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It's Not Just a Kid's Show

What do people think of when they think of cartoons? Do they think of humorous characters with basic and stereotypical personalities, simple graphics and animation, good morals, or your typical good-defeats-bad story structure? Often these descriptions are what people tend to associate with cartoons. Many who think they've outgrown cartoons aren't convinced that cartoons will satisfy their viewing desires, whether their desire is for sci-fi adventures, dramatic cliffhangers, romantic plots, well-written character development, or even sad and emotional downbeats. I agree that it can be hard to get into a cartoon without growing up on it previously; however, regardless of whether or not a show is made for kids, age shouldn't matter. Many who think they're too old for that content don't realize how well-written cartoons can be in terms of their plot and characters, or what they may be missing out on by using their age or the cartoon's simplicity as an excuse to avoid, or claim they dislike the show. There are many shows I watch that are made for kids, and I've found that having an open mind in this area has given me a lot to discover and enjoy. Watching and enjoying shows made for kids has not only given me more to enjoy, but it has also made me realize that I'm able to enjoy these things without feeling embarrassed or "too old".

Often when someone reaches a certain age and maturity, they tend to dive into more mature content and leave their childhood shows behind. While I do agree that it's good to let go

of the past, I don't think someone should say they enjoy or don't enjoy something purely based on how old they are. I'm currently sixteen (soon to be seventeen) and I semi-recently decided to rewatch a show I hadn't seen since I was little. The show is called *Rescue Bots* and is a Transformers series targeted toward younger audiences. Despite my age and the simplicity of the series, I was super invested in the story, and I found myself really enjoying the characters' personalities as well as the whole idea of the rescue bots being a secret. I then started searching for the rest of the seasons as well as diving into the show's relation to two other Transformers series: *Prime* and *Robots in Disguise*. I've enjoyed learning more about this series and the ones surrounding it, even if they are made for kids. Some of the biggest reasons that the Transformers franchise has been around so long has been because of the amount of content it's put out along with the vast community that has been built up around it. The Transformers franchise has a variety of shows and movies available for a variety of ages, but that doesn't mean adults or older fans are limited to enjoying the live-action movies or the animated classics. The fact that many older fans can enjoy the classic cartoons proves that they are capable of enjoying the newer cartoons as well. And this just goes to show that one doesn't have to be a kid to enjoy shows that are made for kids. While I do agree that preference plays a big role in choosing to watch cartoons, age shouldn't.

Another thing one could argue is that a lot of people don't enjoy certain cartoons because they didn't grow up on them. While this is mostly true, it shouldn't affect one's ability to be open-minded. For a while, I was never interested in watching *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. This was most likely because I had watched some of it before, but I never seemed to enjoy it. I was recently in the mood to try something new and decided on that show. As it turns out, I found that I enjoyed watching the show much more than I thought I would and even dove into fandom

somewhat. I watched YouTube videos about the show, learned more about the voice actors, read the comics, and even looked at some fan-made stories and art. I found myself getting really invested in the show and the media surrounding it even though I never grew up watching, or at least liking it. Some aspects of the show that were most appealing to me included character development, parallels, lore, and much more. The show is exciting, funny, empowering, and focuses a lot on the characters and their individual journeys. While this show in particular may not be for everyone, the most important thing to remember is that anyone can enjoy a show despite not growing up watching it, or previously disliking it, and that it's worth trying new things.

Someone could also argue that a simplistic plot is what makes certain cartoons boring, repetitive, and unenjoyable. While there's nothing wrong with disliking a poorly written plot, is it reasonable to say a plot is poorly written just because it's simple? For example, one of LEGO's newest shows, *LEGO Dreamzzz*, could be argued to have a simple plot. The characters go to sleep, and wake in the dream world where they fight off the Nightmare King. While the general plot is extremely simple, there are many occurrences throughout the show that give more depth and detail to the plot, making the show more engaging, relatable, and exciting. While I enjoy the characters' adventures in the dream world, some of my favorite parts are when the characters are awake and interacting with each other and going to school together. Some of my favorite moments in the show are when they interact with members of a nightmare club who are basically traumatized by their dreams, and how the main characters attempt to keep their dream world identities secret from them. It's interesting to see what it's like to have to keep it a secret from others and overcome obstacles in both worlds in order to accomplish their goals. Seeing all this made me realize just how much I would've missed if I had brushed it off and assumed the plot

wouldn't be engaging. All this to say, disliking a cartoon or claiming it's bad shouldn't be because of a simplistic plot. Sometimes, it can be worth watching shows with a simple plot if only to see the bigger picture and how complex it really is.

In relation to the plot, some might say they don't like the characters in a show because of stereotypical personalities or lack of character development. I understand poor character development, but basic personalities can be very fitting for certain characters from a cartoon. The *Ultimate Spider-Man* series features a very quippy, almost obnoxious version of Peter Parker, and the quips don't stop throughout the entirety of the show. While this can be a sign of poor character development in the form of a lack of maturity, it's actually a well-known character trait that can be seen in every existing version of Spider-Man. And if someone claims to enjoy the live action Spider-Man movies, they can't really use the personality of the cartoon Spider-Man to claim they dislike the show since both the cartoon and live action characters have similar personalities. I've found myself doing something similar with characters from different Pokémon series. With that in mind, it's better to judge a character based on how well-written they are, and not simply on what their personality is.

For a while, I've found myself slightly embarrassed whenever I bring up a show I like that is aimed at younger audiences. The biggest example being whenever I mention I'm a huge fan of *LEGO Ninjago*. I've been watching *Ninjago* way longer than any other show I've listed and I'm still keeping up with it to this day. The show has lasted since 2011 and is still putting out new seasons that appeal to both new and old fans of the show. It has a large variety of content that both younger and older fans can enjoy including the series itself, books, Lego sets, and much more. And while I often find myself embarrassed to talk about it (mainly because I won't stop), it's one of the main reasons I've come to realize that cartoons and media made for kids can be

enjoyed by people of all ages. It may not be for everyone, but that doesn't mean no adults or older audiences can enjoy it.

I understand that personal preference plays a big role in all this, but no one should judge a cartoon simply based on their age, a simple plot, or simple characters. In addition, no one should be embarrassed about what makes them happy, especially if what they enjoy is made for audiences younger than them. Rather than avoiding a cartoon because of these, it can be surprising to learn just how complex a show can be if one is willing to keep an open mind about it. I was once asked to watch *Megamind* by some kids I was babysitting. I was previously given the chance to watch it with some friends, but I wasn't interested. While I didn't really want to, I could tell the kids really enjoyed it and decided to give it a shot. Since then, *Megamind* has become my new favorite villain story of all time. I really enjoy his sense of humor and his progression from being a villain, to his new status as a hero and the events that led up to it. Being open to trying something new gave me something to enjoy. And this just shows how important it is to keep an open mind, because new discoveries can appear when you least expect them to.