

TV & FILM

A Parent's Guide to

ANIME & MANGA

axis



You know how your
parents teach you
about life? I learned
about life through
Naruto.

— [Carlos, a teen who loves anime](#)

A Parent's Guide to **ANIME & MANGA**

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What is anime? What is manga?

In Japan, anime is simply an abbreviation for ‘animation.’ Outside Japan, anime refers to the specifically Japanese style of animation. So while an animation from anywhere in the world is called ‘anime’ in Japan, in the U.S. and elsewhere ‘anime’ means animation created in Japan. — [Mark Trainer, writer for Share America](#)

You can find anime about pretty much any topic. If you have a Netflix account, log on and select “Anime” from the [shows or movies genres](#). You’ll see “Romantic Anime,” “Goofy Anime,” “Exciting Supernatural Anime,” “TV Shows About Friendship,” “Comedy Anime,” etc. Anime is more of a medium than a genre, so almost every genre is represented by this Japanese style of animation and storytelling.

While there are a few adult cartoons (like [South Park](#), [Archer](#), and [Bojack Horseman](#)), in the US, cartoons are mostly seen as children’s entertainment. Kids like Disney movies. Tweens watch Cartoon Network. Because anime is often intended for teens and adults, it uniquely appeals to teens who want to be treated like mature viewers. It addresses [relatable themes](#) like romantic attraction, teen relationships, depression, and the despair that can come when things don’t work out the way we want them to.

Anime and manga have a reciprocal relationship. [Mark Trainer](#) explains:

To the Japanese, manga means all comics and cartooning. It comes from two Japanese characters for ‘whimsical’ and ‘pictures.’ Outside of Japan, manga identifies the Japanese style of comics created for both children and adults. A large percentage of anime is adapted from existing manga books, and some successful anime series are adapted to manga versions.

Both anime and manga are Japanese styles of cartooning. The basic difference is that anime is the video version and manga is the print version.

How long has anime been around? How long has it been popular?

1917 - The first animated film is released in Japan. It’s made with chalk and is less than 5 minutes long.

1930s-40s - Anime and manga are used by the Japanese government as [propaganda tools](#) during World War I and World War II.

1958 - With the invention of the television, people no longer need to go to a theater to watch films. Short anime are exported all over the world to watch from the comfort of the family living room, *“[Such export enthusiasm](#) in its early days was based on the worldwide success of Disney’s animation films, as well as upon the assumption that animated films would have a better chance of succeeding in the West than live-action films featuring Asian actors.”*

1963 - *Tetsuwan Atom (Astro Boy)*, the first anime TV series, airs in the US. It’s profitable and gets high ratings. *“[Many tropes we think of](#) when we think ‘anime’ today were codified by *Tetsuwan Atom*, including big eyes, robot battles, and stylized hair impossible to achieve in normal gravity. It was the coolest thing on TV and everyone loved it!”*

1970s - Anime continues to grow and gain popularity. Teens appreciate its ability to address mature themes, especially compared to the more childish Saturday morning cartoons. *“[Touching on themes](#) as disparate as sex, death, science fiction and romance, manga and anime catered to all ages and tastes. Commercial hits like *Pokémon* and *Dragon Ball Z*, meanwhile, projected a new image of Japan to the world.”*

1980s - The Golden Age of anime. VHS and other home recording devices enter the market, so it becomes easier to watch anime than ever. Private viewing (which allows viewers to circumvent public television standards) allows for a new, pornographic genre of anime: hentai.

1990s - *Pokémon* achieves international success. Millennials grow up watching anime when they come home from school.

2000s - Access to the internet increases distribution and fandom. *“[The internet was facilitating](#) global conversations between fans, who eagerly discussed their favorite (and not-so-favorite) shows in minute detail with each other. The increasing ease of sharing anime for free through the internet was a source of contention for producers worried about revenue, but like VHS before it studios began experimenting with ways to monetize this new distribution channel.”*

2010s- Anime and manga continue to captivate audiences around the world. *[According to CNN](#), “After seven years of consecutive growth, the anime industry set a new sales record in 2017 of ¥2.15 trillion (\$19.8 billion), driven largely by demand from overseas. Exports of anime series and films have tripled since 2014 -- aided in part by sales to streaming giants such as Netflix and Amazon -- and so far show no signs of slowing.”*

What are some helpful terms to know?

Otaku: A Japanese word that roughly translates to “nerd” or “geek.” [In Japan it implies](#) that someone doesn’t have a social life because of an obsessive hobby (often anime/manga). In the US the connotation of “otaku” is less negative. Hardcore anime fans refer to themselves as “otaku.” In this short YouTube video, MVPerry [explains the differences](#) between “otaku,” “weeaboo,” and “weeb.”

Weeaboo: Someone who is obsessed with everything about Japanese culture (language, food, customs, and of course, anime and manga). This person may include Japanese phrases in everyday conversations and may want to live in Japan or be Japanese.

Weeb: Someone who likes anime. This term can get thrown around as an insult (“You’re such a weeb”, implying that, “you’re obsessed with anime and that’s weird”).

Normie: A popular person who doesn’t have niche interests or opinions. In the anime world, a normie only casually watches the most popular anime. Because they’re more mainstream or cool, they may disown their love for anime if asked about it.

Subbed: Anime that is in Japanese with English subtitles, so viewers read along.

Dubbed: Anime that is dubbed over by English-speaking voice actors, so no subtitles are necessary.

If you’re interested in the many types of anime characters, this [YouTube video](#) unpacks a few of them, and gives insight into anime fan culture.

Tsundere: A character (most often female) who acts cold or hostile toward their love interest at first (trying to hide their feelings) but warms up as the show progresses. Can violently swing back and forth from angry to sweet.

Kuudere: A character who acts calm, cool, and cynical at first, and then shows more emotion over time.

Dandere: A painfully shy character who can only open up around the right people.

Yandere: A character who seems kind and sweet, but who is actually deranged and psychotic (especially when in love).

Moe: Refers to a cute, endearing, and innocent character that you feel intensely protective feelings for.

Anime Genres: kodomo (intended for children), shonen (teen and tween boys), [shojo](#) (teen and tween girls), seinen (young adult men), josei (young adult women), harem (about boys with multiple female love interests), reverse harem (about girls with multiple male love interests), hentai (pornographic), mecha (about robots), yaoi and yuri (LGBTQ+ romance), supernatural (ghosts, vampires, etc.). And then there's all of the typical genres like romance, comedy, slice of life, drama, thriller, fantasy, action/adventure. Shows are often a mix of many genres.

Cosplay: Short for “costume play.” It means dressing up as your favorite character. Cosplay isn't limited to anime, and participants can dress up as characters from any book, movie, show, or comic (Spiderman, Luke Skywalker, Goku from Dragon Ball Z...). Cosplay is often a major part of anime conventions like the Anime Expo held annually in Los Angeles.

How does my teen even know about anime?

We use the power of personalization and the algorithm to discover new fans of anime. Streaming overall has created a new wave of accessibility and discoverability for anime. Traditionally anime didn't have great distribution real estate, because oftentimes it was too small to secure meaningful distribution, and what having a global streaming service allows us to do is find the fandoms. — [John Deridian](#), Netflix's Director of Content - Japan & Anime

Watching anime used to be a niche interest; fans had to go looking for pirated content on the internet, or needed a special subscription to an anime-only streaming service like [Crunchyroll](#) or [Funimation](#). Now, Amazon Prime, Netflix, and Hulu all offer anime, making it easily available to consumers who might not have come across it on their own. Many shows (or individual scenes) are available for free on YouTube. Fans constantly create new compilations like, “[Top 10 Anime Where Bad Boy falls for Good Girl](#),” or “[Naruto: 10 Things You Didn't Know About Naruto Uzumaki](#).”

It's pretty incredible when you think about it. Global communication, the exchange of ways of seeing the world, values, and artistry, all via a cartoon, was virtually impossible just a hundred years ago. Today, when a new anime airs in Japan it is released in the US just a few hours later (with some effort on the part of producers and voice actors...they have to sub or dub any content exported for an English speaking audience).

*As a kid growing up in Pennsylvania, I watched a lot of Japanese animation shows such as ‘Dragon Ball Z,’ ‘Gundam’ and ‘Naruto.’ These shows featured strange yet fascinating characters with complex motivations and interesting worlds. The protagonists of these shows faced seemingly impossible odds, and through tenacity and determination they overcame their limits. — [Thomas Wick](#), columnist for *The Pitt News**

Why do teens like it?

Relatable characters: Anime characters are [often outcasts](#), struggling to find friends, struggling with being shy, just wanting to fit in. Anime scratched an itch that American TV shows and kids’ cartoons just weren’t addressing. Jason DeMarco, who worked as an associate creative at Toonami in the ’90s, [explains why](#) anime like *Dragon Ball Z* appeals to minority teens:

*Television often succeeds as a primary after school activity for children in lower-income households and urban neighborhoods where programs like sports are virtually nonexistent...It’s clear to me for a lot of families who did not have a lot of things for their kids to do after school ... their TV was their babysitter, because that’s just the way it worked out. A lot of those kids remember Toonami and Dragon Ball Z as being hugely important in terms of teaching them certain values [and] giving them something to look forward to at the end of a s**** school day.*

Rappers like Childish Gambino and Denzel Curry [reference the anime shows](#) they grew up watching in the songs they write today.

Gritty themes: Anime was unafraid to discuss sexuality and mental health long before American TV shows and movies were starting to grapple with those topics. Anime has long been considered an inclusive form of art, portraying same sex relationships and having non-White characters in lead roles.

Visually compelling: The animation style is fantastical, creative, and beautiful. Many TV shows don’t have the large budgets necessary to invest in special effects and crazy graphics. Because anime is illustrated, it provides visual interest and intense imagery without massive expense. If an artist can picture it in their mind, they can draw it on paper, which is why the world-building in an anime series can be so captivating.

Complex plots: A [wikipedia article explains](#), “Unlike American cartoons where they

have a lot of standalone episodes where you can jump into the series and enjoy the series, Japanese anime is more of a complex story-line that builds on the previous episodes. This is why it is so popular in the United States since people can get to know the characters better and become invested in the series.”

It’s not nerdy anymore: Anime used to have a stigma attached to it, but now that popular streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu offer anime, anyone and everyone can enjoy it! [Joellen Ferrer](#), head of communications for Otter Media (which runs Crunchyroll), celebrates the variety of people who love anime: “*What’s been really great to see, especially in the last two years, is this continued movement of mainstreaming of anime...Entertainers or celebrities or athletes are big anime fans. There are number of different athletes that are like, ‘I grew up watching Naruto.’*”

Community: For those who are more deeply invested in anime, there are online forums and in-person events (think cosplay) centered on something that they enjoy and love. Discussing recent episodes, creating fan art and fan fiction, and connecting with others who share their fascination with Japanese culture is all quite easy in our digital world. [Anime is enjoyed globally](#), (the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, El Salvador, and Peru are up there with Japan and the U.S. when it comes to watching anime), so anime fandom often crosses geographic and cultural boundaries.

Cultural insight: Watching anime can increase racial and cultural awareness. [A 2014 study](#) by the MPRA showed that Korean adults who watched anime were more tolerant of their Japanese co-workers. Gen Z values inclusivity and wants everyone’s opinion to be heard. Anime is appealing because it gives them a glimpse of another culture with different norms and values. Anime gives them a broader view of the world and an understanding that cultural differences are gifts from God that don’t have to be avoided or minimized.

What shows are popular?

Naruto: The story of [Naruto Uzumaki](#), an orphaned ninja (shinobi) who wants to become the leader of his village (hokage). A social outcast, he’s mischievous, funny, hard-working, protective, kind, and oblivious at times. He deeply desires the respect and praise of his community. This shonen anime (made for boys) is action-packed, but also navigates what it means to grow up, to protect and be supported by friends, and to courageously pursue what matters. Originally a manga series, *Naruto* was adapted

for TV and aired on Cartoon Network from 2005-2009. [Naruto: Shippuden](#) is adapted from part II of the *Naruto* manga series, has 500 episodes, and is about Naruto's later teen years (it's still airing weekly on Adult Swim's Toonami). [Boruto: Naruto Next Generations](#) follows the adventures of Naruto's son.

Death Note: In [this supernatural thriller](#), Light Yagami is a bored but brilliant student who stumbles upon a mysterious notebook. When someone's name is written in its pages, they die. He embarks on a journey to use this morbid power to rid the world of evil, one criminal at a time. Do the ends justify his means? Or will using the Death Note turn him into the very thing he's working to eradicate?

Pokémon: Known as "Pocket Monsters" in Japan, Pokémon is a [media franchise](#) created in 1995. It started with a video game where human Pokémon Trainers would catch pokémon (fictional creatures with unique powers. Think [pikachu](#)) and train them to fight each other. Pokémon is the highest-grossing media franchise ever, with [over \\$92 billion in total franchise revenue](#). This revenue comes from playing cards, comics, mobile games ([Pokémon Go](#), [Pokémon Sword](#), and [Pokémon Shield](#)) T-shirts, shows like [Pokémon Journeys](#) on Netflix, and other merch. The original *Pokémon* TV series is the most successful video game anime adaptation ever, with over 1,000 episodes aired in 169 countries.

Fullmetal Alchemist: Originally a shonen manga, *Fullmetal Alchemist* has been adapted into two anime movies and two TV series. The story follows brothers and alchemists Edward and Alphonse Elric as they attempt to restore their own bodies and bring their mother back from death by discovering the Philosopher's Stone. "[The series explores social problems, including discrimination, scientific advancement, political greed, brotherhood, family, and war.](#)"

Sailor Moon: This shojo manga series (made for girls) was adapted for several anime and live action series. Usagi Tsukino is a normal middle schooler until she is given a brooch that allows her to transform into Sailor Moon, guardian and protector of the solar system, and leader of a team of other guardians (the Sailor Soldiers). Their quest includes finding the Silver Crystal and a lost princess. [This series](#) is internationally beloved, and has even inspired [olympic figure skating routines](#).

Attack on Titan: Titans are enormous monsters, intent on destroying humanity. When his mother dies in a Titan attack, Eren Jaeger joins the military, swearing to eradicate every remaining Titan. The [fourth and final season](#) will be released in October of 2020.

Detective Conan (also known as Case Closed): High schooler Jimmy Kudo sometimes partners with police investigations (he’s a detective). During one investigation he ingests poison; instead of killing him, the poison makes him a kid again. He must hide his identity by living with his friend Rachel and her dad Richard. The series ([1,000 manga chapters, 900 anime TV show episodes, and 23 movies](#)) follows his fight against the Black Organization, the crime syndicate that poisoned him.

One Piece: Luffy, a boy whose body is rubbery because he accidentally ate a Devil Fruit, is on a quest to find the “one piece” (the ultimate treasure that will make him King of the Pirates) with his pirate crew, the Straw Hat Pirates. [One Piece is a successful media franchise](#), with manga, anime shows, feature films, video games, trading cards, and merchandise.

Dragon Ball franchise: One of the top 20 highest grossing media franchises, Dragon Ball was created by Akira Toriyama in the 1980s. It started as a manga series, was then adapted for two anime series, *Dragon Ball* and *Dragon Ball Z* (more spin offs came later), made into 20 full-length films, and inspired video games, soundtracks, action figures, etc. The story begins when Goku, an alien martial artist, meets a teen girl named Bulma and joins her quest to find the seven Dragon Balls, which altogether summon a powerful dragon who grants wishes. [Anime News Network](#) writes, “Few anime series have mainstreamed it the way *Dragon Ball Z* has. To a certain generation of television consumers its characters are as well known as any in the animated realm, and for many it was the first step into the wilderness of anime fandom.”

[Jason DeMarco](#), creative director for Adult Swim, adds:

Dragon Ball Z is in just watching it, an empowerment fantasy, so of course if you feel powerless, or you feel beat-down, it’s good to watch a story about a hero who is reaching deep within himself and coming back even from death to beat the next challenge, because he overcame all the odds and adversity thrown at him.

Should I be concerned about the content?

Like many teenagers, I struggled to conform to and navigate beauty standards. Except that I wasn’t modeling myself off the blonde, blue-eyed beauties plastered on magazine covers in the grocery store checkout aisle. Neither was

I struck by the comparatively stranger beauty (but nonetheless impossible body standards) of high fashion. Rather, I kept a private running record of my style idols: a kaleidoscope of unnatural hues, physics-defying hair and clothing, and out-of-this-world body and mind modifications (think wings, claws, and psychic powers). I found my would-be mirror not in anything that exists on this planet, but rather in the weird and wonderful world of anime girls. — [Lilian Min](#), freelance writer

Changing beauty standards: The entertainment industry promotes unrealistic standards of attractiveness for both men and women, so this influence goes beyond anime. Any actor or Instagram model is tweaked and filtered, probably to sell a product. Teens know this. And that's a good starting place: acknowledging that a majority of the content that we consume implies that sex appeal or fitness or long eyelashes tell us who someone is (poised, trustworthy, funny...we associate beauty with positive characteristics) and whether or not they are worth listening to or being around. Yet this is the subconscious bias that most of us need to continually work through.

So, media impacts how we view and interact with others. It also affects how we see ourselves. "Am I attractive enough?" "Will people like me?" "Maybe if I [was more muscular, thinner, had bigger boobs, etc.] someone would want me." Again, the entire world is screaming at our teens, telling them what it takes to be wanted and approved of. These are some of the messages, both helpful and unhelpful, that they could walk away with from watching anime:

- **Anime celebrates diversity.** [Lilian Min explains](#), "to find an entire artistic medium that normalized non-white beauty, rather than exoticizing it, was revelatory...It even offered me a circuitous, fluid route both into and out of my Asian-ness: It was a world in which you can have a foreign-sounding name and still look like no one else on this earth, with neon blue hair, purple eyes, green skin, horns, wings, fangs, shape-shifting magical tattoos, and gemstone-encrusted skin. Far from limiting my scope and vision of 'otherized' beauty, anime expanded it — beyond the realm of the physically possible." But even this celebration and inclusivity is complicated. Japan is one of the most racially homogenous countries (less than 2% of the population is non-Japanese). Light skin and small frames are idolized. Perhaps this is why [there aren't many black characters](#) in anime, and there's not much body positivity either.
- **Anime is unrealistic.** [An article in the Artifice](#) notes, "In reality it's impossible to be a size 2 and have a double D cup size. Women are needlessly and

unrealistically sexualized by the anime industry in order to pander to a male audience, giving real girls a negative and unattainable body image. By constantly producing television shows that portray women in ways that defy physics the anime industry is creating an impossible standard of beauty that no real girl could ever live up to.” These impossible standards also impact boys. 16-year-old cartoon characters look like 30-year-old body builders, with perfectly coiffed hair and [impossibly large, starry eyes](#). This doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Anime characters prompted the use of circle lenses (contact lenses that change the color or even the shape of your eye). Circle lenses were first [just used as a part of Cosplay](#), but now they’re more and more common in mainstream makeup trends, especially in Asia. If teens use anime characters as their physical ideal, they will always be disappointed.

- **Anime has problematic tropes.** Exaggerated and hypersexualized physical appearance is only part of the issue. Think about harem anime, where many girls (sometimes 30+ over the course of a long series) all vie for the attention of one guy. Or the Moe trope, where a character is innocent and cute...always in need of rescuing and protection (by the valiant, powerful male, of course). Some anime avoid these reductionistic portrayals of femininity. [Hayao Miyazaki](#), a co-founder of [Studio Ghibli](#), firmly states: *“Many of my movies have strong female leads – brave, self-sufficient girls that don’t think twice about fighting for what they believe in with all their heart. They’ll need a friend, or a supporter, but never a savior. Any woman is just as capable of being a hero as any man.”*

Remember, it’s about the money: Ultimately, any media franchise exists to make the production company money (think back to [Pokémon](#) or Dragon Ball). Anime are especially good at bringing in revenue because storylines get used across multiple platforms. Remind your teen that they are investing time and money in entertainment, and that’s not a bad thing! But it does require wisdom, and some cost-benefit analysis. Encourage them to consider the type of person they want to be, and then figure out if the time and money they spend on anime aligns with their values and desires.

Hentai: Anime can be an accidental gateway to pornography for young viewers. [An anonymous contributor to Fight the New Drug](#) explains how she was introduced to hentai, a pornographic genre of anime and manga, when she was 16: *“As an innocent girl who had rarely seen a naked body, the exaggerated childlike women and bold, confident men portrayed in the cartoons ensnared me at once. I was drawn in by the fantasies. The more I watched, the more violent ones I saw, the darker my thoughts about sex and relationships became. BDSM, rape, abuse...all became appealing to me.”*

Some would argue that hentai is a good alternative to live porn because real people aren't involved, but hentai's emphasis on violence, enlarged and extreme body parts, and child molestation legitimize and encourage twisted desires and fantasies. Here's what researchers are finding:

- **Porn changes what we want:** *“If a porn consumer is frequently watching porn that is violent, full of exaggerated fetishes, degrading, or increasingly extreme, they are actually conditioning their brain to be aroused by that type of behavior; even if it is showing things that they originally thought to be disgusting, uncomfortable or unacceptable.”*
- **Hentai normalizes violence.** In an article titled [“A Feminist Analysis of Cartoon Porn and Hentai,”](#) (trigger warning, this article references explicit content) Estela Lopez boldly writes, *“Even though cartoons are not real bodies, cartoon porn ideology can encourage men to commit violence against women and girls; it makes sexual violence a form of entertainment.”*
- **Hentai normalizes child pornography.** In the same article Lopez goes on to explain, *“The categories of woman and child are blurred, because neither is off sexual limits. A consistent theme in hentai is sexy innocence. Adult women, teens, and children are fused into one. The large eyes, hairless genitals, and small bodies are combined with large breasts and pornographic sexual behavior.”* She calls this blurring of the lines between adult and underage characters *“adultified girls”* and *“childified women.”* The subgenre “lolicon” is specifically about young girls and children being raped and sexually used.
- **Hentai hinders real relationships.** People who watch hentai sometimes report being unable to become aroused by real partners because they've been conditioned to associate sexual desire with cartoon characters that look nothing like real people.
- **Hentai is easily accessible.** The average age of exposure to pornography is [between 8 and 11](#). And most of the time, our kids aren't looking for explicit content. They're curious about their bodies, and Google has all kinds of confusing and downright disgusting answers to give them. An unintentional YouTube search for Dragon Ball Z characters can lead down a rabbit hole of increasingly explicit content, especially if you don't have internet filters to block inappropriate content.

We realize that this topic is frightening and disturbing. If you want more information about talking with your teen about pornography, Axis' [Parent's Guide to Pornography for Girls and for Boys](#) is a good place to start. Fight the New Drug also offers a [conversation blueprint](#), giving you step by step questions to ask as you navigate this

essential conversation.

Mature themes: Since anime and manga aren't usually kid's cartoons, they sometimes include violence, sex, and nudity. Check the ratings to figure out which themes to expect. Of course, anime isn't alone in portraying mature content. Many of the movies and shows that teens engage with are increasingly mature (*Atypical*, *13 Reasons Why*, *Riverdale*, *The Vampire Diaries*, even Marvel movies). Be aware of the kinds of topics that your teen will encounter and then talk about them. Have you talked about depression and suicide? What does it look like when you talk with your teen about sex? Are they thinking about how entertainment affects what they believe about the world and how they act? These shows are perfect segues to talking about how the Gospel impacts all of life, even the messy subjects we would rather avoid.

How do I talk to my kids about anime and manga when I don't understand it?

Ask questions. Curiosity is a great place to start. Let your teen teach you about the intricate worlds, characters, and storylines that they're engaging with.

Listen well. When is your teen most likely to open up to you? Do they like debriefing their day after school, or do they clam up? Do they want to talk about anime right now, or are they tired? Once you ask your insightful and caring questions, leave some space. Notice how much your teen is talking versus how much you are talking. Are you letting them really teach you and share their heart with you? And don't be discouraged if the conversation is short or almost non-existent. A lot of the time it isn't you. Your teen is hormonal, tired, and thinking about a lot of things. Sometimes their angstiness gets taken out on the nearest person (most often, you). You're doing great, just keep being present.

Be willing to watch a show together! Probably the best way to learn about anime is to experience it firsthand. How would your teen feel about sitting down and watching an episode or two together? Especially if you have a younger teen, if they don't feel comfortable watching a particular anime show or movie with you, that might be a good indicator that the content is too mature for them, and a good line to draw. They get to watch if you get to watch. Your teen is a great resource for any questions that you have about anime. Let them teach you about something that they love!

Final thoughts

Any show or movie educates us, forming what we love, what we want, and eventually how we behave. How often have you dozed off during a sermon or lecture? Now compare that to the number of times that you've fallen asleep during a good movie. There's a reason that Jesus told so many stories/parables. He understood that life change happens when our imaginations are captivated. As James K.A. Smith explains in his book, [You Are What You Love](#), *“Jesus is a teacher who doesn't just inform our intellect but forms our very loves. He isn't content to simply deposit new ideas into your mind; he is after nothing less than your wants, your loves, your longings.”*

Transferring piles of information is exhausting and boring. But an intriguing story set to a soaring musical score? That grabs us, probably doing more to influence what we believe and how we live than enduring a long lecture ever will.

So when you feel overwhelmed or confused by your teen's love for anime, think about a book, movie, or song that captivates your heart. When was the last time you cried while listening to a song or watching a movie? Why was it so moving? Hold on to those feelings; your teen is probably finding that same emotional connection and feeling of aliveness through anime. This is an opportunity to humbly enter your teen's world to figure out what they're learning and enjoying. How is their heart being shaped? What themes are compelling to them? What rushes and thrills of emotion do these animated characters draw out of them? You don't have to feel everything they're feeling, but you can respect their experience and try to listen well as they process something that captivates them.

Related Axis Resources

- [The Culture Translator](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related
- [A Parent's Guide to Video Games](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Netflix](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Modesty](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to YouTube](#)
- [Video Games Conversation Kit](#)

[Join Axis](#) to receive all our digital resources and start a new conversation today!

Additional Resources

- [“Anime’s growth in America encourages diverse viewpoints,”](#) *The Pitt News*
- [“5 Major Anime Tropes and the Shows That Avoid Them,”](#) *Fandom*
- [“The 5 Best Reasons Everyone Should Watch Anime,”](#) Brad Stephenson
- [“The 10 Best Anime Memes,”](#) Brad Stephenson
- [“Japanese anime: From ‘Disney of the East’ to a global industry worth billions,”](#) *CNN*
- [“How Pokémon is Dubbed from Japanese to English,”](#) *Vanity Fair*
- [“The global content marketplace: Audience demand for anime,”](#) *Parrot Analytics*

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A Parent's Guide to **ANIME & MANGA**

Recap

- Anime and manga are both Japanese forms of cartoon animation. Anime is the video form and manga is the printed or comic book form.
- Watching anime used to be nerdy or niche, but today (partially because Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime all offer anime movies and shows) all sorts of people enjoy watching anime, and there's not much of a nerdy stigma attached to it.
- Anime is appealing to teens because it boldly addresses themes that many American TV shows and movies avoided for a long time, like sexuality and mental health issues.
- Like all forms of entertainment, anime and manga teach viewers what to love and how to live. It's important to help our teens evaluate the messages that they're encountering as they watch, especially messages around what it looks like to be masculine and feminine, if violence is a good solution to our problems, and what romantic relationships should be like.
- Your teen is a great resource for any questions that you have about anime. Let them teach you about something that they love! Ask good questions, and get ready to learn about this beautiful form of storytelling. It's creative, visually compelling, and even a way to learn more about Japanese culture.

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!

A Parent's Guide to **ANIME & MANGA**

Discussion Questions

- What do you enjoy about anime or manga?
- What's your favorite show?
- What do you admire about your favorite characters?
- Has anime taught you any helpful life lessons? Has it given you insight into how you want to live, or what you care about?
- What are the pros and cons of the way that anime portrays women and girls? Do you recognize any unhelpful stereotypes? In what ways is anime empowering to women?
- What are the pros and cons of the way that anime portrays men and boys? Do you recognize any unhelpful stereotypes? In what ways is anime empowering to men?
- What would happen if you acted like a tsundere girl in real life? Or choose another common trope and imagine being that way for a day...how would that go?
- How does this show portray violence?
- If you could be an anime or manga character, who would you choose?

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!