

This series resonates strongly within feminist discourse, offering a powerful critique of gender roles, patriarchal structures, and the intersectionality of oppression. Mizu, the protagonist, stands as a feminist icon, embodying the struggle for autonomy and self-definition in a world that seeks to confine her based on her gender and race. *Blue Eye Samurai* (2023) challenges viewers to rethink traditional narratives, presenting a story where empowerment comes from physical strength and courage to defy societal norms and embrace one's true identity.

The stunning visuals and art styles in *Blue Eye Samurai* (2023) blend traditional Japanese art styles and modern techniques to create a unique and beautiful show. The attention to detail the animators paid for the character designs and fluid fight choreography is insane. This show uses its unique art style to show the brutality and beauty of Edo-Japan. They also don't shy away from nudity in this series, I was a little surprised, it's not every day you get to see animators show off their autonomy skills like this. Not only is this show a dark and dramatic story of a woman getting revenge, but it's also really funny sometimes, Ringo steals the show whenever he shows up. If you were hoping that I would talk about Ringo, unfortunately, you will have to watch the show. In this article, I will only discuss the two strong female characters in this series.

This tale follows Mizu, a master swordsman who is the bastard daughter of a Japanese prostitute and a European foreigner. She is seen as an "impurity", her identity is shaped by how she is treated in society in painful and traumatic ways. She hides her identity behind a literal and figurative mask. Hiding her blue eyes behind tinted glasses and her gender by pretending to be a male swordmaster.



Green, M & Noizumi, A. *Blue Eye Samurai*. 3 November 2023.

She grew up despised by everyone, her mother tragically died when she was a child, leaving her as an orphan. The only person who didn't hate her was a blind swordsmith. In turn, grew up to despise the man who condemned her to this fate, her father. She spends years hunting down the four European men who were in Japan during the time of her birth. She doesn't know which one is her father so killing all of them seems to solve the issue of a DNA test. She will tattoo their upcoming deaths on her arm, one down and three more to go. During this first season, (the

only season out during the time of my writing), she has her sights set on one particular man Abijah Fowler, a detestable Irish man. The Japanese who know him refer to him as the “white devil” and we soon learn why. A sexual and moral deviant who terrorises Japan by smuggling weapons in from Europe, he abuses the prostitutes he has shipped into his castle from the neighbouring town.



Green, M & Noizumi, A. *Blue Eye Samurai*. 3 November 2023.

The other character of interest in this show is Akemi, the noblewoman who juxtaposes Mizu. Just as Mizu was born lower class and of an “impure” bloodline, Akemi is a high-class princess without physical deformities. Akemi struggles with the patriarchy, she wants to choose who she marries instead of being shipped off to a stranger. Mizu uses physical violence to succeed with her mission and Akemi uses her womanly wiles and meek facade to manipulate the men around her.



Green, M & Noizumi, A. *Blue Eye Samurai*. 3 November 2023.

However, though their characters seem to oppose one another, both women are unhappy with their lot in life and they both use their skills to change their lives. I found an interesting bias in myself during my first watch of this show. I liked Mizu's character, her strength, her power, and her violence, but when I watched Akemi's character arc I found her annoying. To me she was pathetic and manipulative, after my second and third watch, I felt more akin to Akemi. This is a woman who cannot pick up a sword and fight for what she wants, Akemi might be spoiled but she won't shy away from getting her hands dirty. Just as Mizu hides her identity, Akemi hides her class, she pretends to be a prostitute to gain her safe travels throughout Japan, as a high-class prostitute means she will be worth more if she is not harmed when bought by a brothel.

As I grew to understand Akemi's character she became more interesting. She is in love with a Samurai who is hunting for Mizu due to a breach of honour, Akemi fearing that without him she will be married off to an old, womanising lord. So, she escapes her palace and goes after him. She declares her love for him but I think deep down she is only using him to get what she wants.

Both these women fight against the patriarchy in different and valid ways, it was my own bias that did not allow me to see just how similar they are.

*Blue Eye Samurai* (2023) is more than a tale of vengeance; it is a deeply layered narrative that delves into the intersections of race, gender, and identity within a historical context. With its compelling protagonist and stunning animation, the series invites viewers to reflect on the societal constructs that shape our lives and how individuals can resist and redefine them.

As a bold and innovative entry into animated storytelling, the series offers a fresh perspective on the samurai genre while addressing issues as relevant today as they were in the past. Whether you're drawn to action-packed samurai tales or thoughtful explorations of cultural identity, *Blue Eye Samurai* (2023) is a series that is sure to leave a lasting impression.

In addition to being visually captivating and narratively rich, *Blue Eye Samurai* (2023) serves as a significant commentary on gender roles and feminist themes. By weaving these themes into its story, the series challenges traditional perceptions of gender and power, making it a notable work in the context of feminist discourse. As a result, *Blue Eye Samurai* (2023) becomes more than just an animated series; it becomes a significant contribution to ongoing conversations about gender, power, and representation in media. For those interested in feminist themes, this series offers a rich, thoughtful exploration that is both engaging and profoundly relevant.

*Blue Eye Samurai*, season 1 written by Amber Noizumi, and Michael Green. Netflix, 3 Nov. 2023.