

Pan's the value of
imagination when
faced with



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Pan's Labyrinth is said to be one of the greatest cinematic fantasy films created. Written and directed by Guillermo Del Toro in 2006, the film excellently blends fantasy with reality.

On one hand, the film expresses several fantastical and imaginative themes. However, the film also focuses on reality reflecting on post-civil war Spain under the uniform of Franco's fascists. Guillermo Del Toro use of fantasy is crucial, as it opens a new angle in which the audience can critically analyze the weight of the evil aspects of fascism and human desire for power. The imagination is one of the most unique tools utilized to achieve a better reality in both Pan's Labyrinth and in part, the world around us.

The story is set in Post-Civil War Spain, in the year 1944. Pan's Labyrinth tells a story of a little girl named Ofelia, who moves into the countryside with her pregnant mother, Carmen, to live with her stepfather, Captain Vidal who is a high-ranking official in the Spanish Army. The aftermath of the war is still prevalent, leading Ofelia to consume herself by a far different better world. Early in the film, Ofelia comes upon a mystical creature, the faun, which leads her away from reality into the world of fantasy. The faun truly sets the story in motion by explaining to Ofelia that she is in fact a princess of a mysterious underworld that closely parallels the land of reality.

In order for her to return home and become an immortal part of this imaginative kingdom, she is required to complete three tasks. Through this process, Ofelia establishes herself as a devoted and brave character that wants nothing more than to leave her painful world behind. The theme of reality versus fantasy is represented throughout the entirety of the film. This

theme also reflects sub-themes of human desire for power, survival and ultimately a utopian world.

The film uses juxtaposition as it examines fairytale interpretations with a horrific reality to effectively create a film that expresses convincingly the value of imagination when faced with these adversaries. Guillermo Del Toro portrays these ideas and messages with fairytale allusions and motifs that traces the horror of reality right back to the essentials of our childhoods. By doing this Del Toro helps exercise the audience's imagination, allowing the merging of both worlds and causing them to remain inseparable throughout the film.

The transformation of the real creatures into fairies, and the noting of time in both create a bridge between the worlds that reflects the freedom of Ofelia's imaginative kingdom and world in comparison to the vulnerability she experiences in reality. This brings up the idea that our imagination reflects the realities we live in and presents them as metaphoric symbols reflecting not only true events but our subconscious emotions. Del Toro introduces and resolves Pan's Labyrinth in fantasy, hitting home the importance of fantasy. By utilizing the fantasy world this allows Del Toro to make a political comment on rebellion and survival through Ofelia, thus hitting the audience at the core of our own upbringing; through the convention of fairytales that have been told to us since youth. Del Toro's use of the fantasy world as well helps indicate the time period - Post-Civil War Spain in the age of Franco's regime. Del Toro again uses the theme of fantasy vs reality in order to further enhance the vivid brutality of the fascist regime. There are many symbols and repeated shots that indicate this.

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Throughout Pan's Labyrinth, Del Toro purposefully creates Ofelia's imaginative world to be a reflection of the fascist regime.

The fantasy creates a distortion of reality that symbolizes the oppressive and truly evil aspects of fascism and advises us to rebel in any way we can. Guillermo Del Toro uses characters and visuals in order to educate the audience about his specific attitudes towards fascism and on a more general scale, to humanity's desire for power and control over the circumstances we live in. The fantastical mirror image of the real world in Pan's Labyrinth is crucial to understanding the essence of the human imagination as it inspires rebellion and suggests to the viewer that the imagination is necessary to escape the horrors around us. Del Toro further uses the imagination to symbolically assure his audience of the brutality of fascism. Although not all his viewers have been exposed to fascism, we are educated through allusion and symbolism in the fantastical world to loathe the fascism Captain Vidal represents. Ofelia's fantastical world leaves so much to the audience's imagination within Pan's Labyrinth, that the exploration of it becomes a window that allows the audience to explore into the malevolent nature Del Toro makes fascism out to be. He shows it to be suppressive and almost non-human in its antagonistic representation through the character Vidal.

Pan's Labyrinth is a chilling story about the fight for freedom and the risks that must be taken in order to achieve it.