

College LaSalle

Rebecca Brodtkin

Thinking critically about television programming

Group 332

Veronica Vargas Zaraza

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When we were given this assignment, it was hard to choose the shows I wanted to work on. I wanted something that would not only be good but also meaningful to me. That is how I got to the idea of doing both “One Punch Man” and “Death Note.” Both these shows are shows that when I watched I was taken back by their, animation, plot, direction, and themes that were completely different to what I was used to seeing in Eastern media. In the case of Death Note is completely thrilling and catching while also being amazingly clever. On the other hand, One Punch Man, my choice for comedy, is a story that parodies everything we have ever seen about superheroes. The main character has the most ironic struggle in the world; he is too strong. Thus, the irony of seeing his constant struggle to search for motivation is one of a kind. In addition to its themes, well-choreographed fights, and interesting characters that made me think of how good this show is.

On the episode, I watched of “One Punch Man,” “the terrifying city,” the plot begins when Genos, the main characters’ disciple and an S-class superhero (the highest rank in the superhero level), remembers Saitama, the main character and a C-class hero (the lowest rank there is) the hero association they work on fires those heroes who are inactive for more than a week. This is due to his concern for Saitama being the inactive reading manga for the last 6 days. Completely unaware of this, Saitama starts patrolling before the deadline is over. Genos wishes to follow him. However, Saitama rejects Genos' request by saying he should train his mind and find goals for his own such as climbing in the ladder of heroes; nevertheless, this is just Saitama making up information since he doesn't know what to teach a guy like Genos.

The first afternoon he does not find anything. So as the second day of patrolling end, Saitama begins to stress over the fact of maybe being laid off, unable to do anything. Like a man who is a beginner salesman who just can't land the first sale. As if that was not enough, Speed-o'-Sound Sonic, a ninja, and a criminal, shows up for revenge after the extreme defeat he was given on an earlier episode. Saitama brushes him off. After Sonic throws an explosive shuriken at another hero who was scolding Saitama for his weird behavior, the criminal begins to cause a havoc. And, gets defeated in a second.

Later that day in Saitama's old neighborhood, a mysterious kombu monster began skulking around to scare those living in the abandoned Z-City. Casually, the hero association sends some of its members to do a report on that city, A-Class's Golden Ball and Spring Mustachio to the area instead of her, who is a higher rank, S-class.

In Z-City the two aforementioned heroes patrol in the wonder of the rumor about the dangerous matriarch-monster that brought more zombies to the area. Even though at the beginning they don't find anything, they later find themselves against the kombu monster, who had heard of rumors of a monster group surrounding in that city. The duo was engaged in a heated battle. Knowing they were unmatched, Mustachio calls for reinforcements. He is almost immediately defeated. For a moment, the monster begins to plan on creating a monster community in said place until Saitama appears coming home from the supermarket, on his way home. The monster sees him and begins to attack when we hear Saitama say he forgot to buy Kombu. After this, the show cuts to a scene of him cooking Kombu soup when Genos walks in.

After this, we see that the reinforces saw a building destroyed due to powerful forces, a piece of the kombu leaves of the monster, and the injured heroes unaware of who was their savior. Which creates the dramatic irony that everyone believes there are a very powerful monster and a monster feud going on when there is only Saitama. He was the one who broke the building.

I find this plot brilliant, even though we have already seen the: "Oh god I left everything to the last minute and now I am going to get in trouble" trope and the "You are the villain. No, I am the hero" trope in many different shows of different mediums, it is done in a new and exciting way. How I saw it being done not only in a setting so casual and extravagant way. It is a mix of everything I have seen before in a way I have not seen before.

The fact that the overall plot is original makes the storyline of each episode be able to stand out as its own piece. I find myself completely in love with the idea of Saitama being completely unhappy with how strong he is, Genos admiration for what Saitama hates (his strength), his inability to teach Genos, and so on and so forth. It is interesting because even though characters like Tanktop Tiger are normal to see, most of them have a unique air in their execution thanks to the characters and the world building the story has (how they have to climb the ladder to become better superheroes as if it was a normal job). This is seen in Tatsumaki who gets angry because she is in the top range of superheroes and not chosen for a task. It is not the originality. A childish character asking for the lower standard task is not uncommon to see. But the ambiance of the superheroes almost working in an office and getting assigned tasks unlike the Marvel movies where they are these cool unreachable people has a charm and uniqueness I cannot pass by.

That is how I began to see the values or lessons the show expresses. The main one is how no matter strong we are, we will always have struggles. We see that when the main character, even when able to defeat a villain with one punch, still struggles to stay as a professional superhero due to a weekly quota the hero association asks. It is a realistic point of view of the world that can speak to anyone.

The story also highlights a true and crude aspect of society, classism. Everything depends on your rank and how known you are. If you are not in the constant public eye like we see Tanktop Tiger, you are worthless and a tool for others like we see Saitama. This is a value that can be seen in almost every episode and not only does it represent the way we actually live where we create hierarchies based on relatively trivial things. It is a sad truth.

But then again, we as a society see people treating others like garbage because of things like their skin color.

The characters are also a gem on their own. On the episode, we get to see how most characters are all unique. Meanwhile, even though we do see that Saitama and Genos are characters with a broader range of feelings and motivations. The supporting cast is surprisingly different and diverse. They all are relying on some kind of cliché; we see that Mustachio has the cliché “Italian” behavior for example. However, it does not give the characteristic that the show is cheap or not having enough ideas to create characters. This because they probably produced them like that to make laughs as well as be able to digest and understand better when we see them with their powers, noticing that the powers usually match their personality perfectly. After all, they are not the main characters. Then there is Genos and Saitama. Saitama is completely unique and innovative compared to what I am used to seeing. His goofiness and aloofness combined with his unnatural strength make one of the funniest characters I’ve ever seen. Genos even though he is not appearing in the episode is the stereotype of what the main character is; he wants to become the best, the strongest and has a dark, tragic past he wants to overcome. But, being next to Saitama, we get to see the irony the whole show bases itself on while seeing a character I personally love. He, unlike Saitama, who is on the top of how he can be, causing his boredom, is always learning and trying to improve himself. I find it not only nice but also funny when the characters get together.

When comparing the show to other types of shows I’ve watched before (like the big bang theory). I realize there is no such thing as a laugh track in the show. That’s due to its

humor as well as the culture it comes from. Firstly, it is as stated before based mostly on the situation's irony or quirky body expression and language. Most of my chuckles were caused by seeing things like Saitama's expression to monsters. It does not make me laugh at loud. But I do am constantly chuckling at its silliness. Not only would it be weird if the final scenes would be ruined by a laugh track but animation or anime is not a medium that uses that type of tactic to cause laughs.

This comparison made me realize also that the age groups allowed to watch this show are not as limited as I first thought. There are almost dead experiences and blood. However, it is not something a teenager couldn't handle. The fact that it is animation instead of living action makes it less gruesome for me. It takes away the seriousness of the serious injuries. Also, the humor is relatively innocent. Saitama's goofy face is enough to make one laugh. Sonic's havoc causing havoc and Saitama's unawareness of how much of a serious criminal the other one is, makes it impossible for me to find anything I would consider inappropriate.

Thus, after processing all of this I can surely promote the show as an amazing and charismatic display. I love so many aspects of it, as I have stated before. I could not recommend it to anyone when talking about shows I have watched. It is a quick view; it only has 12 episodes of 20 minutes each and I think it is really worth the time. Which is why I also would promote it being used in a college discussion. It is relatively respectful and shows an impressive number of interesting topics that could be discussed in a class

setting. I would love to discuss the hero ladder, the characters representation, or how a world of superheroes can depict so closely how we live nowadays.

The next show I am going to be talking about is the classic in Japanese culture, “Death Note.” It is an anime about Light Yagami, a teenager who gets a notebook with the power to kill anyone by just writing their name in it. The notebook has very specific rules, for example, if you write someone name alone they’ll die from a heart attack in 40 seconds. After receiving the death note, Light gets a new life purpose, killing those criminals who he seems as unworthy and filthy to create a brand-new world where he is seen as the god. So, he begins his serial murders. People begin to call the unknown killer “Kira” and begin to either worship him or argue him severely. The big murders bring the best detective in the world, L, to try to hunt down who is the person causing all the deaths of the criminals. He quickly begins to suspect Light. This begins an interesting game of cat and mouse in between the two of them. Where L wants to find the undeniable proof that Light is Kira and Light wants to find L’s real name.

These two characters are the main focus for most of the plot. They are made to look like complete opposites. Light looks composed and proper while L is quirky and socially incompetent. They also have the two types of opposite types of view: Light thinks murder is the way and that what he does is the justice that will make the world a better place while L thinks one person judging all of us is unfair and that he is the justice that will bring back the balance. Which is why they are constantly trying to outsmart one another. Even though L is not the one that actually unravels Kira, he is the one that is most highlighted. This is because how L is the main and most proper way to perform a contrast to Light. Especially,

since they also have something in common. They are both incredibly smart and hate to lose. Thus, even a match of tennis becomes an exaggerated battle of minds in between the two.

That's why the primary theme is Justice, and how is the right way to achieve it. It bases on what really as a society would be considered fair. The opposite characters represent the ideals of how we should judge what is good. They constantly call themselves justice. And Light himself makes a statement that explains how if Kira loses he will be seen as a murderer, but if he wins he will be justice. This and the constant turmoil that begins to switch in the world with people fighting or worshipping Kira makes you wonder what is really fair and what is really a crime. The interesting thing though, is that they created a character that represents a middle ground in between these two opposites. Matsuda says many times how he wants to catch Kira because he is killing people but also acknowledges how much the world has improved since Kira appeared. Even though I was very against Kira, I did understand his point of view and realized how things cannot be black and white. Actually, his speeches were the moments where I actually sat down to think of the themes throughout the shows.

Kira's side is based on how evil people that commit horrible crimes do not deserve to live. Thus, the show implies and shows many different instances where Light is writing names, giving people heart attacks. However, as more people begin to go against him, he begins to murder them and use those in his favor to make him stay safe and away from danger. We see this when Light makes Ray Penber, a C.I.A member that is investigating him, to write the names of the other C.I.A members. When Ray is over Light writes his name as well and take care of the papers so that no one sees them. This is one of the many

times he simply kills people not because they are criminals but to show the god complex Light has begun to develop. Anyone who is against him deserves to die according to him. Violence is heavy on the plot and each one of them shows how he slowly loses his composure and becomes farther away from human himself. Every death he writes makes me feel like he is farther away from humanity. Which is shown in the manner he thinks and reacts in the first episode compared to the last.

Light is one of those characters that try to make it so that every situation benefits himself. That is how he ends up becoming the biggest manipulator in the show. He uses shamelessly Misa and Kiyomi and makes them believe he is in love with them when he only uses them as a tool. He literally dates both of them and the same time while he uses them telling each how she is the one he loves. He even tries to use his father and make everyone believe he is innocent when he is not. The only time he shows genuine emotion or compassion is towards his family.

On the other hand, there are the type of betrayal Aizawa felt when he couldn't quit the task force, for minutes later to find out that those who did stay were going to be remunerated by L. another proof of the contrast of the two characters; Light kills Kiyomi while L lies temporarily to them to see their actual loyalty.

Betrayal nevertheless is not seen as strongly as when L dies in the show. It becomes a point where 3 characters died in less than a minute, leaving me both mourning the characters' death and the triumph of the evil character. I saw Light motives as wrong from episode 1. Hence, when he won L, I felt as if anarchy defeated justice. I felt betrayed as a

viewer who believes that death penalty is wrong. The ideology that one person could not have so much power without being stopped was thrown under the bus for a moment. Even when the show gives Kira the ending he deserves, it is disheartening to see how this man who was so close to catching an international mass murderer gets defeated by the mere luck of Light.

Either way, even when Light Yagami dies at the end of the show. There is still a very heavy unbiased question over what Justice is. Even though I saw every murder Kira did as horrible and the show depicts it as so. I also realized how the crime rates were lower than ever before in the whole world. This makes me question “what is justice?” myself.

And, even though I still do not believe Light Yagami was right when he took the person of Kira and began killing around. I find myself involved by him. When he died I found myself shocked by the destruction he had. I find the show, its characters, themes, and plot so captivating. It is interesting to me how they set such views of the world and society with Kira and his reception; in addition to Light’s character development from normal kid to evil creature due to the excess of power. Thus, this type of views, next to the smart scenes, the quick pacing are things that I think would be enjoyed in a class discussion. A debate over who is right would be interesting to see. As well as I think it is very interesting to see and analyze the different aspects of the show.

After both writing and reading this, I realized many things about myself. First than anything, I am very biased when talking about shows I like. And also, that I really enjoy analyzing and seeing the differences in between the shows' characters and themes in between themselves or with other shows, or reality. As well as how I like shows I can watch entirely in a short amount of time

I realized how "One Punch Man" humor is really funny because of how much the media is filled with superheroes nowadays. Something I did find interesting. In addition, to the reality this show actually has.

"Death Note" on the other hand, by looking at it. I have analyzed this show many times since I first saw it. And I feel like what changes each time I do this is not the different things I find in the show, but the ones I find in myself. As I grow older the more I find myself partial to a side instead of seeing both sides of the anime as equally valid as they should be.