

# Anime offers pros, cons: a newcomer's guide to the fandom

COMMENTARY

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**K**nown for its appealing aesthetics and artistry, anime is a Japanese artform and creative medium for pop culture. The industry's net worth increased drastically once anime gained traction in Western culture, with the market size reaching approximately \$24.8 billion in 2021, per Grand View Research.

Previously ignorant of its allure, I always characterized anime as nothing more than a socially acceptable cartoon for viewers over the age of 8 to watch.

However, after enduring many months of anime-enthusiasts nagging me to watch their beloved shows, I finally caved and decided to give one a go: "Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood."

Sitting side by side with one of my closest anime-loving friends, we signed into Netflix and geared up for the 64-episode series. "Fullmetal Alche-

mist: Brotherhood" follows Edward and Alphonse Elric, two brothers who grew up in a rural town called Resembool and bore the brunt of an absent father. When their mother – the parent who stayed – passes away due to a terminal illness, Edward and Alphonse attempt to revive her with alchemy, but it all goes terribly wrong.

I must admit, the show was much more engaging than I originally anticipated. With its ominous tone and ghostly scenes that eventually unfold into a complex plotline, the series kept me on my toes.

Beyond the show itself, I found this introduction to anime not only opened my eyes to a new form of television but provided insight into Japanese culture. The creators of "Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood," for instance, masterfully depicted various facets of Japanese life in the show with authentic settings, social customs and historical references.

But, what I find most impressive is the combination of adept animation and dynamic

soundtracks, which has tremendously enhanced the storylines of the anime I have watched. I commend the industry for the emotive artistic choices it utilizes, as well as its commitment to staying true to its Japanese roots after becoming mainstream in Western culture.

Moreover, one feature of anime that is similar to traditional western television is the many different genres there are to explore. Thus, there is sure to be a well-suited program for everyone, regardless of where your interests lie.

And yet, I struggle to reconcile with certain characteristics of the typical anime aesthetic, namely the beauty standards it imposes on women. The expressive eyes, unrealistic body proportions, unmistakable youthfulness and irony of make-up free clear skin seen in female protagonists may reflect Japanese beauty standards, but simultaneously perpetuate problematic expectations of a woman's appearance. Anime

beauty is unachievable and idealizing it is unhealthy.

In addition, the exploitation of anime creators often goes unscrutinized within the industry.

According to The New York Times, many illustrators are paid merely \$200 a month for hours upon hours of backbreaking piecework – a form of employment where the salary is determined by the number of produced frames as opposed to the amount of time spent working.

While I do not enjoy watching anime enough to officially join the fandom, nor do I wish to support unattainable beauty standards or corroborate the socioeconomic injustices committed against anime creators, I do encourage everyone to watch at least one movie or series simply in admiration of the illustration skills.

It is imperative to remember that if you are going to indulge in the artistic beauty of anime, you must understand the problematic aspects of the industry and advocate for change by openly discussing the issues.

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## Anime facts & figures

Anime accounts for

60%

of the world's animation-based entertainment.

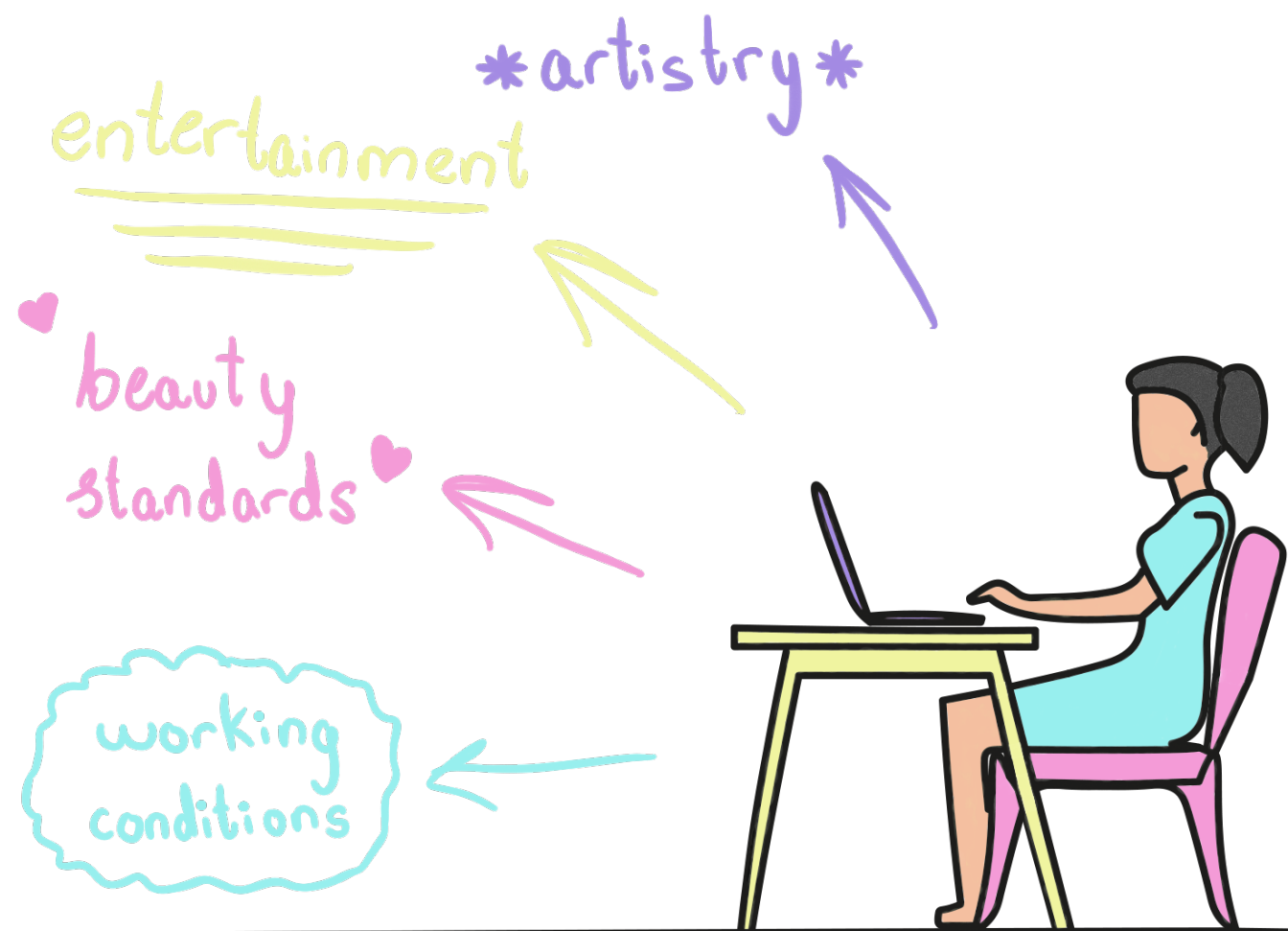
The highest-grossing anime film of all time, "Kimi No Na Wa" ("Your Name") garnered

\$335 million.

"Sazae-san" holds the record for longest-running anime with

7,500 episodes.

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