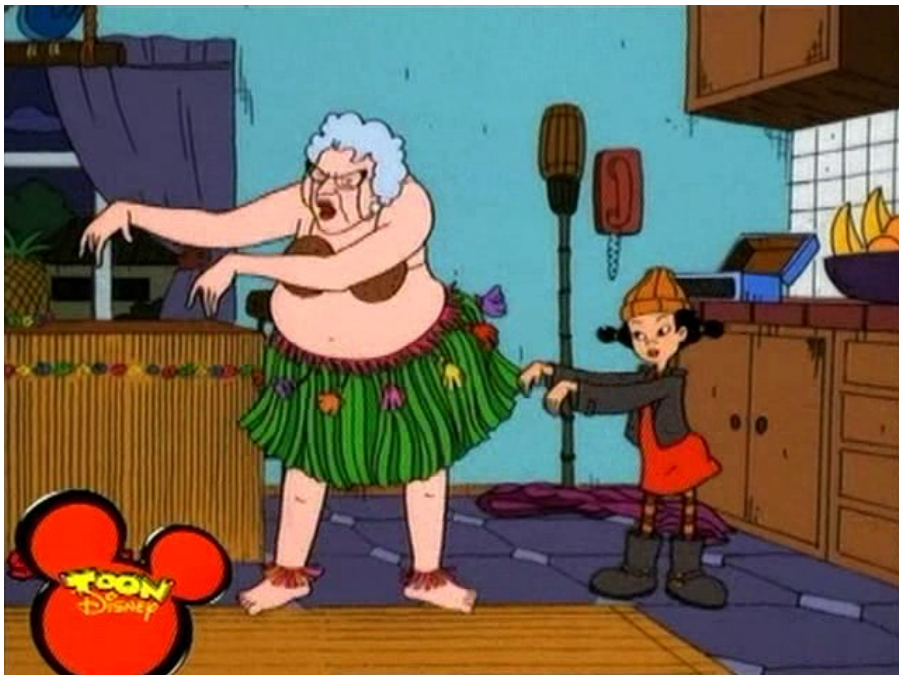


Recess - "Weekend at Muriel's" by Emily E.

Recess was the highlight of my Saturday mornings. I always wished actual recess was as exciting as the shenanigans TJ, Gretchen, Mikey, Vince, Gus, and Spinelli got into. And that my teachers and peers were as progressive as Ms. Grotke and Gretchen. But even in the show, rules and social norms exist. Strict teachers are part of this hierarchical environment. Everyone has had both laidback and strict teachers. Luckily for me, mine were always good at their job, no matter their teaching style. Still, I could never imagine my teachers outside of the classroom. Surely they lived at school. Perhaps they ate three meals in the cafeteria and slept



yet to know the classics or any ancient mythology, so the homage to various ones in every episode felt entirely fresh and wild to me.

The two part series finale, Armageddon Closer and Armageddon Outta Here, can completely stand on its own as a masterpiece. Maybe I am speaking with a wealth of nostalgia for the first time I saw it, but the finale is sweet tragedy and psychedelic. The plot is complicated but basically all of the previous foes in the series return and Max, Norman and Virgil face their destiny as predicted in "Murals." Norman is killed in a fight with a giant spider, the one thing he fears. Virgil dies at Stonehenge because Max is unable to save him from Skullmaster, the series central antagonist, an underground sorcerer based on Milton's Paradise Lost. During the climax Skullmaster is not defeated but Max does absorb the powers of time itself on the sunset of the winter solstice. Max ends up travelling back to the opening scene of the first episode of the series and it all begins again. I am not sure how to comprehensively explain how the cartoon Mighty Max affected me but I think the finale shifted something in my skull so that I am always seeking intense, bizarre narrative and art.

"I think the finale shifted something in my skull..."

Dragon Ball Z - "Goku's New Power" by Mason C.

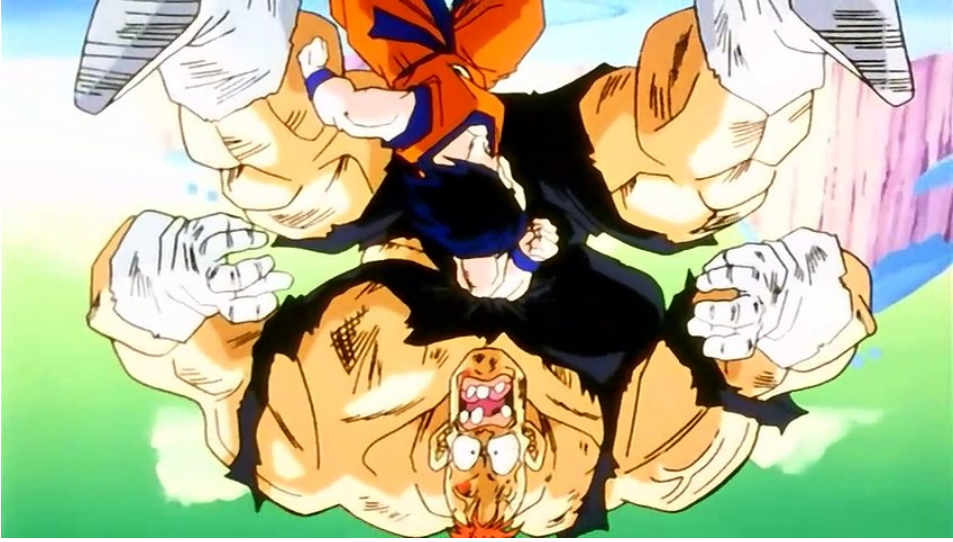
The much-maligned "yelling and flexing" that comprises a good chunk of Dragonball Z's narrative build-up is hard to defend, but the payoffs that it leads to are genuinely satisfying. Goku's New Power exemplifies this better than maybe any episode in the series. It is kind of pointless to examine one single episode of "DBZ," but this episode represents the payoff of a major subplot and the beginning of a new arc. Goku, ostensibly the main character of the show, has been out of action for something like thirty episodes, and

Recome, the villain of this episode and the two preceding it, is able to easily dispatch all our heroes as well as Vegeta, the erstwhile series antagonist. He does all this

"The fun-loving innocent Goku has become a mythological force of destruction."

while performing inane poses, talking like Bufalo Bill from Silence of the Lambs, and having most of his clothing torn off to reveal most of his shoulders and 98% of his butt. This was very sexually distressing for me as a kid and no doubt shaped me in some nebulous way. Recome was not the only such

villain that Dragonball Z would expose to my fragile 11-year-old mind (see Cell's giant androïd scorpion tail/phallus), but he was the first.



At the end of episode 65 Goku's pod arrives on the planet and he wordlessly exits, his eyebrows pointer than ever. After twenty episodes of build-up, showing him train, anxiously awaiting his re-entry into the series, this moment was 24 carat tv gold. This entire episode consists of Recome flipping Goku off (leading to hilariously horrified reactions from Gohan and Krillin), Goku proceeding to effortlessly tear apart this formerly unstoppable titan, and (my favorite part) Vegeta's internal monologue. Vegeta sells this fight to kids like they are witnessing an apocalyptic event. The fun-loving innocent Goku has become a mythological force of destruction. This episode is where we first heard the term "Super Saiyan." In the school cafeteria this was a pretty big deal.