

“My Diet, Dr. Kelp!”: An Overly Enthusiastic Essay About SpongeBob

It is Sunday morning, and like most weekend mornings, there is a lingering air of tranquility. The soft rays of sunlight illuminate the house with faint shimmer, and you feel completely at ease. Time feels nonexistent as you wake up to the smell of clean laundry and sunshine. While you fully adjust to your surroundings, you take in the deafening silence of your home. It's a bit too quiet. Your hand rummages around your sheets, and you are silently cursing at yourself for forgetting to put your TV remote on your nightstand before falling asleep. Once you find the remote, you begin mindlessly flicking past the monotonous daytime programs. All of a sudden, before your finger is able to fully connect with the button of the remote, something catches your attention. A loud “Aye-aye, Captain” fills you with an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia, and your morning automatically gets ten times better. Now, all you need is a bowl of cereal.

Whether or not you lived your childhood in the 2000s, you have probably heard of or seen at least one of the characters from the kids show, SpongeBob SquarePants. Make no mistake, there is a good reason for this. You see, the animated show SpongeBob SquarePants is the best cartoon series of all time, so it makes perfect sense for its influence to be so prevalent. Some readers may object, but as an avid watcher of the show, I will prove to you why I believe SpongeBob is the best cartoon and why you should believe it, too.

Before we fully get into the content of SpongeBob SquarePants, let us first explore the show's presence in the media. If you are a user of any large social media platform, such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok, you have probably noticed the vast variety of SpongeBob memes or other SpongeBob-related content. Although it is impossible to see how many times the cartoon has been mentioned or referenced, just a simple search of “SpongeBob” on Twitter shows popular tweets made as recently as ten hours ago. On TikTok, the hashtags

“spongebob” and “spongebobsquarepants” have a combined view count of 10.2 billion views. This is not some new craze, and in fact, Spongebob has been a large part of social media since the early 2010s. As many of you may know, social media is mostly used by millennials and Gen Z, which is important to take into consideration especially since the cartoon first aired in 1999 and is still producing new episodes today. (Having said this, the newer episodes are not that good, but this is due to the death of the show’s creator, Stephen Hillenburg, in 2018.) So for a lot of young adults and teens, the show has sentimental value, explaining why it is so common to see it on social media (Byran).

Just watching an episode of SpongeBob SquarePants can give you an idea of why it is so lovable — the show is incredibly stupid, so stupid that it is ingenious that the creators were even able to come up with such an idea. Other than the characters personalities, almost nothing in the cartoon is consistent. The original plot of each episode quickly diverges into something else, which keeps viewers wanting to watch more to see what happens next. An example of this being how in one episode, the plot goes from Squidward wanting to be alone, to getting locked in a freezer and waking up two thousand years later. The fast-paced nature of the show is a crucial reason why it attracts the attention of young children. Children between the ages of four and six years old usually can only pay attention to things for an average of eight to eighteen minutes (Ward), so an eleven minute episode of unpredictable entertainment is perfect for younger viewers.

While we know that Spongebob has a lot of younger viewers, it is important to note that adults who have long passed their childhood days still watch the show as well. For many adults, they like to watch cartoons simply because of the show's hidden jokes and adult humor. There are many examples of this in the show, but a notable one being the disagreements between the workers at the Krusty Krab and the restaurant's boss. While children do not understand the effect of Mr. Krabs' frugality on his employees, adults would understand how this dynamic in the show represents big corporations exploiting their workers, which is a huge issue in today’s society. Underneath the stupidity of characters, each episode showed the tribulations of being an

adult. For instance, Squidward, one of the main characters in the show, is a struggling musician who lives in between two annoying neighbors who never leave him alone, works for an extremely frugal boss who barely pays him, deals with rude customers at work, and has to work alongside one of said annoying neighbors. As you probably notice, his life is pretty unpleasant. But his very existence in the cartoon tells a valuable life lesson that resonates with many adults — life often does not go as planned. Squidward had dreams of being a world famous clarinet player, but now is working at a dead-end job. Adults who also have unfulfilled dreams can relate to Squidward's life and get some humor out of the situation.

Of course, there are people who may dislike Spongebob for a multitude of reasons. One of the biggest reasons I hear is that they find the show ridiculous or too fast-paced. Personally, I find that calling Spongebob ridiculous is a ridiculous statement in itself. The first reason being that when you take the time to think about humans as a whole, we and many things that we do, are absurd, so what is the harm in adding another weird thing onto the list? The strangeness of the whole show explores a different concept of human behavior, and that while we live our busy lives and worry about jobs, family or whatever it may be, life is essentially meaningless. When our Earth becomes a fiery rock of nothingness, nothing of what we are doing now will matter. The second, significantly less depressing reason, is that it is a cartoon. Spongebob, like most cartoons, is not made to be taken seriously. It is just a show made to entertain people. Entertainment in general is not realistic, so I find it hypocritical when people say this about Spongebob, but then watch *Grey's Anatomy* when they get home.

To millions of people, SpongeBob SquarePants represents something more than just a kids show. It represents hiding your Nintendo DS under your pillow at night, it represents the comfort of the warm August nights, it represents talking into the fan, it represents the dewy grass on field trip mornings, it represents the days that we feel are quickly slipping away from us and the haziness of the memories so close, but yet feel so out of reach. While I am still young, it is sometimes hard to accept the fact that, someday, I will be old. Someday, it will be my generation

as the aesthetic on somebody's Pinterest board. So watching SpongeBob, it keeps the old me young, and offers a place I can truly feel at ease.

Works Cited

- Bi, Ninfa. "The Reasons Why Adults Are Still Watching Cartoons." *Geeks*,
vocal.media/geeks/the-reasons-why-adults-are-still-watching-cartoons.
- Bryan, Chloe. "Why Is SpongeBob so Damn Meme-Able?" *Mashable*, Mashable, 8 Apr. 2018,
mashable.com/article/spongebob-memes-explained/.
- Raghunathan, Raj. "Familiarity Breeds Enjoyment." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 17
Jan. 2012,
www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sapient-nature/201201/familiarity-breeds-enjoyment#:~:text=From%20an%20evolutionary%20perspective%2C%20it,this%2C%20steers%20us%20towards%20it.
- "Social Media Demographics to Inform Your Brand's Strategy in 2021." *Sprout Social*, 9 Mar.
2021, sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/.
- Ward, Christina. "What Are Normal Attention Spans For Children?" *The Kid's Directory Family
Resource Guide*, 8 Oct. 2020,
www.kids-houston.com/2020/08/21/what-are-normal-attention-spans-for-children/.
- Ward, Luka, et al. "Why SpongeBob SquarePants Is Quite Possibly the Best Cartoon Ever." *The
Oxford Student*, 10 May 2020,
www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/05/08/why-spongebob-squarepants-is-quite-possibly-the-best-cartoon-ever/.