



Why I love Anime
By Kaitlin Meaney

I figured I would take a break from writing about feelsy stuff to tell you about why I think anime is so awesome and that there is a lot to love about it. Also because I literally don't have an anime to write about this week, at least nothing I've watched a whole series of yet. This is me taking a break this month.

Anime has been a big part of my life ever since I was a child. My first exposures coming from *Pokemon*, *Beyblade*, *Sailor Moon*, *Digimon*, and *Yu-Gi-Oh* just to name a few. As I got older I found that the medium was a lot bigger than just the few I had seen in Saturday morning cartoons. In high school I was exposed to my first few subbed anime in the school anime club. I would say that I only truly realized my love for anime while in that club. Now I am an active member of the fandom watching anything that tickles my fancy.

Anime is a much appreciated medium of television but it is vastly underrated. It's regarded as one of the nerdiest thing right next to *Dungeons and Dragons* and/or video games. But there are some things about this medium that set it apart from the others. Something that makes it unique and creates the devoted fans that exist in abundance this day and age. I'll be talking about what I personally love about anime and what makes it so cool in my eyes. Everyone has their own interpretation and this is mine. If you've read my other articles you know the kind of feelings I have towards this medium (laughing, crying...mostly crying), but here I plan on going into more detail.

First of all, a very brief history lesson for the new kids. Anime had its start in the early 20th century but there is speculation over what was the first anime and when it was made. From then on things started to evolve in the 1920's and beyond making anime as we know it today.

Anime, for all intents and purposes, is an art form, much like the cartoons of North America and films in general. What I think I love most about anime and especially the films that come out of this medium, is the hand drawn animation. Sure, it's not as organically hand drawn as animation used to be, technology is used to speed the process, but in an age of computer generated animation being an ever growing trend it's refreshing to still see hand drawn art being used. And dang are some of these shows freaking beautiful. Of course the films look better because of the bigger budgets, but when the animation studio is just right, it can be truly breathtaking. Animation can do things that a camera cannot do on it's own. Scenes can convey more drama in animation than when they are filmed. Whether it's the cinematography or just the sometimes over-dramatic facial expressions, feelings are conveyed much better in animation. You feel the character's heartache, their excitement, determination, anger, etc.

The writing in most anime series' is also nothing to sneeze at. Compared to most north American television shows; I don't think I've ever felt for characters as much as I have in the few anime I've actually gotten around to finishing. Something about how these creators put so much content in eleven, episodes only twenty minutes in length. Though of course there are series' that have hundreds of episodes spanning a long reaching story, but it's the fact that there are shorter series that can convey so much with so little time. It fascinates me to no end. A good example is the show I wrote about last month *Anohana*. It crams the history these friends have and their journey to make their late friend's wish come true in only eleven episodes. It conveys all their grief very slowly but effectively. It takes its time and doesn't rush through everything to squeeze in more than it needs to.

This leads me to the next thing I love about anime, the content. Something about how these writers create beautiful stories out of the simplest plot lines blows me away. The series can have the most ridiculous sounding plot, for example high school girls competing in international war re-enactments using historical tanks. Ridiculous enough? If you gave a crazy premise like that a chance it could be more than you ever expected it to be. There's even a series about a big burly guy in a maid outfit. There's something for everyone since anime is such a diverse medium. If you want weird plots like those previously mentioned, there's an anime for that; if you like Victorian mystery stories like Sherlock Holmes, there's probably an anime out there similar to that; if you're really into romantic high school romances, there is a lot of anime for that. Honestly, if you can think of it, there's probably an anime for that.



(Chihayafuru: from left Arata, Chihaya and Taichi)

Anime can even be educational. Whether it be about real history, Japanese culture or even a modern day concept such as sports, you will learn something. As an example, anime centering around any kind of sport go through the motions of having their character's train for competitions and such. As they do this time is also taken to tell you about these competitions and what is needed to win them. This raises the stakes and making it more interesting. A good example of this type of anime is *Chihayafuru*. It's a sports anime about a card game centered around poetry called *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* (Hundred Poets). The first line of a poem is sung from a card, and out of fifty cards in from of one player and their opponent, the player must find the card with the next verse of the poem and slap it away claiming that card. I had never heard of this game before watching this show but the way it conveys the intensity of the game and the pressure of competitive tournaments had me wanting more. In watching this series, you learn about how the game works and why it becomes so intense while played competitively and that's how anime centered around any real world sport helps you learn about it.

Anime is still a big part of my life today and I honestly wouldn't have it any other way. Finding new shows and new experiences at the conventions just make my life a wonderful experience and I hope you find something you like in it as well if you decide to look into this crazy, amazing, medium.