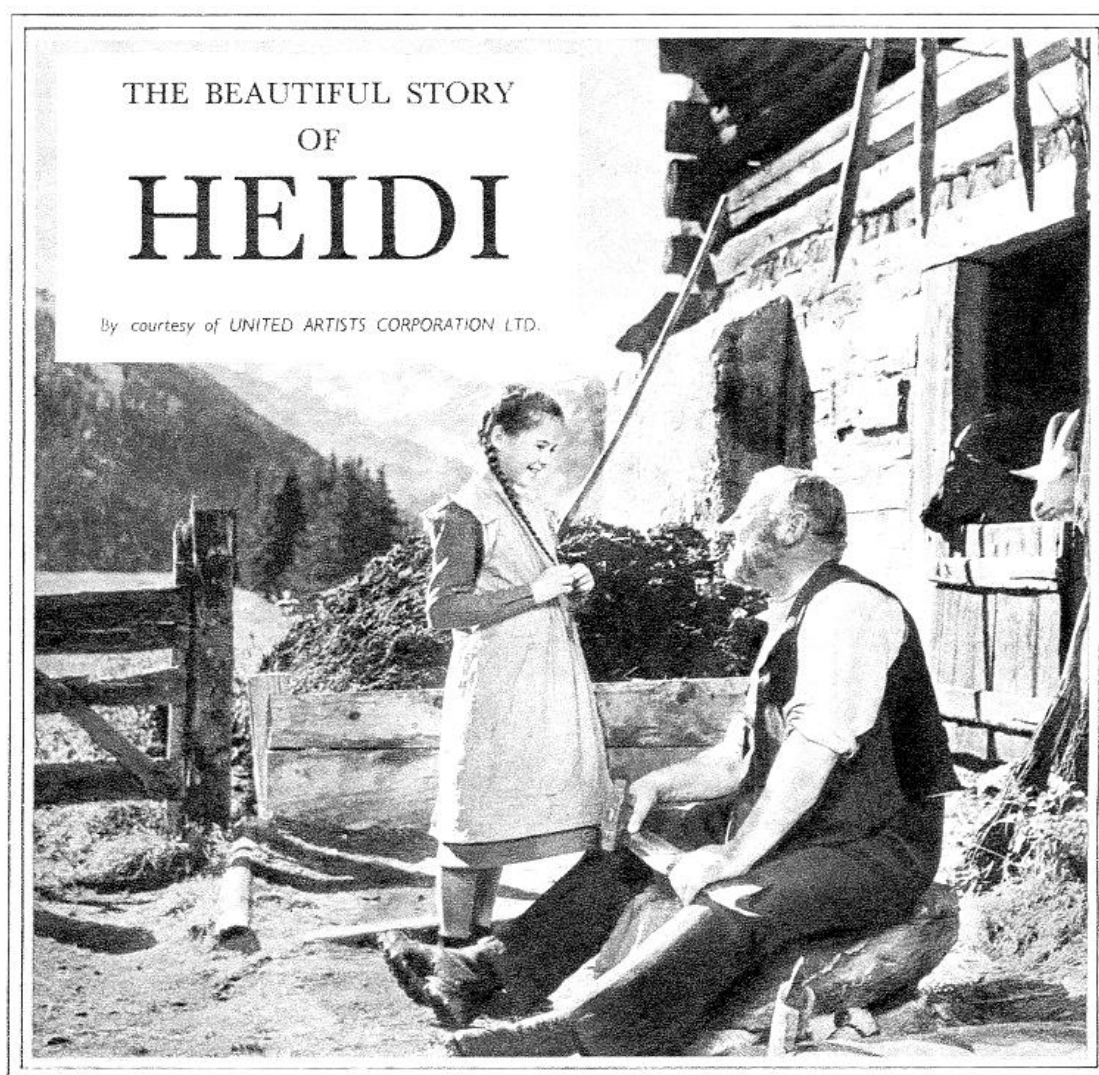


Heidi

Switzerland / W Germany : 1952 : dir. Luigi Comencini : Praesens/United Artists : 98 min
 prod: Lazar Wechsler : scr: Richard Schweizer & Wilhelm M Treichlinger : dir.ph.: Emil Berna
Elsbeth Sigmund; Thomas Klameth; Isa Günther
 Heinrich Gretler; Else Attenhofer; Margrit Rainer; Fred Tanner; Willy Birgel; Anita Mey;
 Karl Wery; Theo Lingen

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	¢	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2624b	5	6	7	1,327	-	-	-	-	-	No	Unseen



Johanna Spyri's working title – "The Little Ray of Sunshine and the Old Grump" – was not a hit with her publishers. She wanted to call her heroine Irmgard, or so I believe.

Source for all stills and captions (unless otherwise indicated): The Boys' and Girls' Cinema Clubs Annual



"Heidi and Peter discover the source of the little stream that flows by their mountain home"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"The Finest of all **"HEIDI"** films from the book by Johanna Spyri, with honest sentiment, lovely photography by Emil Berna and perfect direction. A textbook example of a good children's film. If more films of this sort were made for the youngest of the young then cinemas would still be full. *** "

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"Faithful, flavourful retelling of Johanna Spyri's children's classic, filmed in the story's actual locales. Sigmund is well cast in the title role. Followed by **"HEIDI AND PETER"**. *** "

Movies on TV (1987) review:

"The children's classic of the little girl whose grandfather ends his feud with the village so she can receive an education. Well made, especially for children. English dubbed. *** "

The United Artists Story note:

"Film of the Swiss children's classic. Elsbeth Sigmund, Heinrich Gretler, Thomas Klameth. Dir: Luigi Comencini (Switzerland 1952). Praesens."

Note on reverse of front-of-house glossy still:

"Lazar Wechsler presents **"HEIDI"**, based on the book by Johanna Spyri, with Elsbeth Sigmund as Heidi. Produced by Lazar Wechsler. Directed by Luigi Comencini. A United Artists release. Screenplay by Richard Schweizer & Wilhelm M Treichlinger."

THE CAST

Heidi.....Elsbeth Sigmund
 PastorFred Tanner
 GrandfatherHeinrich Gretler
 KlaraIsa Günther
 PeterThomas Klameth
 Mr. SesemannWilly Birgel
 Aunt DeteElsie Attenhofer
 Miss RottenmeyerAnita Mey
 Brigitte, Peter's MotherMargrit Rainer
 Doctor ClassenKarl Wery
 SebastianTheo Lingen

The Boys' and Girls' Cinema Clubs Annual (c1952) synopsis:

"High up in a cabin amid the snow-capped Alps, Heidi (Elsbeth Sigmund), a little orphan, lives with her grandfather (Heinrich Gretler). She is a sweet, joyous little girl, who spends her days happily tending the goats with Peter (Thomas Klameth), a boy of about her own age.

One day Heidi is taken to the city of Frankfurt by her aunt Dete (Elsie Attenhofer), who is cook in the house of a wealthy man named Mr. Sesemann (Willy Birgel). There she becomes the

companion of Klara (Isa Gunther), the
cripple daughter of Mr. Sesemann.

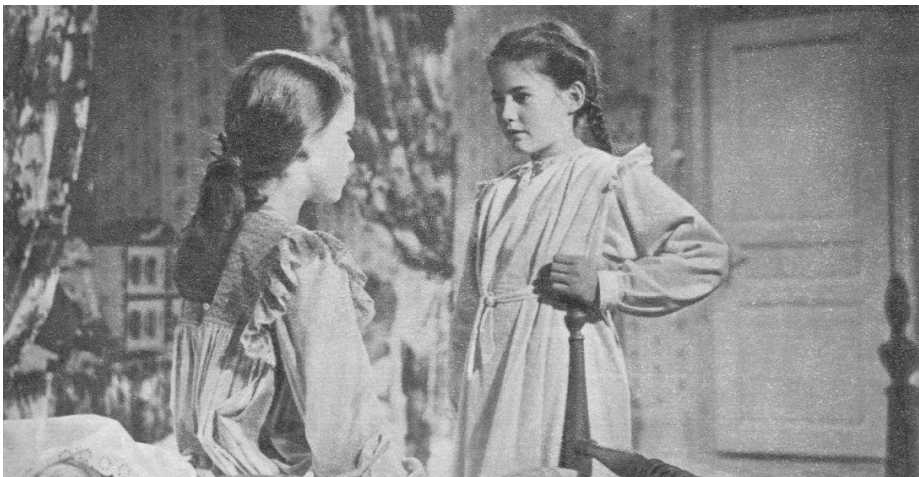
Unused to fine houses, busy streets,



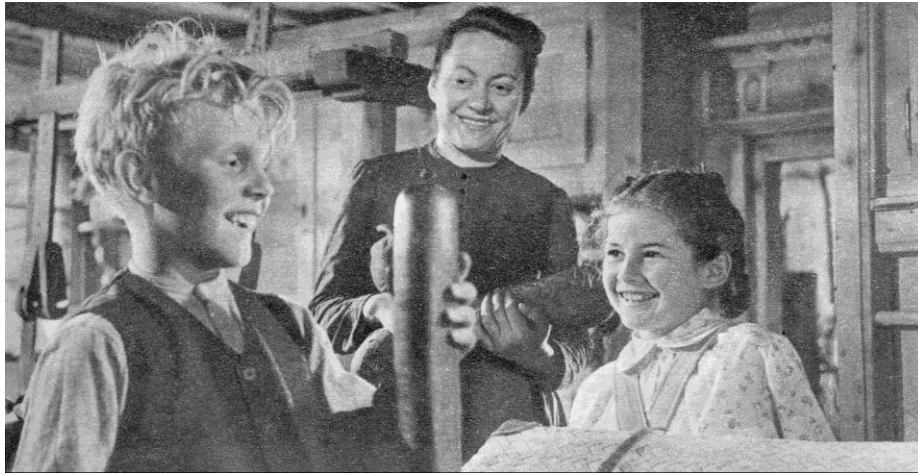
*"At the great house
in Frankfort, Sebas-
tian helps Heidi
capture her pet
kittens, which the
strict governess will
not allow in the
house."*



*"Miss Rottenmeyer
scolds Heidi for
'behaving like a little
savage' when the
child leaves the
table with her
breakfast in her
hand."*



*"Patiently encour-
aged by Heidi, Klara
takes her first
faltering steps alone
across a room."*



*"What a whopper!" declares Peter. "I knew you'd like it.." Heidi grins knowingly. (A shepherd boy and his sausage are not easily separated, by all accounts.) That's my own caption by the way, not one from the **Boys' and Girls' Cinema Clubs Annual**. Could you tell, readers?*

glowing shops, and rich food and dress, Heidi is at first lost in wonder at all she sees, but she gradually becomes homesick for her beloved grandfather and the sunlit mountains and yearns to return to them. She cannot see the Alps from Frankfort, so she climbs to the very top of a church tower to try and get a glimpse of them, while the household searches frantically for her, not knowing where she has gone. Her climb has an amusing sequel later on, when the sexton of the church brings her a basket of tiny kittens, to Miss Rottenmeyer's horror.

Miss Rottenmeyer (Anita Mey), is Klara's governess. She looks upon Heidi as a young savage, and is horrified to learn that the little girl can neither read nor write. So Heidi's education begins. In Sebastian (Theo Lingen), the manservant, she finds a kind friend who helps her in her new and strange world. She learns to read and write. Far away, her grandfather and Peter grieve for her and long for her sunny presence again.

Little by little, Heidi's loving heart, gentleness and joyous spirit, and her simple faith in all that is good and true, win over the strict and snobbish governess and begin the cure of Klara, who under her little friend's patient encouragement takes her first faltering footsteps alone across a room. Mr. Sesemann, returning from a trip abroad, is overcome with joy when Klara walks slowly to meet him. He is ready to give Heidi every luxury and privilege that money can buy, but the little girl's deep

secret longing to return to her grandfather and her alpine home at last lays her low, and very sorrowfully the family admit that they cannot keep her with them.

So, amid tears and loving farewells, Heidi leaves for home, and never is there such delight and excitement as when she flings her arms round her grandfather's neck and shows the humble mountain folk who know and love her that she has come back to them. Nor has she forgotten any little thing about them, as she proves by her presents of a huge sausage for Peter and a loaf of white bread for his mother.

So thankful is her grandfather for her return that he casts off his hatred of his neighbours and goes with Heidi to the church in the village. And when summer comes round again Klara, whole and well, will visit her dear friend and stay with her in the cabin on the mountain."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "The International Encyclopedia of Film", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]



Source: original front of house still. Although the principals all look quite different in this shot, it's not a still from a different **"HEIDI"**

No further information currently available. Only the second film version I've encountered to date, following the 1937 Shirley Temple one, although there have been six remakes since. Italian director Luigi Comencini has done several notable films and TV productions with or for children. Holmstrom only mentions Thomas Klameth in passing in *"The Moving Picture Boy"*, but in the absence of a companion volume for *the ones in frocks* I have no details at all about Elsbeth Sigmund. They both reprised their roles two years later for the Swiss-made sequel.

Strict governesses, wicked stepmothers or cruel aunts were a stock feature of girls' fiction, but there have been conspicuous attempts of late to airbrush these archetypal child-hostile matrons from the scene, or else to offlay their spitefulness in various ways, such as Cruella DeVille being played for comedy in the recent live-action **"101 DALMATIANS"**. Negative women role models are "off-message".

The core story of **"HEIDI"** is itself the simplest of children's fiction archetypes, with strong echoes in **"THE SECRET GARDEN"**, **"LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE"** and **"LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY"**, to name but three. One might argue that Shirley Temple's entire opus was a series of minor variations on this archetype – the paragon child transplanted into alien surroundings and spreading sweetness and light wherever she goes (Fauntleroy himself was scarcely recognisable as a boy character, and is perhaps fairly defined as an "honorary girl".) Dickens' boy paragons, by contrast, were never the central character in their own tales, but simple vessels through which we encounter his more interesting characters. Heidi at least is the focus of her own story.

See the 1954 **"HEIDI UND PETER"** (by a different director), **HEIDI - GENERAL NOTE** for a list of other adaptations, and subject index under **BOY MEETS GIRL, DIRECTORS, GRANDPARENTS, HOSPITALS / SICK CHILDREN, NANNIES / GOVERNESSES / DOMESTIC SERVANTS** and **ORPHANS / ADOPTION**.