

A love letter to 'The Wizard of Oz'

by Maria Ilona Moore

There were a lot of films that I watched as a kid and remember loving. Most of them were musicals and fantasies, or at least contained fantastical elements, just like you. But you are the film that stands out most vividly for me, as the first favourite.



I think I must have been maybe six or seven when I was first introduced to your magic. I have this hazy memory – the kind of memory that you're not sure is real or a figment – of watching you in the house we lived in until I was eight. I'm sitting crossed-legged on the floor, light is trickling in through the gaps in the blinds, and I'm absorbing every step of the adventure.



The adventure was appealing me to as a child because it was bright colours and catchy songs and fun characters. And because, despite featuring the kind of mild peril that seems really terrifying as an infant, it was comforting. It was about friendship and belonging and being a bit different. And also there was a horse of a different colour and the ruby slippers, what more could a girl want.

I related to Dorothy, the way I related to any dark-haired, bookish, sometimes annoying girl I saw on screen or read about in books (Belle, Hermione, Rory – I'm looking at you). I understood why she'd miss the Scarecrow most of all (low blow, but who wouldn't) and I liked that she was meek and timid but also curious and brave. It inspired me – a meek and timid girl – to think that I could be part of a big adventure. And, you know, make some friends while defeating a wicked witch.



As a kid, 'Over the Rainbow' was just the slow, boring bit, something to fast forward on the way to the exciting parts. But as a teenager stuck in a small town, Dorothy's desire for that place high above the chimney tops became more meaningful. Then, in my twenties, the film's significance changed again when I realised that there really is no place like home, but that 'home' doesn't have to be the place where you grew up. When I realised that home was something I could build for myself. That it's the people who keep me grounded when everything else is sweeping around me like a tornado. And that, quite often, it's the films like you that act as a comfort blanket no matter where I am in the world.



When asked about my favourite films, you are always one of the first to come to mind. I've watched you, quoted you, sung along to you countless times, and you'll always be the film I come back to when I need that specific combination of sparkle and comfort, and when I need to feel at home.

Maria x