fake gold nuggets to order food and other items from the staff. No Face becomes larger as he eats, and swallows several spirits after Sen declines his offer of gold. Later, Sen lures him out of the bath house by feeding him the remainder of the dumpling, which causes him to vomit until his stomach is empty and he is back to his normal self. No Face accompanies Sen and Boh/mouse to Zeniba’s house on the train.

Sen visits Zeniba, who she finds is very friendly and pleasant, in sharp contrast to Yubaba. Zeniba says that Sen had broken the seal’s spell by her love and caring and that the slug that Sen killed was a curse that Yubaba had placed on Haku to make him her slave. Haku, now fully recovered, comes to pick up Sen. No Face remains with Zeniba. On the way back, Haku says that if they return Boh, Yubaba’s son, to Yubaba, she will free Sen and her parents. Sen returns the favor by helping Haku remember his full name by reminiscing as a child when she fell into her hometown’s river and was saved by the current (Haku in his river dragon form). The river’s name was the Kohaku River, and Haku’s real name was Kohaku. At the remembrance of his name, Haku is completely freed of Yubaba’s spell.

At the bathhouse, Sen returns Boh to Yubaba, but the witch has one final test: Sen has to identify which of a group of pigs are her parents. Sen looks closely, then says that there must be a mistake; her parents aren't there. This breaks the spell on the pigs and forces Yubaba to give Sen the rest of her name back and let her go. Now "Chihiro" again, Haku leads her to the entrance of the spirit world, saying that her parents are on the other side but warns her not to look back (he did not explicitly state a reason for this), though they promise to see each other again. Chihiro meets her parents, and they continue on to their new home.

Themes and archetypes
The major themes of Spirited Away center on the protagonist Chihiro and her liminal journey through the realm of the bathhouse of the gods. A spoiled child forced into a fantastic world, Chihiro becomes completely separated from everything she has known and must find her way back to reality. Chihiro’s experience in the alternate world, frequently compared to Lewis Carroll’s Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, represents her passage from childhood to adulthood.[4] The archetypal entrance into another world clearly demarcates Chihiro’s status as one in-between. In her transition between child and adult, Chihiro stands outside these societal boundaries, a situation mirrored by the supernatural setting outside reality. The use of the word kamikakushi (literally "hidden by gods") within the Japanese title, and its associated folklore, reinforce this liminal passage: "Kamikakushi is a verdict of ‘social death’ in this world, and coming back to this world from Kamikakushi meant ‘social resurrection.’"[5] Upon gaining employment at the bathhouse, Yubaba’s seizure of Chihiro’s true name, a common theme in folklore, symbolically kills the child Chihiro.[4] Having lost her childhood identity, Chihiro cannot return to reality by the way she came; she can only move forward into adulthood. The following trials and obstacles Chihiro must overcome become the challenges and lessons common in rites-of-passage and the monomyth format. In her attempt to regain her self, her "continuity with her past," Chihiro must forge a new identity.[4]
Beneath the surface coming-of-age theme, Spirited Away contains critical commentary on modern Japanese society concerning generational conflicts, the struggle with dissolving traditional culture and customs within a global society, and environmental pollution.[6] Chihiro, as a representation of the liminal shōjo, "may be seen as a metaphor for the Japanese society which, over the last decade, seems to be increasingly in limbo, drifting uneasily away from the values and ideological framework of the immediate postwar era."[7] Just as Chihiro seeks her past identity, Japan, in its anxiety over the economic downturn occurring during the release of Spirited Away in 2001, sought to reconnect to past values.[4] In interview, Miyazaki has commented on this nostalgic element for an old Japan.[8] Initially, Chihiro travels past the abandoned fairground, a symbol for Japan's burst "bubble economy", and her parents' credit-card-fuelled gluttony and transformation into pigs, to reach the fantasy world replete with Japanese culture and fable in the amalgam of the bathhouse.

However, the "bathhouse of the spirits has its own ambivalence, and its own darkness.... Miyazaki is not so simple-minded as to locate a perfect vision in the past or the spiritual."[9] Many of the employees are rude and discriminating to Chihiro, and the corruption of avarice has incorporated itself into the "bricolage" of the bathhouse[7] as a place of "excess and greed" as well, as depicted in the initial appearance of the No-Face.[10] In stark contrast to the "archetypal approaches to cultural recovery such as recognition, proper identification, spiritual cleansing, and sacrifice," embodied in Chihiro's journey and transformation, the constant background presence of the ambiguity of the bathhouse reminds the audience that reality is not so simple: "the bathhouse's simultaneous incorporation of the carnivalesque and the chaotic suggests that the threats to the collectivity are not simply outside ones."[7] The environmental asides concerning the trash deforming the River God and Haku's plight over the loss of his river to apartment complexes further indicate that the sources of pollution within the bathhouse, a place of ritual purity, come from within the Japanese society.

Spirited Away (千と千尋の神隠し, Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi?, lit. "The Spiriting Away of Sen and Chihiro") is a 2001 Japanese animated fantasy-adventure film written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki and produced by Studio Ghibli. The film tells the story of Chihiro Ogino, a sullen ten-year-old girl who is in the process of moving to a new neighborhood, but ends up in a mysterious world of spirits and monsters.[1] There, Chihiro must find a way to restore her parents' true forms by working in Yubaba's bathhouse. Miyazaki wrote the script after he decided that the film would be based on ten-year old girls, who came to visit his house each summer. At the time, Miyazaki was developing two personal projects, but they were rejected. Production of Spirited Away began in 2000. During production, Miyazaki based the film's settings at a museum in Koganei, Tokyo. However, Miyazaki realized that the film would be over three hours and decided to cut out several parts of the story for its July 27, 2001 release. Pixar director John Lasseter, a fan of Miyazaki, was approached by Walt Disney Pictures to supervise an English-language translation for the film's North American release. Lasseter hired Kirk Thornton as director and Donald W. Ernst as producer of the adaptation. When it was released, Spirited Away became the most successful film of Japanese history, grossing over $274 million worldwide, and receiving critical acclaim. The film overtook Titanic (at the time the top grossing film worldwide) in the Japanese box office to become the highest-grossing film in Japanese history.[2] It won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature at the 75th Academy Awards, the Golden Bear at the 2002 Berlin International Film Festival (tied with Bloody Sunday) and is among the top ten in the BFI list of the 50 films you should see by the age of 14.