

THE ALL-AMERICAN ANIME ISSUE



Konshuu

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THIS WEEK'S SERIES

► ANIME SHOWING

SHOUWA GENROKU RAKUGO SHINJUU

Unlike most anime nowadays, Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu is a historical anime set in the Showa Period (1970s). The main character, a delinquent named Yotarou, embarks on a journey to become a master of rakugo, a unique form of Japanese verbal entertainment, by seeking out a quiet old man named Yakumo Yurakutei. Even if you don't know what rakugo is, be sure to try out this show in order to learn more about Japan's history and culture. Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu is easy to follow, as it slowly introduces a wide variety of rakugo performances rather than bombarding viewers with unfamiliar and esoteric terminology. No characters follow the standard tropes that persist throughout other anime, and we can see that each character has their own story, and even their own way of performing rakugo. As you spend more time you spend watching Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu, it'll grow harder and harder to part with Yotarou, Yakumo, and other characters because each member of the cast is so endearing and realistic.



Studio: Studio Deen

Original Creator: Haruko Kumota



Story and Art by: Fumi Yoshinaga

MANGA SOCIAL OOKU

(*The Inner Chambers*)

In an alternate feudal Japan, a strange disease overtakes the populace, wiping out a majority of the male population and completely overturning the established social structure. 80 years pass, and Japan has transformed from a patriarchal society to a matriarchal society. Females command all positions of authority while males are subject to their dominance. In an ironic twist, the head of the Tokugawa shogunate is now female, and only she can maintain a harem of handsome men named "Ooku." The author sets up the story to be similar to a reverse harem, but we quickly find out that it has a much darker and more brutal tone.



If you haven't heard of *Rick and Morty*, chances are that you have been living under a rock these last few years. A sitcom that has taken Adult Swim by storm, *Rick and Morty* is the episodic series that explores the genius scientist and recluse Rick, his easily distressed grandson Morty, their everyday lives, and their frequent departures into the vast and bizarre worlds beyond their own. *Rick and Morty* is a widely acclaimed series, both critically and popularly, yet it is difficult for many to specifically identify what it is about the show that makes it so enjoyable. Explanations vary from the quality of the gags to the relatability of the characters, so it stands to reason that examining the elements of the show, particularly in contrast to previous works, will reveal just what it is that makes this show so endearing to fans.

While shows such as *Family Guy* and *South Park* are long past their time, they were of dubious quality even during their prime era years ago. Viewers have changed, and the shows themselves have gone from occasional utilization to sheer dependence on gags that are both crude and inappropriate. *Rick and Morty* also uses inappropriate gags that will certainly offend some people in 2016, but unlike its predecessors, the show tends to be very clever about its jokes and does not overly rely on shock, body horror, or the sexual humor of a high schooler. An additional difference that *Rick and Morty* has from other such cartoons is that the characters actually have depth; while the show follows an episodic style, it is rather clear that there is some form of plot consistency, such that the events and character changes that occur in one episode carry over to the following ones. This character exploration benefits very greatly from the setting of the story.

While most animated series will often introduce sci-fi elements at limited points in order to fulfill very specific gags, *Rick and Morty* has a focus on the sci-fi elements and continues to explore worlds both bizarre and

familiar. To elaborate, most shows use the outlandish situations afforded by science fiction in order to depict the reactions of their characters; on the other hand, the cast of *Rick and Morty* is made to explore the strange multiverse they live in while it both confirms and develops the characters. Because of the sci-fi setting and the nature of the show, it is completely possible for the creators and audience to explore any conceivable setting without suffering from issues of consistency. Even more amusing is that the creators have taken advantage of the infinite possibilities in order to create issues that would never occur in real life, often by parodying the implications of ideas that people only fantasize about in real life and swiftly deconstructing them.



While the show itself is called *Rick and Morty* and definitely has a great deal of development for both of these characters, a more accurate description of the show would be "Rick as told by Morty", which is strikingly similar to the narrative style from *Suzumiya Haruhi no Yuuutsu* as seen in the relationship between Haruhi and Kyon. In both works, the audience has the perspective character who is very straightforward and is primarily defined by his or her relationship to the more enigmatic character, the entity who motivates the plot of the story and drags the perspective character into strange situations. Morty is forced to deal with the situations caused by Rick, who in turn responds to Morty's reactions and ultimately strengthens the bond between

the two while showcasing what kind of individuals they are. Such a storytelling style is effective in this case, as Rick's personality and behaviors lead the audience to become enthralled with how he became the individual he is.

From the get go, it is highly evident that Rick is a cut above the rest of the cast, a fact that the entire series exists to illustrate for the most part. As one of the protagonists of the story, he tends to be the one who gets himself, his family, and other involved cast members out of trouble. As if to highlight Rick's presence, the rest of the cast, most commonly the family members, suffer from varying degrees of unintelligence that Rick is forced to confront. In spite of Rick's towering genius, he is not a godlike entity in the show that can simply do as he pleases, although he will most certainly try. The proof? Rick is nearly always responsible for the primary incident being addressed in each episode, often escalating the issue at hand before developing a solution that was simple all along. In fact, in spite of the sci-fi setting that Rick and Morty takes place in, the solutions that Rick comes up with are usually mundane and absurdly direct, things that anybody could have come up with given enough time.

At multiple points throughout the story, Rick shows tendencies that range from somewhat questionable to outright psychopathic, a trait which while shared by most characters in American cartoons, are often not worthy of praise. He condones, when not outright participating in, various acts which are taboo in Western society, which include but are not limited to substance abuse, excessive alcoholism, murder, genocide, theft, smuggling, and promiscuity. In addition, Rick is often a terrible person, as he is responsible for exposing his own grandson to horrors that no individual should experience. He is openly in defiance of any type of authority figures, and he is quick to dismiss the opinions of other people. While some may be critical of such practices, a great deal of people appreciate Rick's straightforwardness in living his life.

However, Rick has unseen depths that the creators have only shown glimpses into throughout the course of the series. While never directly stated, it is very strongly implied that Rick's alcohol addiction is a coping mechanism that helps him deal with what can inferred as a rather difficult past. Rick may be a sociopath, but he is no psychopath; he was developed into the

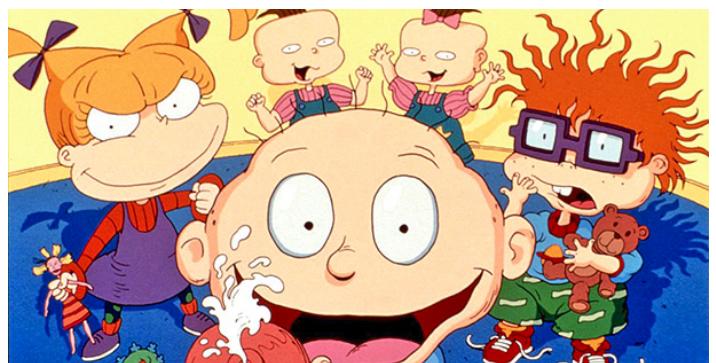
individual he is at present by the experiences that the audience sees, hears of through other characters, and speculates about. One of the most effective examples comes from the last episode of the second season, when the reclusive Rick ultimately comes to the decision to open up to others after continual encouragement from his family; just moments later, Rick's choice is betrayed and he is forced to deal with loss which he may not have otherwise had to confront. Additionally, in spite of Rick's perceived lack of regard for other human beings, he has shown a soft spot for his grandson at times, even almost sacrificing himself for Morty at one point and forfeiting himself for his family at the end of the second season. In Rick, the audience sees humanity within an individual that is least likely to show it, a compassion which most people today are unable to express.



Rick and Morty is fairly new as a series, having begun its run at the end of 2013 and having completed its second season in October 2015, with a third season announced to air near the end of 2016. The first season introduced the cast, the setting, and the general atmosphere of the show, whereas the second season brought depth, development, and exploration, culminating in a climax that forced Rick to take an action that was out of character for him. Ultimately, there is no reason to doubt Rick as the breadwinner of Rick and Morty, and upon understanding this, it becomes apparent that the show's second season will likely be looked upon as the most important, if not the best, as it uncovers Rick and forces him to a point where he has to change. While it may be unfair to make such a presumption before the third season or any following seasons have aired, Rick's character will only continue to change from this point onwards, and some people may not appreciate the direction that the creators will go with this, though there will certainly be plenty of incentive for fans of the series to continue watching. As most fans have said, Rick and Morty is a show that is better at being shown than told, so you too should join the group of people who have watched it. It is worth the watch.



The senpai-kouhai relationship involves an upperclassman and a lowerclassman, where the former is the mentor to the latter; this relationship is prevalent in Japanese works, but it is not absent within Western works. Here, we will examine the relationship across popular American anime and see how each show accounts for the cultural differences indistinguishable by its viewers. Each show ends up creating a new identity, separate from the traditional senpai-kouhai relationship, forged by more American traditions and made for more American audiences.



Recess: Recess continues the tradition of the senpai typically being able to command the kouhai through implied seniority; T.J. is the bona fide leader of his gang, displaying his superiority through his green, expensive jacket and his rebellious, backwards hat. His five friends in elementary school, like most kouhai, are not memorable or impactful enough to even have names; as such, T.J. uses them more like pawns than comrades to continue his reign of terror on the playground. The American influence here is quite obvious. Although they are in the same class, are the same age, and T.J. is not physically impressive, his social domineering and manipulation keep him at the top of the food chain, which resonates more soundly with typical American values.

Rugrats: This example is more complex and nuanced than Recess, because the characters are babies; as is custom in the West, the younger you are, the more difficult social relations are to navigate and properly label. The world of the talking baby is, by far, beyond the reach of adult understanding; Ghibli follows this formula as well, using small children for absolutely every role because of their sheer complexity and lack of social uniformity. In Rugrats, we see Tommy as the alpha male, roaming his playpen with an aura of kingliness; like Zeus, everything is in his command. Yet Chucky stands as a spiritual leader for most of them: Although Chucky lacks Conqueror's Haki, he is also the most physically strong and oldest of the group. He reneges on Tommy's commands quite regularly and becomes the senpai in the most important times; the senpai-kouhai relationship here is strained by the American value of physical fitness as a means of strong leadership.



Rocket Power: Like most sports anime, this American series highlights an important factor in Japanese culture: that of the sport and its relationship to its players, as well as the interconnectedness of teammates to each other. Otto Rocket is the leader of a ragtag team of friends who play sports, and his personal skill allows him to come out on top. Each character is highly specialized in their tropes, from the nerd to the overbearing girl, to the brainless brawn, but the senpai-kouhai relationship exists on the level of sports rather than personality. This is a departure from the Japanese tradition of maturity being used to decide hierarchy; immature characters often get scolded for their childishness, but in Rocket Power, skill decides your social role. The American drive in competition allows this new variation of senpai-kouhai to flourish.

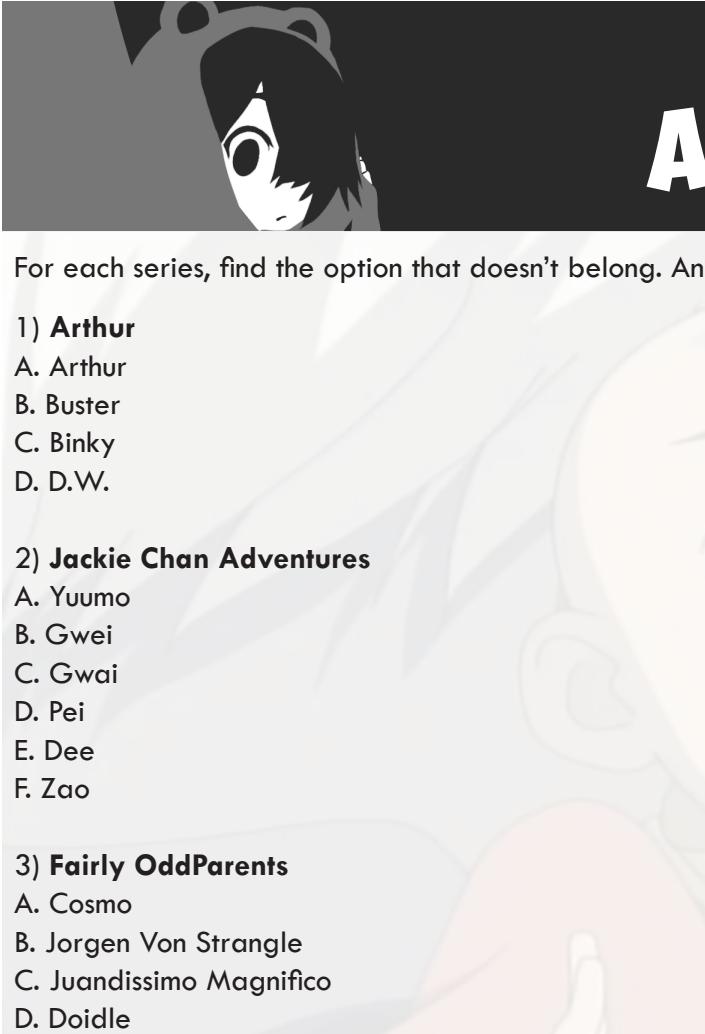
completely in line with One Punch Man. Numbah One is a capable leader who does not show his eyes, perhaps in an attempt to be dark and brooding; his leadership is defined by his bloodline, as he comes from a line of famous Kids Next Door. However, his parentage is also known for having the greatest failure in Kids Next Door history. Numbah One is like a more charismatic Sasuke Uchiha. And much like Sasuke Uchiha, Number One collects a ragtag of kids to help him selfishly fight for his dreams and goals while denying that he is inferior as a successor to greater men. The senpai-kouhai relationship here is driven solely by this dynamic; Numbah One is able to act as the senpai simply because he has more ambition rather than talent; if general leadership and talent decided the hierarchy, Numbah Five would be the superior choice.



Teen Titans: Robin is the senpai of the Teen Titans because of his high expectations, his tall orders, and his towering sense of justice—all contained within a few feet. The senpai-kouhai relationship in Teen Titans relates mostly to being the last one standing in a team fight; as each Titan takes on a minion, Robin often avoids fighting so that he can take on the boss for himself; in this way, he becomes the symbolic leader even though he wins and loses just as often as any other Titan. This is much like Luffy in One Piece, who will only have occasional fights until he and the boss are the last ones standing. Leadership means survival of the fittest, and survival means avoiding combat until it's your time to shine. This example is unique in that the senpai-kouhai relationship also becomes romantic between Robin and Starfire, and follows the American tradition of using love as a cheap way of characterizing a quiet, moody character who would otherwise be a lonely, bo staff wielding wretch.



Codename: Kids Next Door: In American anime, there tends to be a correlation between being bald and being a leader; this is in complete opposition to Yu-Gi-Oh, but



ALL-AMERICAN ANIME QUIZ

For each series, find the option that doesn't belong. Answers can be found at the bottom of this page.

1) Arthur

- A. Arthur
- B. Buster
- C. Binky
- D. D.W.

2) Jackie Chan Adventures

- A. Yuumo
- B. Gwei
- C. Gwai
- D. Pei
- E. Dee
- F. Zao

3) Fairly OddParents

- A. Cosmo
- B. Jorgen Von Strangle
- C. Juandissimo Magnifico
- D. Doidle

4) South Park

- A. Craig
- B. Gary
- C. Tweak
- D. Token
- E. Jimmy

5) Cyberchase

- A. Jackie
- B. Matt
- C. Inez
- D. Digit
- E. Buzz

6) Avatar: The Last Airbender

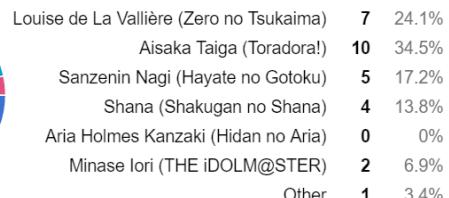
- A. Kyoshi
- B. Aang
- C. Bumi
- D. Roku

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Who is your favorite Tsundere voiced by Kugimiya Rie?



RESULTS



THIS WEEK'S POLL

Which of these acclaimed and top-rated anime had the best English dub?



Vote now at: J.MP/KONPOLL4308

Answers: D, D, B, E, C



HAPPY APRIL FOOLS'!!

And don't forget to submit articles
and artwork to **J.MP/KONSUB!**

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KONSHUU STAFF

Managing Editor: Tina Nguyen

Layout Editors: Edward Hong, Nimsi Garcia

Writers: Aaron Chon, Andrew Oeung,

Andy Chen, Austin Tai, Josh Roque

Illustrator: Rika Sato

WEEKLY EVENTS

Anime Showings and Socials

9 Evans

Mondays, 7:00 - 10:00pm

Manga Socials

106 Dwinelle

Thursdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm

Game Nights

2030 VLSB

Thursdays, 7:30 - 10:00pm

WEEKLY SHOWINGS

Dimension W

Himouto! Umaru-chan

NEXT WEEK'S SHOWING: KONOSubA

