

# Japan's Studio Ghibli teaches fans how to draw its beloved character Totoro

By Public Radio Institute, adapted by Newsela staff on 05.27.20

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Image 1. A scene from the Studio Ghibli film "My Neighbor Totoro." The character Totoro is on the far left. Illustration: Amal FM/Flickr. Licensed under CC BY 2.0

Some people are trying new things as they are stuck at home because of the coronavirus. It might be a good opportunity to watch some of Japan's animated films.

Another possibility is drawing the characters in the films.

The coronavirus is a flu-like illness that has been spreading around the world. It began in late 2019. Officials have asked people to stay at home and keep a distance from each other to avoid spreading the illness. Many schools and businesses have closed.

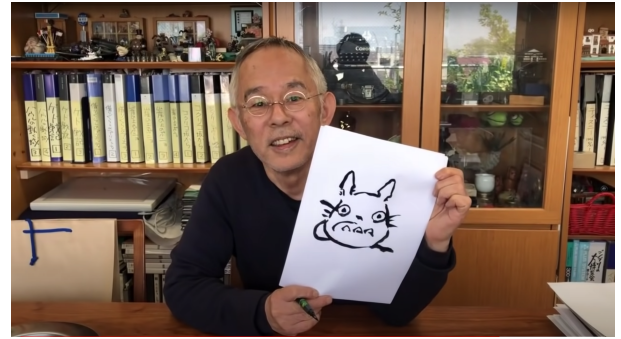
## Learning To Draw From A Video

Toshio Suzuki is a Japanese film producer. He used to be the president of Japan's Studio Ghibli. He is asking people to draw. Suzuki shared a video explaining how to draw one of the company's beloved characters, Totoro.

The character is from the 1988 film "My Neighbor Totoro." Totoro is also Studio Ghibli's mascot.

Suzuki says Totoro's eyes are important. The biggest part of drawing Totoro is getting his wide-set eyes right, he said. Suzuki gives a quick lesson in the video. He starts by drawing an outline of Totoro.

His video was intended for children in lockdown in Nagoya, Japan. Suzuki is from Nagoya. The video was shown on a city website. The site has also posted video messages from celebrities and athletes linked to Nagoya. However, Suzuki's video has reached Studio Ghibli fans far and wide.



"This is something you can do at home. Everyone, please draw pictures," he said.

"My Neighbor Totoro" centers on two sisters who move to a country house with their father. They are waiting for their mother who is sick to get well at a hospital. They find Totoro, a big, cuddly flying spirit. Totoro looks like a cross between an inflated cat, a rabbit and an owl.

### **Champion Of Japanese Animation**

Founded in 1985, Studio Ghibli became the champion of anime in Japan and the rest of the world. Anime is a kind of Japanese animation. It can be in a comic book or TV show or movie. Most of the studio's success is credited to animator Hayao Miyazaki. He helped to start the company. In the 1990s, the Walt Disney Company made a deal with Studio Ghibli to introduce the movies to new people.

Studio Ghibli has created more than 20 celebrated movies. They follow themes of nature, friendship and girl power.

Miyazaki is famous for mostly hand-drawing his animations. His work was popular and found worldwide success among anime fans and children. His film "Spirited Away," about a lost young girl, remains the highest-earning film of all time in Japan. It came out in 2001. It won an Academy Award, a high honor for a film in the United States, in 2003.

Mitaka Ghibli Museum in Tokyo, Japan, shows Miyazaki's artwork. It is closed because of the coronavirus.

However, the studio is still coming up with ways to entertain fans safely at home. It has created free movie backgrounds for people to use. The backgrounds are for Zoom, a video meeting program.

The studio also made a set of vinyl records to go with the film "Princess Mononoke." The records will come out on July 24. The movie is from 1997.

## Quiz

1 Select the sentence that BEST summarizes the article.

- (A) Toshio Suzuki, a film producer and former president of Studio Ghibli, is encouraging kids to draw at home.
- (B) People are learning to draw Totoro, a character from the famous Japanese animation studio Studio Ghibli.
- (C) Totoro, a famous character in Japanese animations, is fun and easy for kids to draw at home.
- (D) Because of the coronavirus, people have more time to draw their favorite movie characters.

2 Read the following paragraph.

*In the 1990s, the Walt Disney Company made a deal with Studio Ghibli to introduce the movies to new people.*

How does this paragraph support the main idea of the article?

- (A) It shows how Japanese animation has become popular all over the world.
- (B) It shows how Japanese animation is similar to the Disney style of American movies.
- (C) It shows how Japanese animation was most popular during the 1990s.
- (D) It shows how Japanese animation has changed over the years.

3 Read the paragraph from the section "Champion Of Japanese Animation."

*Miyazaki is famous for mostly hand-drawing his animations. His work was popular and found worldwide success among anime fans and children. His film "Spirited Away," about a lost young girl, remains the highest-earning film of all time in Japan. It came out in 2001. It won an Academy Award, a high honor for a film in the United States, in 2003.*

What does the author mean by "highest-earning"?

- (A) made the most money
- (B) won the most awards
- (C) became the most popular
- (D) was considered the best

4 Read the sentence from the section "Champion Of Japanese Animation."

*Founded in 1985, Studio Ghibli became the champion of anime in Japan and the rest of the world.*

What does "champion" refer to?

- (A) how anime has spread all over the world
- (B) how anime has become the most popular form of animation
- (C) how Studio Ghibli has won many anime competitions
- (D) how Studio Ghibli has become the most successful anime company