

SYSTEMS THINKING RESOURCES · GRADE 1

The Wild Robot

2024 · Directed by Chris Sanders · 102 minutes · Rated PG

CONCEPT

Environment

BEST FOR

Ages 6 – 7

RUNTIME

102 min · PG

WHERE TO WATCH

Netflix

BEFORE YOU PRESS PLAY

Content heads-up

An easy, comfortable length for a 6 or 7 year old to watch in one sitting. Here's what to know first.

Animal peril

This is a film about a wild ecosystem, and the food chain is part of the story. Fink the fox first tries to eat the goose egg Roz ends up protecting, and other animals mention hunting in passing. None of it is graphic, but predator and prey are present rather than softened away.

A harsh winter

Partway through, the island's animals — including Roz's new family — face a genuinely dangerous winter storm with real scarcity and real risk. It's tense for a young viewer, and it resolves through the animals choosing to work together.

A tender goodbye

Brightbill, the gosling Roz raises, eventually migrates away with the other geese. It's handled warmly and isn't tragic, but it is a real separation — sensitive children may feel it.

A chase near the end

Other robots arrive late in the film to reclaim Roz, leading to a brief action sequence. No serious harm is shown, but it's a faster, more intense stretch than the rest of the film.

THE LESSON BEHIND THE FILM

Why this film for Environment

Your child's Systems Thinking lesson on Environment taught them that the environment of any system is everything that surrounds it and shapes how it behaves — and that a system responds to its environment continuously, whether it means to or not.

The Wild Robot puts this idea at the centre of its story. Roz doesn't arrive on the island knowing how to survive there — she arrives as a machine built for a completely different environment, with no relationships, no understanding of the island's rules, and no idea how to communicate with anything living on it. Everything Roz becomes — someone who can speak to animals, find food and shelter, and become a mother — she becomes by learning her environment from scratch.

A new environment doesn't bend to fit you — you learn to move within it, and it shapes who you become in the process.

The film also shows environment shaping relationships, not just individuals. Many of the island's animals are wary of each other — some are predator and prey — but when winter turns harsh, that same environment pushes former rivals into genuine cooperation. The environment doesn't shape one creature at a time. It shapes the whole web of relationships inside it.

DURING THE FILM

Six moments: what the environment is doing

Each moment is mapped to what happens, the environment concept at work, and a question to open up with your child.

THE MOMENT	WHAT HAPPENS	THE CONCEPT	ASK YOUR CHILD
Roz wakes up on the island	Roz crash-lands on a wild, unfamiliar island with no other robots and no instructions for this place. Everything about the environment is new to her.	A new environment doesn't adjust to you — you have to learn how it works.	Have you ever been somewhere brand new where you didn't know how things worked? What did you do first?
Roz learns to "speak animal"	By watching and listening carefully, Roz slowly learns to understand and speak the language of the island's animals.	Understanding your environment means learning to understand the living things inside it.	When you meet someone new, how do you figure out what they need or how they "talk"?
Roz becomes Brightbill's mother	After an accident destroys a goose nest, Roz cares for the one surviving egg — and becomes the adoptive mother of the gosling, Brightbill.	Environments are full of relationships we didn't plan. Sometimes we end up caring for something we never expected to.	Has something unexpected ever turned into something you ended up caring about a lot?
The island survives winter together	When a brutal storm hits, animals who usually avoid or compete with each other — including Roz — huddle together for warmth and safety.	When an environment gets harsh, the systems inside it often need to cooperate to survive.	Can you think of a time when people who don't usually get along had to work together because things got hard?
Brightbill has to migrate	Roz teaches Brightbill to fly, and when the time comes he must leave with the other geese — even though it means leaving Roz behind.	Caring for something sometimes means helping it leave, not keeping it close forever.	Has there ever been something you had to let go of because it was right for it, even though it was hard for you?
The island protects Roz	When other robots arrive to take Roz away, the animals of the island — her found family — come together to defend her.	When you truly become part of an environment, the living things inside it will act to protect you too.	Who are the people — or even pets — in your life who would stand up for you if you needed help?

NO PAUSING NEEDED

What to watch for

You don't need to stop the film and explain the lesson — The Wild Robot does its own work. These notes are so you know what to look for, and can return to these moments afterwards.

Roz observing before acting. Again and again, Roz watches and listens before she tries anything new — exactly the patient noticing the Environment lesson asks a child to practise.

The winter storm bringing everyone together. The clearest moment where a harsh environment pushes natural rivals into real cooperation. Worth pointing out gently: *"Look how the environment is changing how they treat each other."*

Brightbill's first flight. A personal triumph and a quiet lesson in letting go — worth sitting with rather than rushing past.

Family discussion questions

Designed for 6–7 year olds. You don't need to ask them all — pick the ones that fit the conversation that's already happening. Read the question aloud, listen, then use the follow-up if the moment is right.

1 How do you think the animals felt when they first saw Roz?

BUILDS: PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

The animals are frightened at first — she's big, metal and completely unlike anything they've seen. That fear makes sense: something brand new in your environment is scary before you understand it. Roz becomes less scary not because she changed, but because their understanding of her did.

"If a giant robot showed up in your backyard, what would you do first — run away, watch from a distance, or try to say hello?"

2 What would have happened to Brightbill if Roz hadn't found the egg?

BUILDS: SYSTEMS THINKING — CAUSE AND EFFECT

Without Roz, the last surviving egg from that nest wouldn't have had anyone to keep it warm and safe. One small accident — and one choice Roz makes afterwards — changes the whole story that follows for both of them.

"Can you think of one small thing that happened in the movie that changed everything after it?"

3 How do you think Roz learned to understand the animals?

BUILDS: CURIOSITY AND INQUIRY

Roz doesn't speak animal language right away — she watches, listens and pays close attention first. That's true of learning almost anything new: watching carefully comes before understanding.

"What's something you learned to understand just by watching and paying attention, without anyone explaining it first?"

4 How do you think Roz felt when Brightbill had to fly away?

BUILDS: EMPATHY AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Roz is proud of Brightbill and sad to see him go, both at once — and that's a completely normal thing to feel. Loving someone sometimes means wanting them to go and do something important, even though you'll miss them.

"Have you ever felt happy and sad about the same thing at the same time? What was that like?"

5 If you were stuck somewhere brand new like Roz, what's the first thing you would try to do?

BUILDS: COURAGE AND AGENCY

Roz doesn't panic — she starts by learning the rules of her new environment before trying to change anything. That's a genuinely useful approach to any new or scary situation: understand first, act second.

"What's one thing you could do to feel a little braver the next time you're somewhere new?"

6 Why do you think the animals protected Roz at the end, even though she's not one of them?

BUILDS: COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

By the end, Roz isn't an outsider anymore — she's part of the island's community, even though she's a robot and they're animals. Belonging isn't about looking the same as everyone else. It's about how you treat a place, and how it treats you back.

"What do you think it really means to belong somewhere?"

BONUS ACTIVITY · 10 MINUTES

Notice your own island

- 1 **Pick one place you spend a lot of time** — your bedroom, the backyard, the car. Like Roz on the island, notice something about it you've never really paid attention to before: a sound, a smell, a texture, a routine.
- 2 **Ask your child who else shares that environment with them.** Family members, pets, even plants. What does your child do to help take care of that shared space, the way Roz learns to take care of her island?

FOR THE GROWN-UPS

Parents' note

Why this film for Systems Thinking at Grade 1. Environment is the entry point for all Systems Thinking, and this film makes the concept concrete without needing any explanation: a character who knows nothing about her surroundings has to learn everything, and the environment visibly shapes who she becomes. It's a gentle, grounded illustration of the same idea later Environment lessons return to again and again.

The predator-and-prey content. The food chain is present throughout — Fink's early relationship with the geese is genuinely adversarial before it becomes something else — and that's worth treating honestly rather than skipping past. Real ecosystems work this way, and the film uses it to earn its later moments of cooperation rather than pretending nature has no conflict in it.

The winter and the goodbye. Both the winter survival sequence and Brightbill's migration carry real emotional weight for this age group. Neither needs softening — *"that was a hard goodbye, and it's okay to feel sad about it"* is exactly the right thing to say if your child needs to hear it.

This is one of 240+ QMAK film guides.

Every guide follows this format — a film chosen for what it teaches, no prep, about fifteen minutes of conversation, closed with an Active Notes page (overleaf). The complete Grade 3 curriculum is free to try.

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Active Notes

AFTER THE WILD ROBOT

Print this page. Left column: what caught your attention. Right column: what you'll actually do about it. Grown-ups can write for younger children — the ideas are theirs.

Name _____

Date _____

IDEAS

What did you notice? What surprised you? What do you wonder about?

ACTION POINTS

What's one thing you could do because of this film?



Circle your top 3 ideas

1

Pick one action



Give it a date



Someone initials it

I will do it by:

Initialed by:

One week later — did you do it?

☐ Yes ☐ Not yet

Stuck for an idea? "Roz watched before she tried things." · "In the storm, animals who usually fight helped each other." · **Action ideas:** "Watch first next time I'm somewhere new." · "Help look after one shared space at home, like Roz looked after the island."