

anohana

The Flower We Saw That Day

A Story About Loss That You'll Never Forget

By Kaitlin Meaney

Have you ever watched an anime or a show where you cried like a baby by the end? Have you ever felt so connected to characters after only a short episode count? Well, that was me when I marathoned this little (literally this time) show called *Anohana (The Flower We Saw That Day)* this past school year.

This is only my feelings watching this at first glance (and once again recently to take notes) and not having a lot of experience with how other shows deal with grief. So I will only be discussing how this show dealt with it specifically and how it made me, as I mentioned earlier, cry like a baby.



ANOHANA

(Image credit: A-1 Pictures. From left: Poppo, Anaru, Jintan, Menma, Yukiatsu, and Trusuko)

This eleven-episode series spawned from a serial novel consisting of two volumes released in 2011. It has many adaptations including a manga, this anime, a film and even a live action series. The story revolves around six childhood friends (Anaru, Jintan, Poppo, Yukiatsu,

Tsuruko and Menma) who were all very close when they were younger. However, one fateful day, Menma dies in a tragic accident and it shatters the group to the core causing them to all go their separate ways. Five years later, a grown Menma shows up in Jintan's home as a ghost with neither of them knowing why she is there. It turns out that she's there because there was a wish she made in life that never came true therefore revealing her unfinished business. So begins their journey to figure out what that wish is, reluctantly bringing along their now estranged friends as well. There is only one problem though: Jintan is the only one who can see Menma and this puts a strain on everyone involved as you would expect. There usually isn't a time when someone seeing something unseen is believed automatically, unless you have a friend like Poppo that is, who believes without a second thought.

As the show goes on it is revealed how her death has made an impact on this group and how they haven't really moved on. Anaru has blindly started following the "in" crowd at her high school in an attempt to fit in, Jintan has started skipping school and become a shut in, Poppo has dropped out of school and has traveled the world searching for new adventures, Tsuruko has been spending her time following around Yukiatsu since they go to the same school and Yukiatsu has been seemingly normal while holding his feelings inside. They are all holding their own guilt and their emotional walls shatter as a result of the resurfacing of the subject of their childhood friend. It also touches on how Menma's family has been dealing with her death which is just as important as that of her friends. Her mom barely leaves the house and holds a grudge over the group because they got to grow up while her daughter didn't, her father is simply trying to forget, while her brother (who barely has any memory of her) has been neglected by his parents who barely noticed that he has grown as well.



(Image credit: A-1 Productions. A photo of the group in their club house with their childhood selves)

All of them have their own feelings towards to Menma going from either admiration, love or even envy. Anaru has always admired her and even aspired to be like her, but also envied her at the same time. She was jealous that Jintan seemed to love Menma when she was in love with him. Tsuruko was also pretty envious of her for the same reason, but her jealousy came from Yukiatsu being in love with Menma as well. Then, as mentioned, both Yukiatsu and Jintan have unresolved feelings towards Menma that make things difficult when it is revealed that her ghost is around. Typical double love triangle indeed.

Yukiatsu ends up being a real dick hole throughout most of this show. He is the metaphorical “voice of reason” since he is the only one not willing to face that Jintan can see Menma. It’s revealed by the end that he’s jealous of Jintan because he wishes that she had come to him instead of his friend because of his feelings towards her.

The main theme of the story seems to be that you can let go of someone without having to forget them. Heck in the opening and closing themes there is a strong presence of forget-me-not flowers all over the place. This hints to the fact that Menma doesn’t want anyone to forget her but she also wants them to be happy. Her personality is very childlike, but in a way she is also very wise. She wants to be with her friends again but she understands that she can’t, but she takes a bit to understand that no one can see her but Jintan.

This anime is a story of loss, but at the same time a story of optimism. Even through the buckets of tears I found myself smiling by the end. The reason this show is so good is because it is so real in its depiction of how the loss of this young girl has made an impact on the world around her. It does so much in the short run time that it has, it still blows my mind. There’s just enough character development, happy and sad moments to balance itself out as a great drama. You’ll laugh, you’ll cry, you’ll have a bad case of the feels, but you will love every minute of it.