

2B-03 |Animinutes

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WRITTEN REPORT

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Introduction

Rationale and Objectives

Anime, a shortened form for Japanese animation, is a storytelling medium from Japan that has grown in global popularity at a stunning rate since the 2000s.

Today, the market around anime has grown significantly, to the point that big American companies like Netflix have started getting into the market. For example Netflix, a prominent streaming service, has over 200 anime titles on its platform, in addition to Netflix exclusive originals, while Crunchyroll, a anime specific streaming website, has over 100 million registered users worldwide. These are testament to the widespread, global popularity of anime.

As such, we decided that we would like to analyse popular anime and figure out what were the unique aspects of anime that allowed for this remarkable global rise. Our project name, "Animinutes" is a portmanteau of the words "Anime" and "Minutes", referencing a popular style of youtube video, "Anime in Minutes", where an anime series is summarised humorously in a single 10 minute long video.

Our project intends to produce a similar style of video for our final product, but with added literary aspects.

To this end, we would like to focus on three main questions throughout the course of this project. Our first two research questions

1. What are the defining aspects of an enjoyable anime?
2. What is the literary value of anime and its content?

Aim to delve into the unique literary and cultural aspects of anime, and find out how these enhance its literary value, and increase its impact on the audience.

Our third research question

3. How can we make use of anime's uniqueness to garner more attention for our final product?

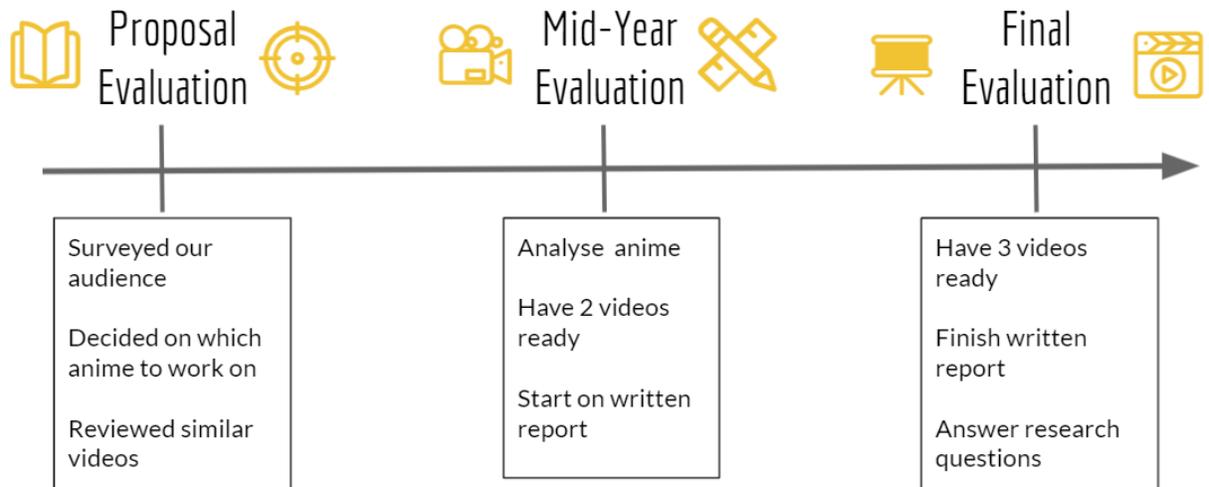
Is mainly directed towards our final product, and how we can use the knowledge from our first two questions to enhance it.

In short, these are our research questions that we seek to answer over the course of our project

- 1. What are the defining aspects of an enjoyable anime?**
- 2. What is the literary value of anime and its content?**
- 3. How can we make use of anime's uniqueness to garner more attention for our final product?**

Proposed Project Timeline

Timeline



Research/Literature Review

Literature Review

For our literature review, we did a review of animes from different genres, as well as the angles from which we can analyse them.

The first genre we analysed was Shounen anime.

Shounen anime are generally geared toward male audiences, often featuring a male protagonist with a unique power, and typically have a lot of action. For shounen anime, we would like to look at how the unique powers the main character has and the situations he is in shape his character development. We will also take a look at the world building of an anime, and how conflict is developed.

Examples of prominent shounen anime are Attack on Titan and Re:Zero. Both centre around a main character in a well developed, historied world rife with conflict, with the main character having special powers that he has to come to grips with, and how their experiences (usually traumatic) shape their outlook on life/world view/personality/world view.

The other genre we analysed was Slice of Life, which typically portrays a sequence of events that could happen in a normal person's life. For this genre, we plan to take a look past the humour and stereotypical romance that is usually associated with it, and delve into the underlying themes present.

These would include how characters deal with loss and death, how deep inter-character relationships are developed, and how these often amplify the effect of the aforementioned losses. We will also be looking at why Slice of Life animes are popular, even with seemingly cliché plots as compared to other genres.

Prominent examples include Your Lie in April and Horimiya. As compared to shounen anime, they have more down-to-earth plots, and depict the main characters as normal people with no superpowers. Their main focus is on the development of inter-character relationships and how the main characters respond, particularly emotionally, to events (usually unfortunate) in their lives.

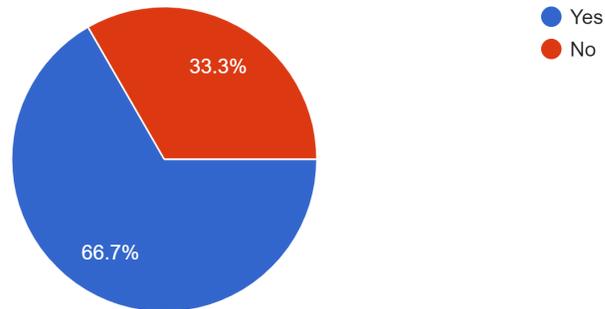
Public Survey

Survey Results(Raw Data)

[Survey Form/Survey Results](#)

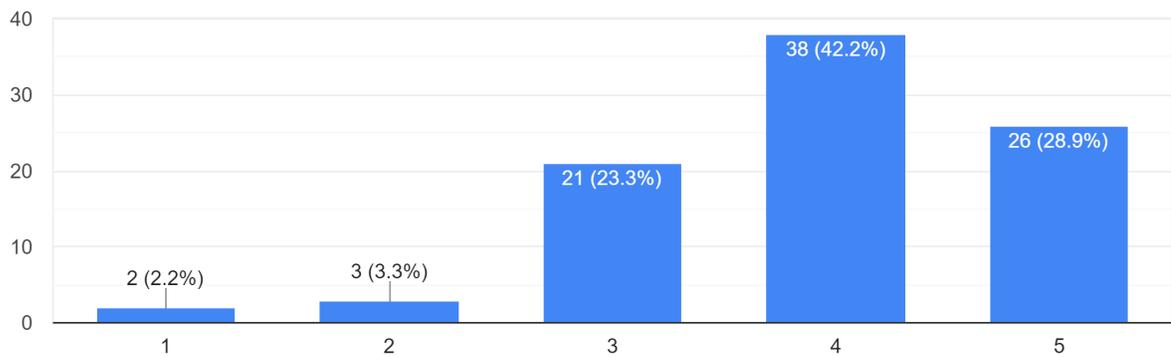
Do you watch anime purely for entertainment?

90 responses



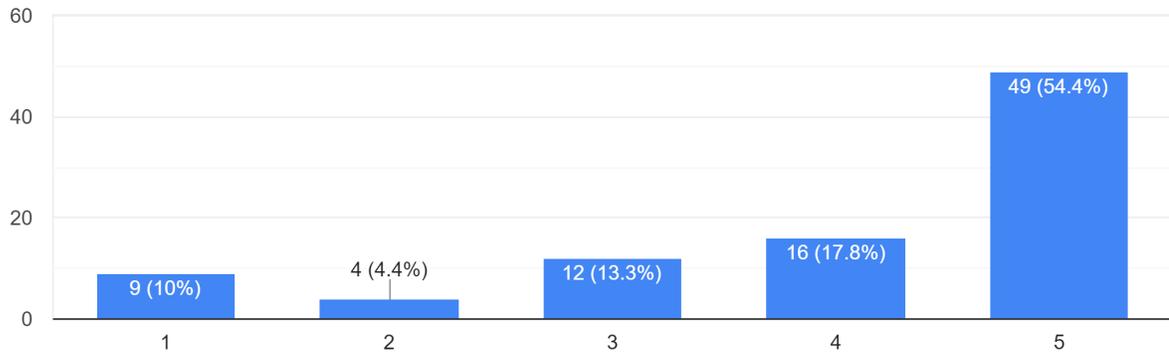
How familiar are you with the literary aspects of anime (eg plot development, themes, music, writing)?

90 responses



How likely would you be to watch an "Anime in Minutes" style video on the literary aspects of an anime?

90 responses



Summary of survey results

During the first quarter of the year, we surveyed 98 random respondents from different backgrounds and age groups on their views on anime, and their reasons for these views. 90.8% of our respondents said that they had watched anime, a testament to its popularity.

We next polled our respondents on their favourite animes and found that these 5 animes (Attack on Titan, Mushoku Tensei, Re:Zero, Horimiya, and Your Lie in April) are the ones people picked most often as their "favourite anime"

We then polled them on their familiarity with the literary aspects of anime. Evidently, not many people are familiar with the literary themes of anime, meaning that our project is most likely to benefit many people.

We also polled them on how likely they would be to consume our final product. Amongst our respondents, our project concept seems well received, meaning that our final product would be likely to get a positive response

Similar Products

We took a look at Gigguk's Anime in Minutes, the series our project was inspired by.

After reviewing his videos, we noticed that his concise summary of the plot allowed for a fast paced video that still remained informative.

That, combined with the humorous nature of his videos helped to keep the audience engaged and entertained.

These factors led to the large popularity of his videos, accumulating a total of 100 million views across 6 videos.

Selection of animes

From our goal to pick popular anime to summarise and analyse, we chose based on our respondents' favorite animes (Attack on Titan, Mushoku Tensei, Re:Zero, Horimiya, and Your Lie in April).

To cover a wide variety of themes and genres, we chose Your Lie in April to represent the slice of life genre of anime. Your Lie in April is also a unique case study, as it was originally a manga with middling success, but was brought into the limelight after its release as an anime, receiving widespread praise and critical acclaim.

As such, we wanted to analyse what unique aspects made the anime adaptation more well received than the manga, which aligns nicely with our project's goal of analysing what unique aspects make anime so popular as compared to traditional forms of media, such as (in this case) manga.

We also selected Attack on Titan, often credited as the shounen anime that brought anime to the global stage. We want to know what sets it apart from other shounen anime from the past.

In addition to Your Lie in April, we have also picked Horimiya to represent the slice of life genre. This is because it (by anime standards) is a relatively new anime, and despite it seeming like a stock-standard romance/slice of life anime it was still enjoyable and popular, beating out classics like Clannad, so we want to analyse what makes it so well received as compared to past animes, allowing us to analyse how anime as a art form has advanced

Final Product(s)

Animinutes

Animinutes are our final video products, which serves to encompass and summarize all of the following analysis into short minutes for the pleasure of the viewer, whilst enabling them to appreciate the literary aspect of Anime and Anime as an art form, hence the name Animinutes. The below are full blown analysis of our chosen anime, but also serve as uncut scripts for our video production.

Summary of the anime(Spoilers Ahead)

Your Lie in April

The story starts off with ex-piano prodigy Arima Kousei and his good friends in middle school, Tsubaki and Watari, two years after the death of his mother from illness, who was strict, harsh and abusive. Ever since then, he has viewed the world in monochrome, without any flair or color, and suffers from mental breakdowns whenever he plays, causing him to be unable to hear his notes.

In the first episode, he meets Tsubaki's classmate Kaori, who asks to be introduced by her(Tsubaki) to Watari. Kaori is a kind hearted, talented, audacious, and free spirited violinist who inspires Kousei to play the piano again as her accompanist, and shows him that music should be emotional and mold-breaking, unlike the rigid style of always sticking to the notes Kousei was taught under his mother's tutelage.

It is later revealed in the series that Kousei's mother's actions came from a place of misguided love, due to her concerns about whether Kousei could make a living off of his talent. Kousei also meets old rivals from his past after his return to the music world.

During one of their performances together, Kaori faints on stage, and is hospitalized, waving it off as being anaemic. After her discharge, Kaori is back to her cheerful , upbeat self, and invites Kousei to play at a gala with her, but she doesn't show up due to her deteriorating health, becoming dejected, and Kousei plays a duet to her with one of his students (and also his rival's younger sister) to motivate her.

Afterwards, Kaori elected for a surgery that would extend her lifetime (albeit for a short while), so that she could play one more time with Kousei. On the day of Kousei's piano competition, she underwent surgery but passed away shortly after.

Before her death, she had written a letter to Kousei, telling him how his performances as a young boy (pre retirement) had inspired her to learn the violin instead of the piano so she could play with Kousei. When they were in the same middle school, she was ecstatic, but the trio of

friends (Kousei, Tsubaki and Watari) were so close that she was unable to squeeze in. As time passed, her health deteriorated further and she knew she was running out of time, acting more free spirited and audacious, so she wouldn't have regrets after her passing. She also said that she told a lie (giving the series its namesake), that she liked Watari, while she actually wanted to get closer to Kousei, without hurting Tsubaki's feelings. She then confesses that she loved him and wanted him to remember her, thanking him for everything before signing off.

Horimiya

Horimiya is an anime adaptation of the manga adaptation of the popular Japanese webcomic *Hori-san & Miyamura-kun*, as funny as it sounds.

Kyoko Hori is a bright and popular high school student, in contrast to her classmate Izumi Miyamura, a gloomy and seemingly nerdy, glasses-wearing boy. Smart, bright, and funny, she's able to make friends with almost everyone she meets. However, Kyoko has a side of herself that she doesn't let her classmates and friends see: she takes care of her younger brother Souta and the house while their parents are busy with work, and once she gets home from school she sheds her glossy image so that she can do her errands, a homebody unnoticed by classmates that live in the area.

Miyamura has his own set of secrets. Bullied and shunned by his classmates in junior high, he starts out with a reputation for being weird and antisocial. At first, no one in their current class knows anything about Izumi, assuming that he's unfriendly and an otaku obsessively into action figures, but quickly, Kyoko realizes that there's a lot more to him than she expected. It's not just the piercings and tattoos, which he uses his overlong hair and a heavy winter uniform to hide; Izumi has spent so much time being rejected that Kyoko is really one of the first people to actually see him.

The anime then follows the couple through their daily lives, in school and at home, as they slowly fall deeper in love and their relationship blossoms.

Attack on Titan

Season 1

The story centres around Eren Yeager, and begins in the town of Shiganshina, located on Wall Maria, the outermost of three circular walls protecting humanity from Titans. In the year 845, the town is attacked and the wall breached by two new types of titans, the Colossal Titan and Armoured Titan. Despite Eren's attempts to save her, his mother is eaten by a titan while he escapes. After swearing revenge against the titans, he then enlists in the Survey Corps, an expeditionary force with the goal of freeing humanity from the control of titans.

5 years later, Trost, a town within Wall Rose, is again attacked by the Colossal Titan. Eren then finds out about his ability to transform into a sentient titan, drawing suspicion from the humans who then attempt to kill him. Fortunately, Dot Pixis, the leader of the Garrison Corps, stops them, allowing the Survey Corps to use his power to repair Wall Rose, reclaiming the city. Afterwards, the Military Police, government, and Survey Corps contest to take ownership of Eren and his power, with Eren being entrusted to Hange Zoe and Captain Levi of the Survey Corps. Not long after they embark on a mission into titan territory where they encounter another sentient female titan who lays waste to the men, resulting in failure of the mission. While fighting the Military Police's efforts to disband the Survey Corps, they deduce that fellow Survey Corp member Annie Leonhart is the Female Titan. They try to corner her in the innermost city within the final wall, Wall Sheena, where she battles Eren, destroying property and killing people before Annie, seeing no hope of escape, crystallizes herself.

Season 2

Titans mysteriously arrive within the walls many days later, with no sign of how they got in. The Survey Corps is dispatched to investigate, but when one of their top squad leaders comes face to face with the Beast Titan, an ape-like behemoth with the ability to talk, he is slain. Many members of the Corps are besieged by Titans, prompting Ymir, one of the new Survey Corps graduates, to reveal that she can turn into a Titan herself. Christa Lenz also reveals that her real name is Historia Reiss, and that she is a descendant of the island's royal family. After revealing their true identities to Eren but failing to persuade him to return to their homeland with them, Reiner Braun and Bertholt Hoover then transform back into the Armored Titan and Colossal Titan, taking Eren hostage while the Survey Corp is left stunned. Reiner, Bertolt, and along with them Imir, flee after Erwin leads a successful effort to rescue Eren, in which Eren uses a secret power known as 'the coordinate' to control Titans to escape. The Titans are revealed to be transformed humans, and the people of Ragako Village, including graduate Connie Springer's family, were the ones they fought.

Season 3 Part 1

Under pursuit from the Military Police, Eren and his friends officially join Levi Squad. While Levi Squad and Hange Zoe are hunted by men commanded by Levi's uncle, Kenny Ackerman, Erwin makes a plea to the authorities. They also discover that a person can attain the abilities of a Pure Titan (the sentient ones) by transforming into a titan and consuming another human with titan abilities. King Fritz, the island's king, is shown to be a puppet ruler controlled by the government. The only surviving members of the royal dynasty are Historia and her father, Rod Reiss. Because Eren is in possession of the Founding Titan's power after his father Grisha ate Frieda Reiss, who then let Eren eat him, Reiss kidnaps Eren. As Reiss turns into a monster Pure Titan and travels to Orvud District, the Survey Corps arrives, and with their and Eren's assistance, they halt him Historia deals the final blow on her father and declares herself Queen.

Season 3 Part 2

The Survey Corps afterwards led an expedition to repair Wall Maria and reclaim Shiganshina. In the resulting battle, the combined powers of the Beast, Colossal, Cart, and Armored kill a large

portion of the Survey Corps. In the battle, Armin takes control of the Colossal Titan by swallowing Bertolt, and Erwin dies in a suicide charge against the Beast Titan. Eren and his companions return to his home and the basement, where they learn the truth about their world: they are Eldians, sworn enemies of the invading Marleyans, who encircled themselves within the 3 walls as a form of ceasefire. They are not, as they were informed, the last humans, but rather a secluded sect of Eldians on the remote island of Paradis teeming with titans. The Eldians are oppressed by Marley because they are 'Subjects of Ymir' who can be converted into Titans by being injected with fluid. The Survey Corps kills all of the remaining Titans behind the walls and leaves Paradis for Marley, where Eren wonders if they will truly be free if they defeat all of their foes.

Season 4

Season 4 is set in the nation of Marley, following a group of warriors-in-training, children who will eventually inherit titan powers. In the opening battle, Marley is seen losing its power as other nations invent anti-titan weapons as a counter to their titan advantage. The Survey Corps then infiltrate and attack Marley, destroying buildings and killing civilians in the process. Eren kills Willy Tybur, the backseat ruler of Marley and inherits the Warhammer Titan after eating Tybur's sister. Armin uses the power of the Colossal to destroy Marley's Navy. As they retreat back to Paradis through an airship, Gabi and Falco manage to board it and kill Sasha before being detained. Zeke and Yelena work with Paradis with the goal of creating a new Eldian empire. Eren is imprisoned for his betrayal of Paradis with his attack on Marley, but escapes with a faction of soldiers who call themselves Yeagerists. Eren talks with Mikasa and Armin, but end up at odds with each other. Levi is injured in a thunder spear explosion while attempting to subdue Zeke. Yelena then reveals that she has spiked wine with Zeke's spinal fluid and holds the government hostage. Meanwhile, Pieck and Porco, 2 titan warriors of Marley, infiltrate Paradis and launch a coordinated attack with Marley's forces, and war breaks out.

Remaining parts in the Manga

In the battle, Eren appears to be decapitated by a shot from Gabi, but instead enters the Paths with Zeke, a gateway connecting all subjects of Ymir. He manipulates the past, giving his past self selected memories. He also meets Ymir Fritz, the original titan, who has been shackled in the Paths for thousands of years. Eren somehow frees her and uses her power to unleash the Rumbling. By freeing the colossal titans within the walls of Paradis, he unleashes a genocidal calamity on the world with the aim of wiping all humans except those of Paradis. Paradis forces work together with the Marleyan titan shifters to stop Eren, after which he reveals that he only became the enemy with the intention of saving his friends. Mikasa kills Eren, ending the tragedy. 3 years later, the world prepares for war with Paradis while Queen Historia attempts to negotiate for peace. Generations later, Paradis is bombed and destroyed. A boy who survived the war approaches a tree that has grown in the rubble, representing the original source of the Titans' power.

Jujutsu Kaisen

Yuji Itadori is an unnaturally fit high school student living in Sendai with his grandfather. He regularly avoids the track team due to the time commitment required for it, despite his innate talent for the sport. Instead, he chooses to join the Occult Research Club; due to the freedom it allows him to attend, he goes to visit his dying grandfather in the hospital every day. On his deathbed, his grandfather instills two powerful messages within Yuji: "always help people" and "die surrounded by people". These two ideas seemingly stem from his grandfather's own regrets. After his grandfather's death, Yuji interprets these messages as one statement: everyone deserves "a proper death". He is then confronted by Megumi Fushiguro, a sorcerer who informs him of a high-grade cursed charm talisman at his school that Yuji recently made contact with. His friends at the Occult Club unsealed the talisman, a rotting finger, which attracted Curses to the school, creatures that are brought about through negative emotions and are strengthened by consuming magical powers present in sorcerers or such charms. Unable to defeat the Curses due to his lack of magical powers, Yuji swallows the finger to protect Megumi and his friends and becomes the host of Ryomen Sukuna, a powerful Curse. Due to Sukuna's evil nature, all sorcerers are required to exorcise him (and by extension, Yuji) immediately. However, despite being possessed, Yuji is still able to retain control over his body for the most part. Seeing this, Satoru Gojo, Megumi's teacher, decides to take him to the Tokyo Prefectural Jujutsu High School to propose a plan to his superiors: postpone Yuji's death sentence until he consumes all of Sukuna's fingers, which would allow them to kill Sukuna once and for all.

Analysis of the anime

Note: All screenshots provided come from our final video products.

Your Lie in April

YLIA explores many different themes, such as failure, parental expectations and trauma, and it makes use of a good deal of literary techniques such as symbolism and metaphors to get its point across.

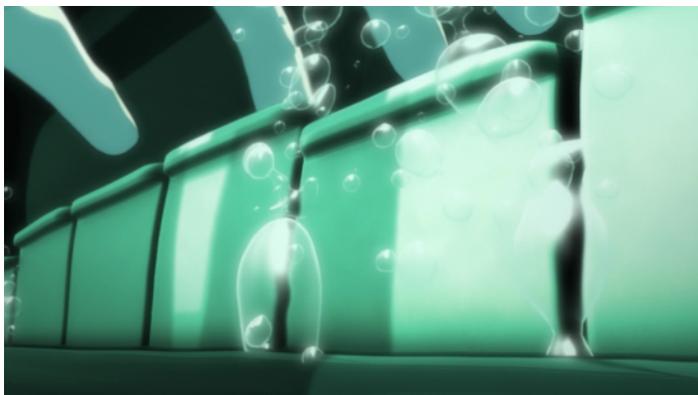
Trauma in YLIA

One of the major uses of symbolism is the deep dark ocean(seen in episode 4 during his first performance after his hiatus), which symbolizes the despair and self doubt he was facing since his mother's passing, describing it as "being at the bottom of a dark sea where I can't hear anything", shown by the scenery transitioning from a brightly lit music hall, to dark and surrounded in blue.



Episode 4: Kousei sinks in the deep dark ocean

As the scenery transitions, Kousei's notes become less sharp and more dull, and by the end of the transition, bubbles are floating from the keys when he hits them, along with a glub-glub sound, drowning out the original sound of the notes, giving him the feeling of playing at the bottom of the ocean.



Bubbles floating from the piano keys.

This symbolises how Kousei's panic and self doubt causes him to panic and despair. We later learn that this is due to his mother's abuse of him, forcing him to keep playing until he could play each score perfectly. With the help of Kaori, he slowly recovers from his trauma, as shown in subsequent scenes where the deep dark ocean is replaced by a shallower pond, where light from above is visible, showing Kousei's progress/character development, and how his problems are not as monumental as he believes.

Use of symbolism to signpost key stages in character development

Another use of symbolism is with the trains moving past the characters in the background in numerous key scenes, drawing a parallel between trains as a form of transit, and how the scenes, most notably when Kousei opens up to Kaori, sparking the start of his recovery, when Kousei reads Kaori's last letter about her decision to live the rest of her life freely, as well as Tsubaki's decision to date her ex-senior, show the characters' transition in their lives.

What is the purpose of the black cats in YLIA?

Arguably one of the most important uses of symbolism in YLIA though, are the different black cats that appear throughout the series during or foreshadowing critical events. While opening up to Kaori about the source of his trauma, his mother's abuse in his childhood, Kousei brings up a cat he had, Chelsea, and how she scratched him once, which was reason enough for Kousei's mother to take her away, with Kousei saddened but unwilling to protest his mother's decision.



Pictured: Chelsea the black cat being taken away, as shown in a flashback sequence.

This shows the amount of control his mother had over him, as though he loved Chelsea, he still could not bring himself to argue against his mother, which may also be interpreted as him hating his mother for abusing him, but still loving her, as explained later in the series. Another black cat that shows up is the one which first appears during Kousei's opening up to Kaori in the park, which could signify Kaori herself, as the cat shows up during an important moment in the plot, when Kousei opens up to Kaori. Later on in the series after Kaori's death, Kousei spots what looks to be the same black cat dying from a traffic accident, signifying how Kaori has left his life.

Parental expectations and children's relationship with them

Since I've brought this up, Kousei's relationship with his mother is also integral to the plot, and explores one of the series key themes, parental expectations. From a young age, Kousei was spotted by his mother's friend, who thought Kousei would be a skilled pianist, which led to his mother teaching him to play the piano, as shown in episode 1(13:00), where she sits behind a practicing Kousei in her wheelchair as Kousei narrates; "She hit me, and yelled at me and she never let up, even if I cried." As a bruised and crying child Kousei is shown from a camera angled down towards him, showing how he was under his mother's control.



Flashback of Kousei's sick mother.

The camera then transitions to a shot panning from her cane, which is emphasised through its large proportion from the camera's point of view, then panning to her face, which shows her wearing a nasal cannula (showing that she is suffering from some form of severe medical condition), and her eyes are blanked out. Given that the eyes are windows to the soul(which means that looking into a person's eyes can tell you what the person thinks and feels.), this could likely mean she was concealing her true, yet to be revealed emotions from Kousei about how she was treating him. Upon hearing that his mother wants him to go to Europe to perform, Kousei brightens up and replies "If that's going to make mom happy", showing how he wants to live up to parental expectations, even though he is being abused. However, she was suffering from an unspecified disease, and knew she was running out of time. Fearing for Kousei's ability to provide for himself after her death, she forced him to play and train harder, leading to his future trauma, where Kousei is unable to see her face in flashbacks, always concealed by darkness, showing how he hated her for treating him badly. After being confronted by her friend, Kousei's mother admitted she knew this was wrong, and that she hated it, but she could not see any other choice. After Kousei learns about this, his mother's face is fully revealed in color, showing how Kousei has acknowledged that while what his mother did was wrong, she did actually love him. The series makes the point that while parents expect the best of their children, push them to their limits, and though their children do not understand the underlying reasons and despise them as a result, their parents still truly love them.



Above: Kousei's mother is revealed in full colour.

Conversely, Asian children have an immense amount of respect for their parents, particularly when it comes to achievements in order to make them proud, this being the main motivation for Kousei to practice the piano in his younger days. Even after his mother's death, he still greatly respects her, as shown in Episode 1 (9:15), when upon coming home from school, Kousei kneels before an altar with his mother's picture, two years after her death.

Use of cherry blossoms to represent Kaori in YLIA

Finally, the most important use of symbolism comes from Kaori's comparison to the cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms bloom during the late March to early April period, like how Kaori meets Kousei in April during the start of the series. However, the cherry blossoms stop blooming after early May. This draws parallels to Kaori, as she dies after befriending Kousei for only a short amount of time, but while she was around, she brought joy to his life, similarly to how cherry blossoms are enjoyed by Japanese during the same late March/early April to late May period, when Japanese have outdoor parties beneath the sakura/cherry blossom tree, a practice known as Hanami, in addition to gathering in great numbers in parks where the trees can be found.



Kousei and Kaori's first meeting.

Kaori and cherry blossoms are similar in that Kaori was a major positive influence in Kousei's life that was only present for a short period of time, just like cherry blossoms, which are beautiful during late March to early May, coinciding with the start of the series, and wither away in a relatively short two month period. In order to make this connection more prevalent to viewers, the very first scene where Kousei and Kaori meet in the park in episode 1 is surrounded by cherry blossoms with their petals drifting towards Kousei, before he hears Kaori playing a melodica nearby, and he walks in the direction the petals are floating from, leading him to his first meeting with Kaori (who is wearing a dress colored a similar pink to the cherry blossoms), while Tsubaki's earlier words about love are narrated yet again. This is also foreshadowed earlier in episode 1 when Kousei is in class, recalling what Tsubaki had told him about love: "Miwa told me(Tsubaki) that my life changed the moment I met him" while floating cherry blossom petals are shown on screen. To first time viewers, this scene is not of much significance, but it acts for rewatchers as a foreshadowing of Kaori's integral role in Kousei's life, as explained previously. In the title screen of YLIA, there is a subheading "A single petal that drifted into my life..." petals/flowers tend to be a feminine symbol representing Kaori, which again draws attention to how Kaori and Kousei (seemingly) met by chance.

Symbolism/Foreshadowing present in YLIA opening 1 (Hikaru Nara)

In fact, symbolism is also used in the opening of Your Lie In April. Part way through the intro, a bird can be seen flying, before the next frame shows Kaori falling followed by Kousei running as if to catch her, before a feather lands on his outstretched hand. Thereafter, the next scene is of him holding Kaori in his arms. This foreshadows the illness that Kaori would suffer from later in the series, as Kousei comments, in the episode , that she's lost weight (presumably due to her illness) when he was carrying her in the hospital comparable to the common saying "as light as a feather" showing us the severity of her illness.

Use of vivid colors and/or a lack thereof to display character's feelings

In the first episode, most of the world is viewed in color, however around 9:11, when Kousei goes back home, away from his friends, the colors are all dull and muted, when the camera

pans over his old awards and the dusty, unkempt piano room . This shows how Kousei feels unloved, as Tsubaki said earlier in the episode: “when you love someone, everything looks so colorful.”. In contrast, earlier in episode 1 when Kousei is in class, recalling what Tsubaki had told him about love, namely her friend Miwa’s experiences with love: “the things I see, hear, feel... my viewpoint, everything is in full color!” along with showing a town area similar to where Kousei lives in bright colors, as contrasted with the previous scene of his dull colored house. It then transitions back to Kousei, who is sitting in class, and we see that the classroom is portrayed in dull colors (10:00) when Kousei thinks about how Tsubaki’s words would apply to himself.



Kousei reflects on his friend's words in this gloomy sequence.

The camera is also focused solely on Kousei, blurring the rest of his classmates in the background, which emphasises his loneliness, while Kousei narrates: “to me, everything is monotone.” Which serves to draw the viewer in by making them curious as to his past (presumably traumatic) experiences, as Kousei then recounts his performance in his younger years, after which he was unable to play the piano. After meeting Kaori at the end of episode 1, she grabs his hand and drags him along to watch her performance at Towa Hall. This scene (21:07) is bright and colorful, with the cherry blossoms in the background (which signify love) and both Kousei and Kaori colored brightly, which relates again, back to Tsubaki’s words earlier in episode 1.

Societal view of music

Another key aspect of Your Lie in April is how society views music. This particularly comes into play during episode 2, where Kaori plays at a violin competition. While the other contestants play the set piece as per normal/intended by the composer, she changes the tempo and the stresses of the song to her liking, which revitalises the bored audience, but infuriates the head judge, who sees it as offensive that she deviates from the composed score. In contrast, pre-retirement Kousei plays each score perfectly, and exactly as the composer intended them to be played, which won him competitions, due to his fulfilling the judge’s requirements, but earned him the derogatory moniker of “the human metronome”, likening him to his mother’s robot as he

played exactly how she wanted him to play to win competitions, which went against what most people thought music should be; free spirited and an expression of oneself, and wholesale copying someone else's performance, even if it is a perfect replica, is against what music should be, a form of self-expression. This brings about the series point that music should be enjoyed, regardless of how "perfect" it is and is not merely a test of a musician's mechanical skill, but also their creativity.

What makes YLIA the anime more popular than the manga?

As shown above, Your Lie in April makes use of many different literary devices and cinematic techniques to push its points/themes to the viewers. As for the apparent popularity of the anime over the manga, Your Lie in April, is able to make use of its soundtrack and the depth of color provided by the animated medium, particularly better than most other animes adapted from manga, due to YLIA's focus on music and color as key symbols in the plot. Whereas, the manga is drawn in black and white, which is unable to illustrate the key theme of love, mainly how loving someone can make the world seem brighter and more colorful, being able to only use shades of grey. In addition, the manga is limited by its medium as unable to express sounds, which in a series focused around musicians and their music, is a serious detriment to its success, which the anime is not limited by.

Horimiya

Love and Cliches

Horimiya is fundamentally a story about loving who you really are; what is on the surface a cliched, typical high school romance manga is far, far deeper than it seems.

The original manga by HERO and Daisuke Hagiwara, adapted by Cloverworks, intersperses light, fluffy, romantic moments with constant looks at struggling, realistic characters as they balance their lives with their hopes and fears for the future.

Despite the typical, cheery high-school setting, the story manages to flesh out the characters impressively in the span of only 13 episodes, and shows them dealing with familiar, relatable issues. Far from just a high-school romance, it is also an anime about teenagers dealing with anxiety and identity.

For starters, when we are introduced to Miyamura, he is still dealing with the effects of being ignored and neglected by his peers for years, throughout his middle school life. This bullying has had long-lasting, tangible consequences, pushing him to extremes like giving himself piercings and getting tattoos. The anime details his healing, as Hori slowly helps him to see himself, to live with his trauma, but he doesn't magically get over all his trauma because he gets a girlfriend, a subtle detail that infuses the anime with far more personality and realism.



Miyamura, the male protagonist of the show. (they are the same person)

Despite Hori's confident, dauntless public persona, the anime gives us an inside look at her insecurities, behind the mask. She worries about her little brother, and whether she is too mean, sadistic or weird for Miyamura. At the same time, she sees herself without much of a future, worrying her.

The story of Horimiya explores how together, we can become better; how a relationship can be far, far more than the sum of its parts. The reason Horimiya is considered one of the best romance anime of the season, and in fact one of the best of all time; what starts off as a typical, disappointing, bland highschool romance blossoms into a far more nuanced and complicated show.

Opening Theme

On the subject of what makes a good anime, one of the most important parts is the opening theme. Often a neglected part by many anime watchers, Horimiya's opening bears some refreshing design choices that set it apart from the rest.



A screengrab from Horimiya's opening, “色香水”



Screengrab from the opening of another popular romance anime, "Clannad".

There are some obvious differences in design here. Clannad's opening follows a more cheerful, colorful color scheme, with emphasis on scenery and vast landscapes, as well as sakura blossoms to express love. In comparison, Horimiya's opening is characterized by muted colors and "windows", through which we get fleeting glimpses of traumatic events, representing the hidden, unspoken traumas behind each character. Clannad uses 24 episodes to gradually flesh out characters, but through the early establishment of atmosphere and the idea that there is something "more" to the characters, Horimiya gets an impressive amount of character development in the span of 13 episodes, which begins with the anime's opening.

The opening sequence starts off with a single desk in the middle of an empty space before Miyamura flashes on-screen, already setting a rather somber mood from the get go. Borders are featured prominently throughout the opening and the anime itself, serving to symbolize how the characters have formed walls around themselves

When Miyamura is featured, he's almost always cast in blue or drained out colors. Colorful scenes of nature are merged with darker scenes that represent Miyamura's past. Miyamura's depression is most evidently symbolized in a split-second scene of an enormous meteorite-sized rock hanging precariously above him, threatening to crush him.



The symbolism continues with the box that Miyamura is in, representing the inner turmoil and pain that he's keeping inside himself, the things he represses and bottles up. He struggles to open himself up to people and to allow people to get close to him. When he picks up the box and pulls it close to his chest, he's simply trying to protect himself.

Becoming more Vulnerable

One aspect of the opening that carries over into the show itself is the use of colored shadows that separate from Hori and Miyamura's bodies. These colored shadows appear most frequently when they're with each other and at their most exposed. This symbolizes them discarding their public personas and opening themselves up to each other.

The opening theme's lyrics may be touching on Miyamura's fears of opening his heart to Hori and giving too much of himself to her that they become "the same colored perfume." It can also be interpreted as Miyamura being scared that if he and Hori do end up dating and break up, he won't be able to forget about their time together. Hori, and her "perfume," have already become part of his life and he can't separate himself from her anymore.

It's far from surprising to say that Miyamura has a hard time accepting the fact that he deserves to be loved. Despite how blatantly clear Hori's feelings are, he's adamant that it's impossible for her to love him. He doesn't want to presume but he also is afraid of what it might be like to be in a relationship with Hori -- to be emotionally vulnerable with someone that he loves. While *Horimiya* might be a light and cutesy show, this heavy emotional undercurrent justifies the more dramatic opening sequence.

Cinematography

One thing of note is the shot framing in the anime, and how Horimiya uses “framed shots” to visually express its themes.



An example of a “framed shot”, from episode 1

The anime uses these shots to frame the mindsets of the characters, and display the relationships between them, while also portraying the themes of isolation and opening up to people from a visual perspective.

At this point in the episode, Hori and Miyamura are implied to have been regularly spending time together. They have begun to get to know each other’s “true selves”, and consequently are probably the only people who really understand each other. In other words, they are each other’s confidantes. This is expressed visually, with their classmates outside the ‘barriers’ our protagonists have entrenched themselves in. They only know the superficial facade that the two of them have put up, and not their “true” characters.



The next shot, where some classmates bother Hori for her homework.

Once again, the framing of the shot creates a sort of border or barrier around Hori, distancing her from the others.

Isolation

Shortly after the last scene of the episode, Toru (the purple haired character) has a discussion with Miyamura, eventually commenting that he and Hori would “make a weird couple”, to which Miyamura replies:



This shot works on a few different levels. The window frame around Miyamura forms a literal “box” around him, showing how he keeps his guard up around others. He is still hesitant to open himself up, and so he walls himself off. Compare this to the first shot above, where Hori and Miyamura are in the same box, indicating that together, he is less closed off.

Later, in episode 3, it is revealed that Miyamura essentially gaslights himself into thinking he is unwanted by his friends. Years of isolation have led him to believe that he is just a bother to people, and those that do keep him around do so out of pity or fear. When Miyamura begins talking about how he and Hori would not be a good couple, he isn't actually agreeing with Toru or even responding. He is convincing *himself* of this, because of this mindset he can't get rid of.

Barriers

In this scene, Miyamura has convinced himself that Hori is simply acting as a friend to him to be nice. He doesn't want to bother her anymore, especially if she and Toru start dating. (Toru has confessed to Miyamura that he has feelings for Hori)



The two are walking through the hallway after school.

As the two walk down the hallway, Miyamura eventually pulls ahead, moving into a different window frame, paralleling how he is trying to “rebuild” the barrier between them, and distance himself from Hori.

In the context of the show, she obviously wants to figure out what the matter is with him, and visually we see this as she tries to break down the barrier that Miyamura wants to put up again.



And as we see later in the episode, they are once again in the same frame.

Similarly, in this scene below, the main cast (on the right) and the figures of authority, the main source of conflict in this scene, are separated, indicating how they have yet to become friends and open up.



Conclusion

At its core, *Horimiya* is a show about isolation, self-image, social anxiety, and opening up to people. It is about finding a group of people who will support you for who you are, so that you may let your guard down and be yourself. Teenage years can be some of the most frustrating and stressful times in one's life, and a lot of that can be because of the stress we put on ourselves to fit a certain image. The lives of *Horimiya's* characters are no different, and watching them come to terms with these feelings and working through them, bit by bit, is part of what makes the anime so interesting.

Attack on Titan

Blurring of lines between good and evil

The Good vs Evil conflict is a theme common to many popular Shonen anime, with examples being *Demon Slayer's* demon vs human conflict, as well as *Jujutsu Kaisen's* main conflict. A distinction between the protagonists and antagonists sets a clear direction for the entire storyline, as well as provides a destination for the plot, usually the extermination of the demons or creatures playing the role of the "bad guys". However, *Attack on Titan* does things quite differently through its blurring of the typical black and whites of its plot, presenting viewers with multiple grey areas of uncertainty.

As the anime progresses, the initial Human vs Titan conflict slowly twists and convolutes itself, hinting that everything is not as simple as it seems to be. The seeding of doubt begins as soon

as the show starts after the introduction of the main antagonists, the titans themselves. Despite their gargantuan size, lack of intelligence and distorted features, they still look... uncannily human. Even the initial premise of the show is shrouded in mystery: Where did the titans come from? Why do they look like humans? Why aren't there other groups of humans? The initial setting of the show poses doubts and questions to viewers about the world that are only further deepened as the series progresses. By blurring the lines between good and evil in multiple ways, Isayama diversifies the theme of the show from a fast paced, action filled anime, and adds in a touch of mystery, constantly keeping viewers on the edge of their seats.



Pictured: Humans vs Titans

Firstly, Attack on Titan disrupts the Titan vs Human conflict through dramatic reveals and plot twists, hinting towards how humans and titans are more entwined than it initially seems. This is mainly done through the reveal of the existence of Titan Shifters, humans with the ability to transform into various titans at will. The initial reveal of Eren as the Attack Titan, and Annie, Reiner, and Bertholdt's subsequent identities as the Female, Armoured, and Colossal Titan uncovered, causes doubts and uncertainty amongst the viewers about the true nature of titans. The actions of Annie, Reiner, and Bertholdt against the interest of humanity also raises questions towards the true nature of the conflict. This uncertainty creates a sense of foreboding in viewers, captivating them as pieces of a greater mystery are slowly revealed. Perhaps one of the more chilling moments in Attack on Titan is the Welcome Home scene in season 2, where Connie hears a titan bearing resemblance to his vanished mother saying the words "Welcome home". On one hand, while this pretty much all but confirms the identity of titans as transformed humans, it also poses a moral dilemma towards the characters in the show. This dilemma is further shown after the grand reveal of the contents in Eren's basement, which exposes titans beyond a doubt as transformed humans. This raises many internal conflicts within characters, seen in short scenes after the basement reveal as they struggle to come to terms with their actions and identity. They are saviours of humanity, warriors of valour, defending their last stronghold from titans, yet at the same time, also murderers.

Attack on Titan further disrupts the Good vs Evil narrative through the introduction of nuance to characters on both sides of the conflict, presenting each with their own backstory and personal

goals. Reiner and Bertholdt, mass murderers and terrorists in the eyes of Eldia, are also seen as scared and confused children, their actions born from fear of their nation of Marley. Erwin, the leader of the Survey Corps and genius strategist, willingly sending men to their deaths to prove his father's theories of the outside world. Eren Kruger, The Owl, the Eldian mole in Marleyan forces, former wielder of the Attack Titan, yet also the executioner of countless Eldians and accomplice in the murder of Faye Yeager. Every single character, no matter the side they take in any conflict, each has their own motivation and purpose directing their actions. By establishing a clear motive to each character, their actions towards attaining their goal, regardless of nature, still seem something probable and reasonable, or even necessary. As such, despite the magnitude of their actions, every single character is still undoubtedly, irrefutably human. By invoking our sense of empathy or sympathy for characters in this way, it establishes with them a sense of relatability, preventing us from truly "hating" anyone in the story. This creates yet another dilemma, but this time for the audience. By portraying the actions of each character as despicable, yet reasonable, but also as a mere means to an end, it forces the audience to endlessly attempt to justify whether each goal is worthy of the sacrifice required to attain it. This unique portrayal of characters is a clear statement by Isayama that there is no truly "right" side in Attack on Titan, and how what is good or evil is something merely a matter of perspective.

Finally, Attack on Titan completely removes the distinction between Good and Evil in the Marley arc, where we see the terror and destruction in the attack of Shiganshina reflected in the Survey Corps attack on Marley's capital. This parallel is made even more clear as we see the anger and thirst for vengeance once belonging to Eren reflected in Gabi, a character even admitted by Isayama to be a female version of Eren. While on one hand, this may simply be viewed as an act of revenge, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the attack also reveals a lot about how the characters have changed between the timeskip of season 3 and 4. Far from the scene in season 3 where we see characters grapple with the possibilities of them being murderers, the Survey Corp in season 4 consisted of a well trained troop of cold blooded killers. Perhaps this was the effect of the basement reveal, how the knowledge that they were viewed as demons, a target for extermination, put into question their survival as a people. Far from the valour and honour driving them in seasons 1-3, their only motivation now is a carnal desire for survival, also reflected through the changing of themes in openings from patriotism to war. In line with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the characters themselves appear to also have cast aside their lofty ideals of good and evil for the sake of survival. The Marley arc is perhaps a commentary on human nature, how in the face of death, we humans are reduced to a state akin to animals, driven by our natural instincts of self preservation, not too far from the Titans themselves.

The almost complete lack of distinction between good and evil in Attack on Titan is something never seen before in anime. While there have been occasional attempts at such a theme by anime such as Evangelion or Tokyo Ghoul, Attack on Titan presented something that completely blew its predecessors out of the water. The significance and depth of exploration in this theme by Hajime Isayama, in my opinion, makes Attack on Titan a piece of modern literature. Attack on Titan, by making completely no distinction between good and evil, poses paradoxes and dilemmas towards not only its characters, but also its audience. As a result, one pays it the highest compliment one can pay to fiction: it makes you think. Uncomfortably.

How and why did it rise to global fame

AoT is one of the most influential anime of all time, and is often credited with the popularisation of anime worldwide. With approximately over 100 million copies of the manga sold and the anime racking in over 45 million in earnings worldwide, 2 live action movies, and even a crossover with Marvel's Avengers, it is only natural for people to wonder: What is it about Attack on Titan that made it so popular? In this analysis, I would like to go over certain features of its production and plot, what are certain factors that led to its initial bloom in popularity, and what is it about this anime that intrigued and captivated a global audience for so long.

Production

Contrary to what one might expect, the beginnings of the Attack on Titan manga before the anime were rather rocky. The initial artwork in the manga was one of the worst amongst other popular mangas. The sketchy rendering of characters and sometimes awkward expressions and postures in stark contrast to other popular works such as Demon Slayer or Tokyo Ghoul. In fact it is even something repeatedly acknowledged by Hajime Isayama, the author himself. However, despite this, the manga was still averaging an impressive 30 thousand volumes sold, all this while being published in the relatively unknown Bessatsu Shonen magazine, a publication of circulation of only around 66 thousand copies. All this meant that sales of Attack on Titan were being driven almost entirely by word of mouth alone. This shows that even before the anime, there was something about the series that resonated with the public at large. A large part of that can likely be attributed to the core premise of the series. Massive humanoid creatures known as titans that suddenly appeared one day and wiped out most of humanity, forcing survivors to take refuge behind 3 massive walls. This human vs titan conflict is one that is simplistic, yet compelling. The conflict and premise can easily be gotten across through a couple sentences, allowing for word of mouth to create intrigue around Attack on Titan's world, resulting in its manga's initial popularity.

However, Attack on Titan only truly blew up upon the release of the first episode of its anime on 7th April 2013. This can likely be attributed to the choice and design of titans as the main antagonists of the show. In 2013, western media was in the middle of its zombie craze, with multiple games centered around zombies, and the popular television series The Walking Dead fueling the phenomenon. The titans in Attack on Titan, while bearing resemblance to the more popular zombies, providing to a mainly Western audience a relatable and familiar premise, also offer a fresh take from the lumbering, brainless creatures everyone was used to, spurring

greater discussion and intrigue around the show. In this aspect, Attack on Titan's popularity can be seen to be partly a result of its unintentional fusion of Western and Japanese media cultures, creating something unique and fresh for a hungry global audience.



The pilot episode of Attack on Titan aired on 7th April 2013.

Another aspect that went a long way towards Attack on Titan's popularity was the sheer quality of its production, which can be largely attributed to its director, Tetsuro Araki. A large part of AoT's plot is driven by short bursts of intense moments, outbursts, and plot twists, and Araki is exceptional at conveying such moments. Be it through the Colossal Titan swinging his arm to destroy a wall, or the multiple aerial titan fights, Araki knows how to perfectly manoeuvre the motion of a camera through a 3D space to maximize the drama and energy of the moment. Such direction adds a certain velocity and impact to the direction of the show, while increasing the visual appeal, also helps each scene become a springboard for the next, hurtling the viewer through battle after battle, from one episode to the next, keeping them constantly engaged.

Of course, credit must also be given to a more overlooked aspect of the anime, its bomb soundtrack and openings. A good soundtrack will always be a key aspect of any anime or show, with one example being the famous, or infamous, Call of the Witch in Re:Zero that comes with each scene of horror. For Attack on Titan, for each stunning fight scene and plot point comes an equally amazing backing track, complimenting and adding to the intensity of the scene. The openings of Attack on Titan are also nothing to be overlooked, with the openings of the first 3 seasons, Guren no Yumiya, Shinzo wo Sasageyo, Red Swan, and Shoukei to Shikabane no Michi, having more than 200 million views on YouTube combined, reaching a massive global audience despite most viewers not even understanding the lyrics of the song. Music is a medium that transcends the barriers of language and culture. The openings of Attack on Titan are masterpieces that allow for the excitement, the intensity, the emotion of the anime to be shared and felt by a global audience, instilling patriotism for the imaginary nation of Eldia.

Plot and Storytelling

Of course, as important as the production and visuals of Attack on Titan were towards its success, it goes without saying that without a good plot and solid cast of characters, it would simply have fallen flat on its face. There have been multiple anime similar in production quality to Attack on Titan, but what truly sets it apart from the others, giving it audiences of such a massive scale, is its unique plot and superb storytelling,

Simply the first episode of Attack on Titan itself is enough as a testament to Hajime Isayama's skill as an author. The episode opens with a shot of the colossal titan towering above the walls, with the words "On this day, mankind remembered. The fear of oppression under them, and the humiliation of being caged like birds", followed by a scene of the Survey Corps battling a titan, before the opening is played. An ominous climax followed by a scene of action is a very common opening amongst Shonen anime. By delivering a climax, it serves as a hook by delivering a promise to the viewers, giving the series or arc with an endpoint, providing direction to the plot and story. One such example is Boruto's opening, which begins with a scene of two teenagers fighting on the ruins of the Hokage Rock before cutting back to daily life. However, Attack on Titan does things slightly differently. By beginning with a climax that will shortly be delivered in 15 minutes instead of taking weeks or months, Hajime Isayama establishes a sense of trust by making good on his earlier promise. By raising the expectations of the audience in this way, Isayama captivates them, keeping their attention, which sets a foundation for the introduction of the next massive plot point, Eren's basement, which would take another 6 years to be revealed.



Pictured: A Titan

Attack on Titan also uses foreshadowing to great effect. What is often considered the biggest plot twist of the show, and also a major talking point when the episode was released, was the reveal of fellow Survey Corp members, Reiner and Bertholdt, to be wielders of the Armoured and Colossal Titan respectively. However, such a plot twist was not without pretense. Upon the reveal, many seemingly insignificant details surrounding Reiner and Bertholdt were revealed as snippets of foreshadowing. The mess of hints through peculiar choices of words and slight actions all unraveled as pieces of a bigger picture. Such masterful foreshadowing gives weight and meaning to every single moment in the story. It gives viewers a sense that every moment is significant, spurring constant discussion and speculation. The way twists and turns in the plot

are slowly teased out give the anime a sense of mystery, constantly giving the plot a sense of direction and momentum, making viewers keep coming back for more.

Plot aside, the whole initial premise of Attack on Titan also played a role in its popularity. Aside from the cultural factors mentioned in the production section, the Titans vs Humanity dynamic was a fresh new take towards the genre of apocalyptic scenarios. In contrast to other Western, or even other fellow anime, humanity does not have the slightest bit of advantage against their enemies. The sheer size difference between humans and titans take away any physical advantage we may have, and the setting of a seemingly medieval nation means that humans also lack the technological advantage typically enjoyed by survivors. From the despondent return of the Survey Corp in episode 1 despite the elaborate attack, it can also be seen that even humanity's intelligence is not enough to negate the sheer difference in power between humans and titans. Far from the promise of a better future often depicted in similar shows, Attack on Titan does not offer us the slightest shred of hope for victory over the titans. Despair remains the theme throughout the first few episodes. From Eren and Mikasa's inability to save their mother, to the multiple deaths of comrades in the 2nd titan attack, to even Eren himself being eaten, it seems that humans are completely helpless in the face of the titans. However, hope does eventually come, only that it comes in the form of... not a human, but a titan, Eren's Attack Titan. The series topels the traditional dynamic of humans as the ruling species of the world, and provides a unique point of view through the power imbalance between humans and titans. It provides a fresh perspective, how humans, top of the food chain, are now simply picked up and consumed as prey by the titans. There is a cruel irony in how humans, who have been slaughtered and eaten by titans, must now rely on a titan themselves as their only hope for survival. It emphasizes the powerlessness and helplessness of humans. How in the face of titans, we do not even have the slightest bit of control over our fate, and must rely on the enemy to survive. This previously unseen perspective of humans, not as mighty and powerful, but rather weak, or even pathetic, is one of the defining characteristics of Hajime Isayama's Attack on Titan, and part of what makes it appeal to a global audience.

The last, but perhaps most jarring, aspect of Attack on Titan that sets it apart is its constant killing off of characters. In any other show, a character death, regardless of its circumstance, would almost always be a significant moment and a key point in its plot. However in Attack on Titan, what is striking is how insignificant these deaths are made to seem. With multiple killing offs happening every other episode and battle, death becomes one of the main themes of the story. There is none of the fabelled "plot armour" protecting characters from death, with Hajime Isayama not sparing even Petra of Levi Squad from the titans. As a result, the plot becomes unpredictable. With each new episode and event comes a sense of anxiety. How will this play out? Will they survive? Will they succeed? In the despair filled world of Attack on Titan, such uncertainty only serves to add to the allure of each new episode, with viewers hooked, waiting and watching on with anticipation.



The unpredictability of the show plays an important role in its success.

Another defining part of Attack on Titan's deaths is how each death, despite how often they happen, still feels personal. Each death is always accompanied by a close up scene, forcing the audience to catch a glimpse of the character's determination, fear, or despair before they die. This way, despite how frequently it occurs, Attack on Titan still manages to make each death feel emotionally charged and tragic. Despite, or because of this, gore has become one of the selling points of Attack on Titan, with each death allowing us a form of macabre catharsis as we witness the unfortunate character's last moments. Character death offers the viewers uncertainty as to what will happen next, leaving them curious as to the fates of their favorite characters, since no one is safe in the war torn world of Attack on Titan. Even fan favorites like Levi are not immune to the plot, as shown by his disfigurement (though not outright death) at the hands of Zeke Yeager. This curiosity about characters' fate keeps the audience hooked, which is part of what makes Attack on Titan so popular.

The death of characters can also advance the plot/character development significantly, such as after Erwin Smith and Armin Arlert are mortally wounded, and Armin is eventually saved over Erwin by using a Titan serum to turn him into the next Colossus Titan, though Erwin is one of humanity's best strategic assets against the titans. After this event, Armin grapples with self doubt, as he believes that Erwin's life is more important than his, but his friends and comrades still chose to save him. This was (as explained by Armin's friends) because of 3 reasons.

1. Erwin had previously shared with Levi how tormented he was by his guilt of sending people to charge to their deaths for a cause, and Levi did not want to revive him and further condemn him to fight both the war and his conscience (Levi: His only choice was to become the devil. And it was us who wanted that of him. Not only that... He was finally freed from hell... But we were going to call him right back into it. (...)) So I think... We ought to let him rest.), and
2. Armin was seen to be just as capable as Erwin in terms of leadership, though he merely lacked experience.
3. And maybe the most important, Erwin's only goal was to find out the mysteries of the world in Eren's basement, while Armin wanted to unravel the truth of everything and eventually be free. Just before Levi wanted to inject Erwin. He recalled what his uncle Kenny said, that everyone is

a slave to something. Armin's hopes and dreams were beyond the small walls they lived on. It expanded on and on, to the ocean and beyond. Erwin's hopes were confined to the walls of Shiganshina. Kenny states that the dreams were the things that kept them pushing forward. Once their dreams are complete- they hardly strive to move forward. After hearing Armin's story, Levi understood that Armin's dreams were more far reaching than Erwin's, and it was in doubt whether Erwin, having a conflict with his conscience, would continue on after his goals had been achieved. Thus, Armin's friends chose to save him, and he eventually becomes a renowned diplomat working to bring peace to the world after playing a key role in stopping The Rumbling (the Attack on Titan version of Ragnarok), and dealing with his self-esteem issues that he should have died instead of Erwin, but his friends saw something in him, thus choosing that he should live.

In conclusion, character death in Attack on Titan not only serves to draw the curiosity and attention of the audience, but also advances the plot and characters in a meaningful way, relating back to the earlier statement on how every event that happens is significant, further keeping the audience watching every scene.

In short, the success of Attack on Titan was due to a variety of factors, with their effects even showing even before the production of the anime. In the beginning, it would have been difficult to see how a manga criticized for its art would eventually take the world by storm. However, looking back now, we see that within this scratchy artwork were the makings of a masterpiece. The first, and possibly the only one of its kind of its kind, Attack on Titan has challenged and broke through the norms of anime, earning for itself unprecedented and well deserved success, elevating anime from a local Japanese media, to a medium shoulder to shoulder with even the likes of Hollywood.

Jujutsu Kaisen

Jujutsu Kaisen does many things right in setting itself apart from the typical Shounen anime that you would see on the front page of your anime sites. It has a flowy and smooth transition of story, phenomenal action sequences, and superb animation, as one might expect for a top performing anime of its caliber. However Jujutsu Kaisen has many things and themes going for it which are more unconventional, in which the franchise dares to explore, which we plan to take apart and analyse.

Identity

As with many top animes of the Shounen genre, identity plays an important and a big role within the franchise. However, Jujutsu Kaisen does this in a way that sets that apart from other big titles, yet still following that same rinse and repeat formula of the spirit of believing in yourself to claim victory. A clear example would be in Episode 17 of the fight between Nobara and Momo, two female jujutsu sorcerers from different schools decking it out for the honour of their school.

As per the usual there are these monologues of the main/secondary characters (in this case Nobara) on believing in yourself being true to your own identity, but Jujutsu Kaisen does this in a different way in that the antagonist (Momo) does not directly oppose and turn down the views of Nobara in a criminal, obviously morally wrong way, which any other Shounen might have. Instead, the show goes one step further where their fight, in addition to being a jaw-dropping fight on a mechanical level, also serves as a vehicle for the conflict between two very valid ideologies. During the fight Momo talks about the societal pressure of being a woman and essentially having to be perfect in the eyes of society, needing to conform to these unrealistic standards for both capability and beauty constantly. She monologues about having the weight of femininity constantly on her head, in contrast to Nobara, who bullishly rejects gender norms and standards, determined to stay true to herself, being secure in the knowledge that her femininity is not dependant on any external source and is whatever she wants it to mean.



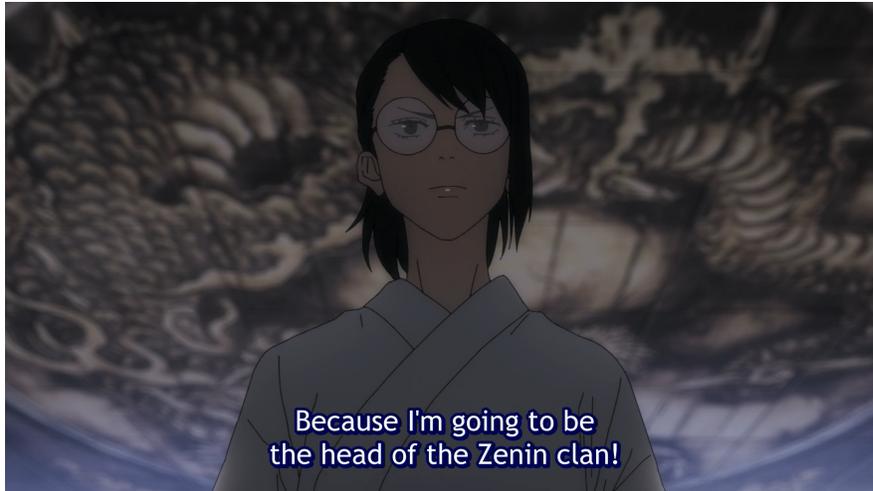
Above: Nobara monologues about the identity of women during her fight in Episode 17.

This need to conform to whatever society expects of us weighs down on all of us at some point within our lives in one way or another, and no one is really truly free from this imprisonment of how society views us. Similarly, the idea of being true to yourself is indeed what we all want at our core, and this idea of true liberation is burrowed deep within our hearts, regardless of what society dictates. There are these grounded perspectives embedded in the Shounen framework of believing in yourself versus being jaded and conforming to societal norms. Obviously, due to the nature and inescapability of the franchise being Shounen, the former wins the fight, but its the context of the whole fight and the fact that ironically it is a Shounen-style, stereotypical conflict, in addition to that daringness to even take on this topic and the fact that it represents our own internal conflict as a fight scene in itself gives this show a fresh spin on things. Another example can also be seen when Maki, a female born in one of the main clans of the show, is being reduced to nothing but a servant within her household despite showing her flare to want to fight for her clan, all for being a woman, which is what drives her whole character forward, with this sense of identity, and wanting to be more than what she was slated and predetermined to be. Jujutsu Kaisen combines surface level hype and bad-assery with an intriguing ideological tug of war on identity, captivating viewers through the use of this play on the latter.

Portrayal of Women

The portrayal of women in the entertainment industry is cliché and overused to say the least. This is evident from The Bechdel Test, which is a measure of the representation of women in fiction. It asks whether a work features at least two women who talk to each other about something other than a man. The requirement that the two women must be named is sometimes added. It serves as a measure of judging how well a film depicts their female characters, in which many popular titles have failed, namely Star Wars and Lord of the Rings. By no means is The Bechdel Test a way of judging a film or show's success on a whole, but it does definitely show how much effort the creators put in in setting itself apart within this aspect. Jujutsu Kaisen does exceptionally well on this, to the point where it has literally made a name for itself for its portrayal of women in their franchise. Most of mainstream anime has its female characters for nothing other than sales through the use of sex appeal. Much of the female characters have little to no character development and are oftentimes very stereotypical in character, being more of a cheerleader type of character where personality would solely be found on their chests.

Jujutsu Kaisen does this with a vast difference with actual writing being put into their backstories. Nobara is a prime example of being an outlier in the typical love interest type of trope. She speaks directly against the typical damsel in distress, where she knows it's okay to be pretty but also tough. Being introduced in Episode 3, she's introduced arguing with a modelling agency for being rejected. Unrelenting, she quickly turned the viewers perspective of her around and used her charisma to make herself seem interesting in that moment itself. She has the unique balance of being tough and dainty at the same time, with her headstrong moments in combat and against people she doesn't like regardless of their looks, also having her moments of fangirling and fantasizing about shopping and getting her nails done. Nobara flips the conventional script of the typical bimbo female character. She has the character development of what a main character would have, which can be clearly seen in Episode 5 where she has internal moral conflicts when fighting off a curse (the antequinal creatures in Jujutsu Kaisen) that was holding a child hostage. She rationalizes her thoughts like how a normal human being would, thinking about how the child would have been already dead but ultimately still decides to drop her weapon for that very slim chance in being able to save him. Her internal conflicts and morals are a direct opposite from the narrow minded trope of female characters, straying and setting apart the franchise from other franchises.



Above: Maki dreams to become head of her clan despite her adversities.

This is also ever present in the backstory of female characters, an example being Maki. Maki is not only a very beautiful character but also has an intricate and beautiful backstory, having lesser cursed energy and power to fight off the curses, but in exchange having physical ability on another plane. Hence, her family chastised her and outcast her, making her sort of a blacksheep and discriminated against within her clan. However, instead of waiting for someone to save her in that usual princess-trope style, she took the adversity that was going against her and flip, wanting to be a Jujutsu sorcerer stronger than anyone else to prove that she could be a high ranking sorcerer without having as much cursed energy, thereafter taking over her clan. This intricately detailed backstory is a large abnormality within the anime community itself, where there are countless characters without even a single frame of how they came to be. The female characters in the anime all have a chance to shine, with each of them being different from each other, and none following the conventional large-chested sex appeal robot. Each and every one of them, no matter how insignificant, have a speck of significance within themselves, which sets Jujutsu Kaisen apart from other anime, even of the same genre, within this aspect of portrayal of women.

Critical Reflection

Difficulties faced

Over the course of this project, one of the biggest challenges we faced was not the project itself but how each of us had to manage our time. Secondary 4 is an extremely busy year with numerous simultaneous ongoing projects, tests and events happening. In addition, we also had to keep up with our individual studies during this period amidst the pandemic. Being in different classes, we naturally had different timetables and had communication inconveniences. In

addition to this, we were not experts at video production and hence had to learn more on the topic.

Our solutions

We managed to find workarounds for all our problems. Despite our filled timetables and scheduling conflicts, we always found a time (no matter how late) to meet up and discuss our plans, as well as find the time to dedicate ourselves to do proper research and discussion for our project. We also delegated tasks beforehand to each individual member of the group so as to still be able to be productive and work towards our end goal even if we could not meet up. We also learnt more about video producing applications in order to properly finish our end product with standard.

What we learnt

In addition to learning the mechanics and fundamentals of video production, we also learnt much about anime and its entertainment value as a whole and as an art form, contrary to the public belief that it is a mindless form of entertainment. We learnt that the value of anime not only lies on the surface level hype and animation, but also the themes and effort used to properly develop the characters such that the anime flows on a whole. Many themes are actually largely prevalent in real life despite its seeming simplicity on the screen. We also learnt that animes that do well do something different and sets itself apart from conventional tropes, to captivate the audience, be it resonating with their inner conflicts and personal struggles, or how they build and hype up their characters.

Last Notes

Overall, we thoroughly enjoyed this project and learning many things about this complex and sophisticated entertainment form, despite its simplicity on its surface.

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