**Why Are Cartoons That Are Widely Regarded as Landmarks in Animation History Generally Canceled?**

**A Rhetorical Think Piece**

**Introduction**

Cartoons are one of the most popular and widespread forms of entertainment today. Many television networks specialize in airing solely cartoons, such as Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. These episodic animations have been present in the lives of almost every American, imparting a variety of morals on their audiences, or teaching them about life and all of its associated ups and downs. Cartoons are a brilliant medium, as they have the ability to address many of life’s questions and struggles in a manner that audience members can grasp. Additionally, they are an art form with near-infinite possibilities. Cartoons are often produced by a team of passionate animators and writers, eager to create a unique world, memorable characters, and an interesting story.

One may scoff at the seemingly trivial and childish topic of animated television shows, or cartoons. However, when analyzing the effects cartoons have on people worldwide, the hard work that is poured into their creation, and the beauty of storytelling in such a limitless medium, it is easy to see how important of a role cartoons play. Sadly, many cartoons today are facing severe threats that could unjustly cut their lives short. My Life as a Teenage Robot was canceled on October 17th, 2005 due to ratings (Wichobot, 2005). Wander Over Yonder ended March 5th, 2016 due to the executives refusing the staff the opportunity of a writing an overarching plot (Amidi, 2016). Sym-Bionic Titan was hung up to dry because Cartoon Network was unable to acquire a toy license (Moore, 2011). Network executives, money, attention spans, and many more issues are at play in the plague of unceremonious cartoon cancelations. This, especially to one as passionate about cartoons as I, is serious cause for alarm. Cartoons should not be cut short for the sole purpose of money or monetary gain, but should be given a chance to grow and develop.

Setting aside the pretentious air that comes with dubbing cartoons “an art form,” we can analyze the reasoning behind my claim. Besides the beauty of animation and character design, cartoons have the unique trait of imparting important life lessons and touching on difficult topics in a way that viewers will understand and remember. Teenage Robot taught me that there’s more to someone than just their outside appearance; they are their own unique person with their own unique experience. Sara Goodwin of *The Mary Sue,* and two Bachelor’s degrees,agrees wholeheartedly. In her article, “Not Just for Kids: Important Life Lessons Learned From Cartoon Characters”, Goodwin addresses the big variety of morals and life lessons that anyone can take away from cartoon shows, not just young kids. She starts off by levying the claim that cartoons are not, in fact, just for children (Goodwin, 2017). She then proceeds to list and describe the many important morals that are found across the spectrum of television animation. Goodwin takes a well-known cartoon and lifts a moral found within its episodes and overarching themes, thereby proving that cartoons are an important medium to everyone, from children to adults.

This article is considerably reliable. It is extremely recent. Additionally, Goodwin, the author, has two degrees: A Bachelor’s in classical civilization and a Master’s in Library Science, both from Indiana University. She isn’t however, an official on animation and cartoons. It is limited by the fact that there is a lack of a thorough counter-argument, aside from her criticism of Scooby-Doo, in which she admits that the gang’s recurring decision to split up could send the wrong message to children (Goodwin, 2017). It doesn’t admit how some cartoons could potentially be imparting bad morals on its audience.

A fresh perspective will be presented in this article, as it shows all the different morals found in cartoons, and how they affect their audience. This is one of the sole articles that realizes the power that cartoons wield, and presents and analyzes many examples. For example, Cartoon Network’s Steven Universe, a bildungsroman style show about the titular Steven, teaches that “[f]amilies come in all different shapes and sizes, and that’s cool” (Goodwin, 2017). She then proceeds to list the astoundingly diverse lineup of families found within the show. Goodwin (2017) notes how Voltron: Legendary Defender champions the idea that “different people can make a difference [in different ways].” There is an important message of holding off judgement, of understanding other’s perspectives embedded in the show’s themes. Goodwin continues this pattern on many other cartoons. This smattering of ways cartoons teaches their audiences reveals that there is more to cartoons than just distracting you child, or monetary gain. They shouldn’t be ignored or canceled for such shallow reasons.

Despite my ragging on the monetary and business motivations of network executives, there is some validity in the abrupt canceling of these cartoons, even if they are well-liked. That is why I decided to delve into the process of cartoon production. Sean Russel goes very in-depth in “How TV Animation Works.” Russell goes through the production process for an episode of a cartoon show. He compares cartoon production to the making of a live-action television show, including the cost, time, and supplies required to make a cartoon show. Russell points out that it is much more difficult it is to make a cartoon, and how many people are involved in its making.

This text seems somewhat reliable. The author isn’t an official on the subject, but uses advanced animation and cartoon vocabulary that I can verify. It is limited by its relevancy and bias, as it is an older article. Furthermore, it does not cite any official sources on the topic. Russell has a very neat perspective, showing how ridiculously hard it is to make a cartoon, especially when compared to a live-action show. Russell implies arguments to cancel cartoons, besides ratings, but he also does the opposite. However, I think I can make up for the article’s lack of outside credibility through my own experience. I have been faithfully following cartoons since childhood. I animate regularly at home for my own pleasure, and I have conversed with animation veterans, including Tony Bancroft, the director of Mulan.

Reading through Russell’s stages of cartoon production reveal how grueling it is to make even just one twenty-minute episode. Television animation is traditionally produced at 24 frames per second. This means that each second of footage contains 24 separately drawn images, or frames. That means that “the make up [of] a typical half-hour program consists of around 30,000 separate frames” (Russell). Just the time – about 9 months – and cost it takes to create these frames alone highlights the main point Russell makes at the start of his piece. “While [t]he production process for a live action TV show is fairly straightforward. … Producing an animated television program is a far more laborious process, involving dozens of people working hundreds of hours” (Russell). Before the frames are even created, for example, the visuals must be storyboarded, put into an animatic, and outsourced to another animation studio, where they make in-betweens. Then, the animation must be inked, painted and colored. And that’s just the process for creating the visuals. This is the main argument for canceling cartoons, and understandably so. The cost, time, and effort is so high, that when the payoff is low, we can understand why an executive would decide to end a show. Creating a cartoon episode comes with all the problems of creating a live-action show, but with the added problems of higher cost, more time, more workers, and higher risk.

Now, I admit the risk and cost of creating a cartoon is a valid consideration for stopping a cartoon prematurely. However, I think that today’s executives are a bit too eager to pull out this excuse to stop any cartoon, just so they can save a couple bucks. One of my favorite cartoons is Sym-Bionic Titan, a high-octane action series involving aliens and advanced technology, was canceled after one season for the sole reason of the lack of a toy license so that the company could produce merchandise. Ben Moore is as outraged as I am.

In “Genndy Tartakovsky’s ‘Sym-Bionic Titan’ Canceled Due to Lack of Merchandise?”, Moore contends Cartoon Network’s sudden decision to suddenly cancel one of their most popular cartoons, Sym-Bionic Titan. This show garnered very positive ratings, garnering aggregate scores of 8.2 out of 10 on IMDb (IMDb.com) and 9.1 out of 10 on TV.com (TV.com) from viewers. Moore prefaces the article by listing some of Genndy Tartakovsky’s previous works, then summarizing the plot of Titan. He then voices his disapproval of the announcement and renounces the reasons for doing so. Afterward, the author references the displeasure of the cartoon’s loyal audience as well, confirming that the cancelation upset a great number of viewers.

This article is considerably authoritative. It came out several years ago, so it might be somewhat dated. However, it came out exactly when the cartoon was canceled, so Moore portrays a genuine reaction to the cancelation. “Cartoon Network has made a massive mistake” Moore gripes (2011). He even speaks the thought that many others had. “So what if *Titan* doesn’t have enough toys for the merchandise-addled children of America to purchase? … Let it breathe! Let it grow!” (Moore, 2011) It does have some other sources backing up the info. Moore provides an authentic perspective on the cancelation of a cartoon, and helps to further claim that cartoons are too easily canceled. We need to give cartoons a change to develop, to tell their stories, to present their characters, to paint their themes.

**Conclusion**

While there are legitimate reasons to consider canceling a cartoon, like cost, risk, and time, I think supporting cartoons and their staff despite these risks are far more important. Executives have become too obsessed with monetary gain. They cancel cartoons for something like a lack of merchandise without a second thought for their audience or the staff.

Cartoons can be beautiful. They can teach their audience about emotions and the human experience. They can impart powerful morals onto their audience. Cartoons should be free to breathe and grow; to be free of the shackles of business-minded CEO’s.

**Audience Justification**

The audience I have chosen is the anyone willing to listen. Anyone willing to give cartoons a chance. More specifically, to the artists, the creators, the supporters, the lovers of cartoons. Everyone is affected by cartoons. Anyone can and could be affected by cartoons. Nearly every adult grew up watching cartoons, whether fervently getting up every Saturday morning, to casually flipping the channels and finding a show.

Everyone, especially children, have near-limitless access to cartoon shows, and thusly, their morals and experiences. There is such a huge variety of cartoons available to anyone. Animation is becoming an increasingly versatile and prevalent medium.

I tried to arouse the emotions of my audience, and specifically cartoon-lovers, was to use aggressive and upset language. I want to sound reasonable, so I acknowledge counterarguments. I appeal to everyone by noting how widespread cartoons’ influence is, and how their morals and depictions of life can impact viewers. I also try to emphasize the artistic importance and integrity of cartoons as an art form, so that everyone can at least try to appreciate the amount of thought and work that goes into cartoons.