

The impact of Japanese anime on contemporary Chinese youth

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Abstract: Japanese anime is popular globally due to its unique charm and has a significant impact on contemporary Chinese youth. Its advantages include alleviating stress and relaxing the mind, helping adolescents learn about other cultures and expand their knowledge, and fostering positive qualities and mental resilience. However, there are also negative impacts, such as some teenagers becoming addicted to the virtual world, immoral content like violence and pornography in some poor-quality anime leading to moral confusion, and incorrect historical views permeating in some anime that can hurt the national pride of young people. In response, it is essential to support domestic animation and promote excellent traditional culture, combine family and school efforts to guide adolescents, strengthen the supervision of imported animation and purify the online environment, and lead teenagers to play their own active role, improve their ability to identify and control themselves, and promote their healthy growth.

Keywords: Japanese anime, Chinese youth, positive impact, negative impact, healthy growth; domestic animation

1. Introduction

Japanese anime, a combination of animation and manga, holds a significant position in the global animation industry due to its unique features, such as national characteristics, innovation, and entertainment value, making it a highly influential component within the global animation framework. Since its inception in 1917, Japanese anime has gone through four developmental stages and now boasts a rich collection of works across various genres, including war, youth, detective, magic, historical, and romantic themes, each with its representative masterpieces. Among these, the series of animated films led by Hayao Miyazaki have achieved a level of global impact that remains unmatched by animation from any other country. As the information era continues to evolve, the influence and penetration of Japanese anime have become increasingly noticeable, particularly in shaping the worldview, outlook on life, and values of teenagers who are in a critical stage of development.

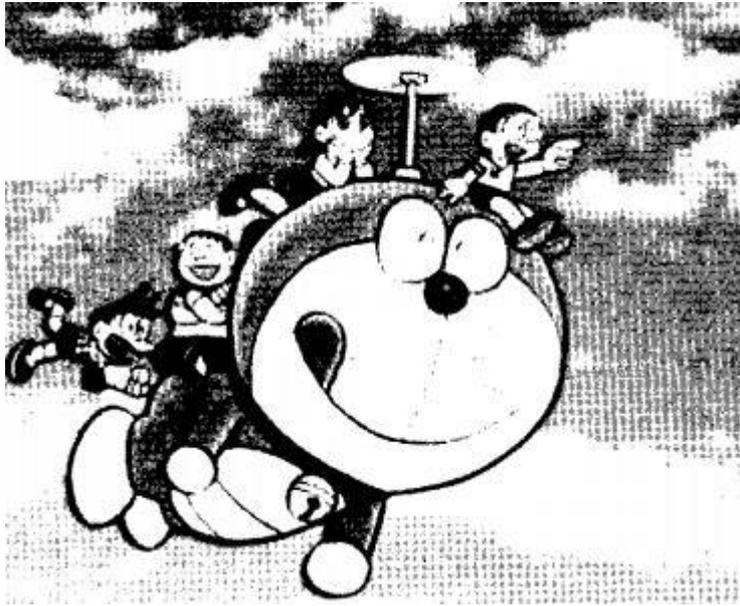


Figure 1



Figure 2

2. The allure of Japanese anime for contemporary Chinese youth

2.1. The unique charm of Japanese anime

2.1.1. Humorous and entertaining

Outstanding anime works can offer audiences a relaxing and enjoyable experience, subtly cultivating a humorous and optimistic character in teenagers. In China, due to the pressure from middle school and college entrance exams as well as extracurricular classes, teenagers are burdened with heavy schoolwork and are not guaranteed sufficient rest time. Under such a stressful study environment, light-hearted and funny comics or animations just meet the teenagers' needs to relieve stress. The humorous and witty

dialogues, exaggerated actions, and unique artistic expressions in Japanese anime all make the audience burst into laughter. For example, in Detective Conan, each time that Mouri Kogoro tries to explain his inconsistent words and deeds, and when Conan is at a loss for words and has cold sweat on his head with a “hehe” sound, they all make people can’t help but smile.

2.1.2. Aesthetic and distinct characters

The character design in Japanese anime is quite aesthetic. For example, in The Prince of Tennis, Ryoma Echizen is dashing and handsome; in Slam Dunk, Hanamichi Sakuragi is charming and captivating; and in Naruto, the young Sasuke Uchiha’s appearance causes girls to scream as soon as he appears. All of them are extraordinarily good-looking male characters. Moreover, the female characters in the anime are mostly characterized by big eyes, oval-shaped faces, and cherry - small mouths, and they are all beautiful and lovely. The combination of handsome men and beautiful women, just like today’s South Korean idol dramas, easily wins the favor of teenagers and deeply attracts their attention.

2.1.3. Plot twists and suspense

When we read novels, we often find that those whose endings are predictable are usually boring, while those with intricate and twisting plots are hard to put down. The same goes for anime. Works that are too smooth and predictable cannot arouse the audience’s desire to continue watching. Japanese anime has seized the audience’s psychology tightly, creating suspense and twists in the plot. For example, in Detective Conan, when it comes to the key moment, the next episode will be played. When you guess that the murderer is Zhang San, Li Si will become a suspect. As a result, you will keep watching and persist in looking for the answer. In addition, the thrilling basketball games, football games, car races, martial arts fights, or space wars all make teenagers excited and nervous, with their full attention focused.

2.1.4. Deep themes rooted in reality

Apart from magic and superpowers, most Japanese anime draw their materials from real - life problems and reflect actual phenomena. However, they express ideals and pursuits beyond current reality as well as the true, good and beautiful that human society strives for. For example, in Hayao Miyazaki’s series of animations, Laputa: Castle in the Sky shows the courage to pursue ideals, the spirit of never - giving - up and going ahead resolutely; My Neighbor Totoro expresses the affection between sisters, mothers and daughters, as well as childlike innocence and simplicity; and Spirited Away depicts strength, endurance and longing for the beautiful nature.

2.2. Psychological fit with adolescents

2.2.1. Adolescents are in a special age stage

They are enthusiastic, impulsive, imaginative, willing to try new things, fond of imitation, eager to express themselves, and in pursuit of beauty with high spiritual needs. Japanese anime combines the real and the unreal, adding romantic colors to the reality, which meets their psychological characteristics. In Japanese anime, not only are the character settings and images in line with teenagers’ pursuit of beauty, but also the combination of reality and imagination leaves teenagers with a huge space for imagination and brings them various psychological enjoyments.

2.2.2. Social pressure and teens' escape tendency

The rapid development of modern society has brought tension and stress that are hard to adapt to due to its fast pace. This is especially true for teenagers. Contemporary Chinese adolescents are under the pressure of middle school and college entrance exams as well as various extracurricular classes. They feel depressed and have nowhere to vent their emotions. Meanwhile, adolescence is a period when their sense of self - identification is forming. They are eager to express themselves and realize their own value. However, in reality, due to their age, lack of experience and knowledge, they are unable to achieve “identity - achievement” through internal perception and contemplation. As a result, adolescents feel anxious and uncertain, and may even experience a crisis of self - identification. Therefore, they tend to escape from reality. Anime caters to their need to relax the mind, release stress and relieve fatigue. Thus, it is understandable that anime is so appealing to teenagers.

3. The impact of Japanese anime on contemporary Chinese youth

3.1. The positive impact of Japanese anime on adolescents

3.1.1. Stress relief and mental relaxation

Today's adolescents are under a lot of stress from social expectations, parental expectations and their own developmental needs. They may feel physically and mentally exhausted. Japanese anime, known for its humor and light - heartedness, can help them relax and relieve tension. When they watch these funny anime works, they can relieve stress and also learn some philosophical knowledge and experience some precious emotions. Some scholars point out that the process of adolescents interpreting the anime *One Piece* can be viewed as "vicarious satisfaction" in psychological terms. What is called vicarious satisfaction is that when people are faced with frustrations and disappointments that are hard to get rid of, they seek some kind of neural pleasure or positive association, and do self - compensation either consciously or unconsciously. For example, in *The Borrowers*, the love that transcends races and the courage to go on living all bring positive energy to adolescents.

3.1.2. Learning other cultures and gaining knowledge

From modern history and world history, we can see the Japanese ability to learn. Japanese people are good at absorbing the beneficial elements of other cultures and integrating them with their own national characteristics to create a Japanese brand. While watching Japanese anime, we can not only learn about Japanese culture but also enjoy the charm of cultures from other countries. For example, Hayao Miyazaki's animation *Howl's Moving Castle* has a typical European style. The picturesque towns and castles, the gorgeous Western - style retro costumes all reflect European culture. However, the characters have typical Eastern - looking faces and figures. Also, the film uses Japanese ukiyo - e - like colors, presenting a European - style scene with Japanese aesthetic features.

3.1.3. Cultivating positive qualities and temperament

Japanese anime often shows positive qualities such as fearlessness of sacrifice and setbacks, perseverance, and never - giving - up. It can be an inspiration for adolescents who are at an important stage in their lives. It tells them that difficulties can be overcome and persistence will lead to success. For example, in *Captain Tsubasa*, the protagonist is a student from Nankatsu Primary School. He loves football and trains hard. No matter whether he suffers injuries or faces desperate situations in matches, he never gives up. He is also good at using strategies and tactics flexibly. He keeps adjusting his tactics during the games and finally wins. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, the hero eventually overcomes his timidity for the sake of his beloved and gets a happy - ending. There are many positive qualities in Japanese anime works, such as truth, goodness and beauty, which play an active role in shaping good qualities.

3.2. The negative impact of Japanese anime on adolescents

3.2.1. Addiction to the virtual world

Anime, a product of reality but transcending it, often features exaggerated plots and character settings that cater to adolescents' mental needs, tempting them to become addicted and even escape reality, with some developing world - weary feelings. For instance, sci - fi and fantasy anime with elements like magic and superpowers offer a novel experience that entices adolescents to daydream about possessing such abilities to overcome real - life difficulties. Also, during puberty, adolescents' curiosity about the opposite sex and desire for pure love may be repressed due to heavy schoolwork and adult interference. In this case, Japanese shoujo anime can become an outlet for their pent - up emotions, making them prone to anime addiction.

3.2.2. Moral deviation caused by violence and pornography

As a commercial product aimed at profit - making, anime has both high - quality, positive works and low - brow, violent, and pornographic ones that cater to adult demands. These can mislead adolescents, luring them into imitation and onto a moral tangent. For example, the once - popular *Crayon Shin - chan* is full of

"erotica", with exaggerated portrayals of female body features and adult themes, despite being labeled as suitable for adults.

3.2.3. *Undermining national pride through ideological infiltration*

In today's world, culture is a key part of national strength, and the struggle for cultural dominance is a common international tactic. Japanese anime often contains militaristic thinking and the Bushido spirit. These ideas, subtly conveyed, can gradually alter Chinese adolescents' thoughts. Long - term exposure may shake their faith in their country and damage their national self - respect and confidence. In recent years, Japan has attempted to gain international favor by distorting World War II history, even denying the Nanjing Massacre and other war crimes. Such actions can seriously mislead college students' views on history.

4. Strategies to promote the healthy growth of contemporary Chinese youth

4.1. Support domestic animation and Chinese culture

China's current animation industry has multiple issues, such as a shortage of animation professionals, a lack of original works, an incomplete industrial chain, and limited international influence. It has not effectively utilized and promoted China's excellent traditional culture. For instance, pandas are a Chinese symbol, but Kung Fu Panda is a foreign - made film, which is thought - provoking. Thus, creating Chinese - characterized animation is urgent. First, the state must establish policies to support domestic animation, train professionals, and encourage original and high - quality animation creation. Second, people's imagination should be unleashed, and the public's creativity should be fully utilized to discover and nurture talent. Moreover, beneficial elements from other countries' top animation works should be absorbed and combined with China's traditional culture to form a unique Chinese animation brand for sustainable industry development.

4.2. Combine families and schools to guide youth

From the school perspective, teachers should enhance interaction and communication with students. This way, they can understand and monitor the anime students watch and offer timely guidance. Strengthen supervision, leverage class leaders to monitor students' books and videos, and prevent unhealthy comics. As the saying goes, "Parents are a child's first teachers." Parents should set positive examples, limit children's anime - watching time, cultivate healthy hobbies, select suitable reading materials and audiovisual products, and spend more time accompanying children. Finally, schools and families must strengthen communication, maintain contact, and jointly address problems to foster children's healthy growth.

4.3. Regulate imported animation and purify online space

In today's information age, the rapid development of technology and the internet has made it easier for adolescents to access harmful information. Thus, network management and purification are crucial. Relevant Chinese departments should enhance market regulation of the animation industry, crack down on merchants selling comics with harmful content, and combat websites featuring pornography and violence. Special attention should be given to entertainment venues near campuses, such as stores and internet cafes. To purify the online environment, Taiwan's mandatory internet grading system can be emulated by categorizing websites into "restricted" and "unrestricted" levels. Restricted sites containing pornography, violence, etc., should be strictly managed and banned for adolescents. Currently, China has few regulations on internet content and its target audience, and a lack of supporting laws. Thus, implementing animation culture grading will be a long - term task.

4.4. Guiding adolescents to leverage their subjective initiative

As the internal driving force of development, it is crucial to enhance adolescents' self - discrimination and self - control abilities. In the information and internet age, faced with a massive amount of information, adolescents need to learn to resist bad temptations and make scientific choices. Among Japanese anime works, there are both good and bad. The state, schools, and families should actively guide adolescents to select works beneficial to their healthy growth. More importantly, adolescents should strictly require

themselves according to moral and legal standards. The blue sky over adolescents' heads requires the joint efforts of the whole society.

5. Conclusion

Japanese anime, as a cultural phenomenon, plays an undeniable role in the lives of contemporary Chinese youth. It serves as a window for young people to relax, unwind, and explore the world, yet it also harbors many potential risks. Faced with its complex dual nature, we should neither reject it entirely out of fear of its negative aspects nor turn a blind eye to its detrimental effects. By adopting a multi - faceted approach that includes supporting domestic animation, enhancing family and school - based guidance, and improving regulatory mechanisms, we can create a better environment for the growth of young people. This will allow excellent culture to nourish their souls and enable them to maintain a clear - headed understanding when confronted with a diverse range of cultures. In this way, they will grow into a new generation that possesses both cultural confidence and an international perspective.