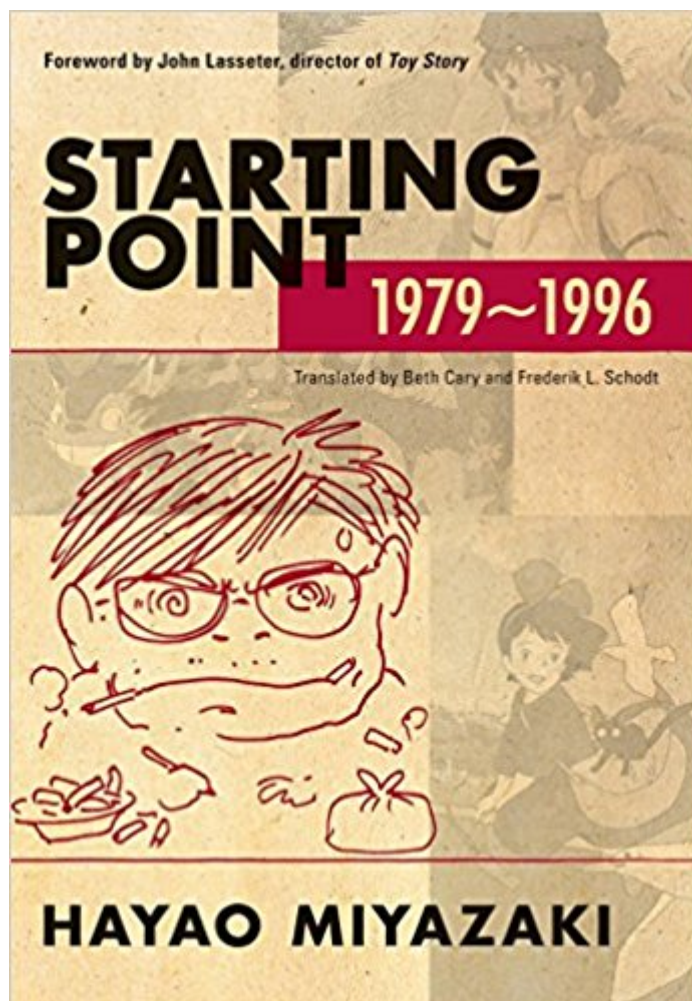


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# Starting Point, 1979-1996



## Synopsis

The first of a pair of memoirs in collection form, featuring essays, interviews, and even a brief comic on the history of airline food, from the master animator. In the first two decades of his career, filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki laid the groundwork for his legendary movies. *Starting Point* is a collection of essays, interviews, and memoirs that go back to the roots of Miyazaki's childhood, the formulation of his theories of animation, and the founding of Studio Ghibli. Before directing such acclaimed films as *Spirited Away*, Miyazaki was just another salaried animator, but with a vision of his own. Follow him as he takes his first steps on the road to success, experience his frustrations with the manga and animation industries that often suffocate creativity, and realize the importance of bringing the childhood dreams of the world to life. *Starting Point: 1979-1996* is not just a chronicle of the life of a man whose own dreams have come true, it is a tribute to the power of the moving image.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hayao Miyazaki is one of Japan's most beloved animation directors. In 2005 he was awarded the Venice International Film Festival's Golden Lion Award for Lifetime Achievement, and his Studio Ghibli received the festival's Osella Award for overall achievement in 2004. Miyazaki's films include *Spirited Away*, winner of the 2002 Academy Award<sup>®</sup> for Best Animated Feature Film, as well as *Castle in the Sky*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, and *Ponyo*, all of which have received great acclaim in the U.S. Miyazaki's other achievements include the highly regarded manga series *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* and

Starting Point: 1979-1996, a collection of essays, interviews, and memoirs that chronicle his early career and the development of his theories of animation. Both are published in English by VIZ Media.

I bought Starting Point at the beginning of this year as material for a research paper I was writing on three of Hayao Miyazaki's films. Since then, I have read the entire thing and reread multiple portions of this extraordinary book. It became an invaluable resource for me as I wrote my paper, but it was also a very enjoyable and personal book. Over the course of the weeks it took me to finish it, I felt like I actually got to know Hayao Miyazaki. As I told several people, Starting Point is definitely the best book I have purchased in a very long time, and so far it is the best thing I have read this year. With all the wonderful essays, interviews, directorial memos, and even drawings it contains, I'm surprised there hasn't been more hype about it. It is an absolute must-read for any Miyazaki fan. I can't believe we had to wait more than fifteen years for this book to be translated and published in the United States (it was first published in Japan in 1996). The book, which is nearly 500 pages long, has been divided into several parts and includes a foreword by John Lasseter (director of Toy Story) and an afterword by Isao Takahata (director of Grave of the Fireflies). The first part, entitled "On Creating Animation" is perhaps the most technical part of the book. Even though many of Miyazaki's thoughts on animation and film techniques were a bit over my head, I still enjoyed reading those chapters and thinking about them. Miyazaki's writing style is simple enough that I didn't feel swept away by too much jargon or overly-technical terms. For filmmakers and those interested in how animation works, this part of the book will be fascinating. The second part, called "On The Periphery of the Work" was similar to the previous section in that it contained chapters about animation techniques. However, Miyazaki mainly writes about his thoughts on various animated films. He also includes some very short essays like "The Tokyo I Love" that almost feel like journal entries. Part three, "People", is full of essays about individuals who have helped, inspired, and even irritated Miyazaki. Two of my favorites are "I Left Raising Our Children To My Wife" and "My Old Man's Back." These are both very vulnerable essays about some of the people closest to Miyazaki, and reading them almost brought tears to my eyes. "A Story in Color" and part of "My Favorite Things" give the reader a short break from the text with a comic and some illustrations. "Dining in Midair" is a charming and sometimes amusing comic about the history of in-flight dining. Scrapbooks No. 1 - 3 in the beginning of "My Favorite Things" display some pictures of flying machines, tanks, and cars, and also a very short illustrated story called "I Want A Garden Like This." Then we are back to more essays for the remaining part of "Favorite Things." My favorite essay in this section is "My Random

Thoughts Notebook Is My Hobby." This one made me laugh because I expected it to be an essay about Miyazaki's random thoughts notebook. However, it was simply a piece full of disjointed thoughts, memories, and observations. "Planning Notes; Directorial Memoranda" was a nice inclusion and the directorial memos were fun to read. For those who want more details about some of their favorite Miyazaki films like Castle in the Sky, My Neighbor Totoro, Kiki's Delivery Service, Porco Rosso, and Princess Mononoke, this section is for them. Although the memos are fairly short, I found them fascinating and enjoyable. However, for those who really want depth and insight into their favorite films, "Works" is the part to flip to. This section has a lot of information on Miyazaki's earlier works, like Lupin III, Future Boy Conan, and Panda! Go Panda! I had not heard of any of these before reading the book, but reading the chapter on Lupin was what convinced me to watch the film Lupin III: Castle of Cagliostro, which was excellent. "Works" also has quite a few extensive chapters on Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind, My Neighbor Totoro, and Castle in the Sky. Miyazaki focuses on Nausicaä especially in several chapters, one of my favorites being an interview titled "Nature Is Both Generous and Ferocious." All in all, this book was excellent and I am very pleased to have it in my library. I have heard rumors that Viz Media might be publishing Miyazaki's later book Turning Point: 1997 - 2008 soon, and I hope that is the case. Much as I enjoyed this book, I would love to read more about Miyazaki's later works like Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away, and Ponyo. In the meantime, I plan to read this book over and over again, and I encourage anyone interested in Miyazaki's works (or even just interested in film and animation) to pick up a copy.

I won't go into detail, as most of the other reviews here are pretty accurate. I have to say, this is one of the most valuable books I have ever purchased. If you aspire to be an animator or a filmmaker or a storyteller of any kind, you should definitely buy this book. It's so unbelievably amazing. I can't wait to finish it and get the 2nd book. Love it! The only thing that saddens me is I thought the book would be filled with sketches and animations. But it isn't. It's mainly essays from animators. Which is great because the animators go into such detail about animation styles, how Miyazaki inspired them, how he inspired Disney, what makes a good animator, struggles, etc...it's so so so detailed. It's truly a treasure.

I attend more than a few director Q & A's at various film festival or Pacific Film Archive screenings. Inevitably someone asks the why, how, what-is-your theme, what-did-you-mean-by, what-do-you-want-us-think-when, why-did-this-character-do-that kind of question that directors and

authors often decline to answer. Especially with respect to Totoro, both the film and manga versions of Nausicaa, Castle in the Sky, and Kiki, Miyazaki has addressed many such questions, sometimes in painstaking detail, in the decades of interviews and articles collected here. Though with room for error, readers can piece together Miyazaki's creative process and begin to understand how and why the characters he creates differ from those of any other animator. Offhand, I can think of only two works of similar scope and value: Bresson's *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Folio) (French Edition) (Folio: 1995) and Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film* (Dover: 1972).

Hayao Miyazaki is considered one of the best directors of animation history. That easily is the best reason of why to buy this book. Covering the surprisingly amount of 500 pages, *Starting Point* (in a beautiful edition by Viz Media) includes not only all the essays and commentaries written by Miyazaki between 1979 and 1996, but also integrates a lot of sketches, cartoons and rare drawings of the famous director. Not only that, but the biggest catch of the book is discovering that Miyazaki, as what it is (a genius), it's also a complex individual and a likeable writer. His opinions included in this book, cover a wide variety of topics: the history of Japan, animation principles, evolution of the anime industry, his personal life, opinions of society, ecology, war and even life. *Starting Point* is a provoking and complex read. The opinions of Miyazaki may come as overly extreme or controversial, but in his broad vision of the world is clear that he makes his animated movies with passion and care for the children (which are his intended audience). Viz Media deserves a price for this hardcover edition, the design and quality is top-notch and includes a brief, but insightful introduction by John Lasseter and an Afterword, by the also amazing director, Isao Takahata -from *Grave of the Fireflies* fame-. A recommended read by fans of anime, animation or Studio Ghibli and a must-buy by animation students.

I read this book for an auteur paper I was writing for film class. Reading Mr. Miyazaki's essays on life and animation has been so inspiring. I thoroughly recommend it for anyone embarking on a creative life.

Great gift for people who are interested in anime. If you like Hayao Miyazaki films. He is an amazing man. Each cel of these movies takes a few different people. Thousands or even millions of hand drawn, hand painted pictures go into every movie. Lots of people put in years of work to perfect this process. His movies are all mind blowing, colorful, unique, works of art.

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