

Transcript for Totally Booked! A Penumbra Podcast
Episode Third: Manga with special guest Mary Wepler

Autumn: Welcome everybody to episode three of "Totally Booked!" A Penumbra Podcast. We're super excited today! We have special guest Mary Wepler—did I say that right?

Mary: Yep that's perfect!

Autumn: Awesome. And I'm going to pass it off to all my co-hosts—there're quite a few of us from *Penumbra* here today—to kinda introduce ourselves before we get started on our interview.

Nikki: Hello, everyone! I am Nikki Walden and I'll let my other co-hosts introduce themselves.

Mary: Hi, Nikki.

Essence: Hello, I'm Essence Saunders.

Mary: Hello.

Nicole: I'm Nicole Azof.

Mary: Hey Nicole!

Giana: I'm Giana.

Andrea: And I'm Andrea Wagner.

Nikki: And today we will be discussing manga, more specifically what we're going to discuss today is certain titles from manga that have been popular in recent years, or like were popular. Some of the themes that we might discuss include bullying, morality, and heroism, and like other subgenres of that. And also, we have Mary Wepler, as was stated before today, and we will be doing an interview of her regarding questions about the library. I also wanted to add that you guys can like feel free to donate to the Warrior Food Pantry like. So here we have Mary

Mary: Hello!

Nikki: And we'll start the interview! Giana, if you wanna take a go at it.

Giana: Yeah, I have the first question. So Mary, our first question for you is what brought you into becoming our librarian at the university?

Mary: So I've been working in libraries since about early 2000. While I was finishing up my Masters in Art History, I got a job at Sacramento Public Library as a library tech there. I worked there for about two or three years, and then I moved to San Francisco. I had a little bit of a hiatus, and I worked for the ARC, which is a nonprofit which helps adults with developmental

disabilities. So I did that for three years in San Francisco, and then I worked at Stanford's Green library for a little bit, and then I got a job at UC Merced, and I worked at UC Merced in the library for six years. Then I became the archivist for the art campus architects and construction team. So I did that for three years, full time three years, so altogether about nine years full-time at UC Merced. And then I got a job at Delta. While I finished up my Masters in library science, I did a second Masters, and then I got the job as a tenure track librarian at Delta College in Stockton. So I did that for six years, and in 2019 I also started teaching art history for Delta, which I still do. I still teach one class a semester, and I teach two classes in the summer for Delta teaching art history, which is really really fun. I really enjoy it. And then in September of 2021, I got the job at CSU Stanislaus, which was really exciting for me because I'm from Atwater and I've traveled all over the world and lived in England for a year and, you know, I've had all these great experiences, but it's so nice to be able to work close to your hometown and so, yeah, that's where I'm at today. And I was lucky enough to become the Special Collections and University Archives librarian in the first full-time library that they've had at CSU Stanislaus, so I feel really fortunate to have this position and be here with all of you.

Giana: That's awesome. So you said you are Special Collections and University Archives librarian. Can you tell us a little about about your responsibilities?

Mary: Yes, definitely, and I'll just preface it with in addition to being a librarian, I'm also a certified archivist, which you have to study for this test for a long time, then you get certified, and it just helps you to be able to handle primary sources and rare materials. So part of my job entails making sure that we have all the proper workflows and all the resources that we need in order to help make accessible all the special collections and archives that we have. So we have to have, you know, a digital repository where we maintain all the records for special collections and university archives. So that was a major component in my position when I first started, because we'd never had a database for all of our records. So I went ahead and kind of drew up a project plan, and we have some really talented people that work in the library. Our IT tech in the library is

Gamma Moraz and Rick Deeds, and basically the three of us together worked out a plan to roll out a digital repository archive space and then to also create a web server where we could keep all of our digital files, so metadata is a big part in my life and cataloging. So that's that's one component of managing records, also preservation tasks. So when we receive new records—well, they're not necessarily new, right? Because a lot of times they're really old, but new to us. Sometimes they're in corrosive boxes, in acidic boxes. They're an acidic file holders. They might be leaning over, things might need to be repaired, so I also manage or oversee preservation tasks that are necessary to make sure that the records can endure through time, and that they can be accessible through time. So preservation is another aspect of it. Digitization is another aspect, and that's something that I really really love. And so digitization, too, is really part of preservation, because when you digitize something, you have a copy of it, and also chances are that people will sometimes settle for the digitized copy versus the analog or the actual document, and so that helps preserve the documents as well. So digitization is a part of preservation as well, and it's definitely part of access. So a few digitization projects that we've started since I started in September—and I have to call up my students Catherine and Daniela because they're so awesome—they together have digitized over 300 *Signals*, student newspapers that were not available in a digital format. So those are now available, they're text searchable, not only do they output it to .pdf, but they have to output it to .tif and .jpeg so that we can preserve the digital objects through time. So digitization is a big component of what I oversee. So they've been working on that, and we haven't—now a lot of *Signals* from—we had some from the 60s and 70s, but now we have more, and we also have them in color. Before they were running in black and white. But especially the 80s and the 90s—we've done a lot of the *Signals* from the 80s and 90s—so that's a super exciting project. And then we just finished—I should say my students—just finished digitizing all the yearbooks. So we had yearbooks from 1971 to about 1983. They were sporadic in the 70s, and then there were really few in the 80s, but the 60s is pretty continuous. We had issues, I think, from '61 to '69. So digitization is another aspect of what I do. Outreach is another aspect, because I do physical exhibits as

well as digital exhibits. So on our lib guide, I have digital exhibits, and we have a big, physical exhibit right now that we've had up for a couple of months, and it's the 65th anniversary of the establishment of Stanislas as a college, which goes back to 1957, so that's in the reading room on the third floor, and then it extends to the quiet study. We might—I don't know if any of you've seen it—but that's an exhibit we have ongoing through the end of the semester, and I always have digital component to that as well, same for when we release digital collections like our yearbook collection, we're gonna be releasing that pretty soon, and I'll have a little digital collection for it as well to promote. So outreach is a big part, really trying to outreach to students, to the community, to show them how primary sources and rare materials can be used in their research and to write papers and, you know, for whatever project they're doing, so outreach is another aspect, and then instruction. I do a little bit of instruction, and I create learning objects like lib guides. And I actually have a lib guide for tonight, for our Manga, and I've added anime to that as well. So I can share that with you in a bit whenever you think it's appropriate. But thank you for that question.

Giana: Okay, so this next question is more of a hypothetical question. So let's just say I came up to you asking a question regarding gathering reference materials that consist of old newspaper articles. How would I go about finding what I need?

Mary: Definitely. So we have old newspapers listed on our website, our school website. Do you want me to share the screen and show you where that's located actually? Should I share my screen? Would it be appropriate or it's—probably—I need to talk you through it, huh? Because it's mostly audio—is it preferred

Autumn: We'll have a video component as well, so I enabled share screen if that works.

Mary: Okay! What I'll do is I'll talk it through while I'm doing the visual as well, so the first thing I wanted to show you was how to get to...this is the libraries homepage that we're on right now. And to get to the library, or I should say Special Collections website, you go to Services, and we're the second item from the end here. And this is the website for special collections and university archives, and there's a lot of information—here's the manga and anime lib guide that I've created just for our session today, and to assist students

with manga and anime in the library going forward, and I'm going to be adding to that guide through time. But as far as newspapers, we have, on my lib guide for special collections and university archives, SCUA, as we call it, on the fourth tab is historic newspaper collection, and you can see all the different newspapers that we have in special collections. You can see, some of them are pretty old, 1849 to 1851, 1945 to 1957. So it's an alphabetized list of mostly local newspapers. So if you knew that you wanted to peruse one of these newspapers, and you knew the date, we could prepare that for you, and then we would schedule time for you to come to the reading room and review that content. If, however, you wanted, say, Signal newspaper articles, I was going to go back and show you, you could go to our catalog archive space, and say you knew that your grandmother had been in a Signal in...I don't know, 1986. If I type in, say, in 1986, and right now we're on archive space, which is our relatively new digital repository. I can click into that, and that is going to show you all the results that come up. So you can see these are all like different issues from the 80s, or from 1986. So if I click into this one, into this record, it will take me to record with all the metadata, all the details about this issue. And then I can click here into the digital object and that is actually going to take me to the Signal .pdf that we've digitized. And if you knew, for example, that you were—look, it's gonna take a little bit to render. But if you knew, for example, that your grandmother was featured, or maybe your mother, was featured in the 1986 issue, you could then word search the Signal because we've made those not only .pdfs, but they're text searchable .pdfs. So here you look at—here's 1986. So you can kind of see what things look like here at Stanislaus in 1986. Now I'm on a Mac, so I'm gonna do control F, but if I were on a PC I would do...on a Mac you command F, on a PC you would control F. And then I can just search through this issue. So let me try this here. See if it'll let me do that. And then I could search—for some reason my F—oh, there it is, it's at the very bottom. So, if I knew that I was looking for something like "vashe," it's going to show me everywhere where "vashe" appears in this issue. It's gonna highlight—you can see up here, it's highlighting—it's kind of light on my machine. So that's how you would search; like if you knew the date, you could search for the Signal—you could search a

specific date to see if we had Signals for that date range or whatever, and then you could actually word search each document by whatever keywords you decided to input into that command, F or control F menu. So that, yeah, thank you for asking that question. Did you need additional details about finding research?

Giana: No, I think that was good. No, you're good, I think Nikki has the next question, I think she wants to add to that.

Nikki: Okay, I'm gonna ask like one more question pertaining to that specifically, and then we're gonna move forward in time a little bit towards like later questions. Is there a way to contact the special collections and university archives desk for more help?

Mary: Definitely, so I'm gonna go back to share screen. And I'm on the SCUA lib guide again. So on this guide there is a contact information and appointments box here. It's on the kind of lower right hand side of the homepage for the school website, and if you click into this little kind of icon, it'll take you to a web form and it'll say "Hello, welcome to special collections and university archives research request form, and then you can click begin, and you can go through this entire form. And I ask you a few questions like, have you found an item on One Search that shows the location of special collections? So if you see in a library One Search record in the library catalogs record that special collections is listed as the location, that means it's upstairs on the third floor and you would have to schedule an appointment to view that item in person. If it wasn't, you know, something that hasn't been digitized, or did you find it on archive space. And that would take you to the database that we were just on, where we searched for the Signal from 1986. And I have little tutorials here, like I have a tutorial, a video tutorial, on how to use finding aids, because it can be really confusing. And one thing, one of my jobs, as time goes forward, is to really develop a strong instruction and workshop program for special collections and university archives to really help people use finding aids for their research and for any project that they may be working on because, there's nothing like interacting with original documents that are one of a kind documents. It's kind of a special experience, so we really want to get the word out there. So I'm so appreciative that you're having me on the show today! Anyways, you would have two choices

for your time to meet, as well to come to the reading room. So that's a way that you would do that.

Autumn: Awesome. Lots of good information, too.

Mary: Well, thank you for the questions.

Nikki: Thank you for that information, Mary. To forward in time a little bit, you mentioned earlier that, like that you made a special page regarding Manga.

Mary: Yeah, I did! Let me go ahead—I'm sorry, I feel like musical chairs with the sharing screen—okay, so yeah, if you can all see my screen, I have like a little kind of press release area here and I'm gonna update it once you guys post the podcast too, if that's okay, but I have the lib guide here, and it's on manga and anime, and I borrowed it from a colleague. He let me use the template, and he's located at the International and Area Studies Library at the University of Illinois. Librarians and archivists are such a wonderful group of people. We love to share resources, and I know because they have a program, I believe, in cartooning, so he had a really good lib guide, and I I actually used just a little bit. Well, I'd say I use about 30% of his guide, but it was really helpful in developing this lib guide. So I've linked to that—like a good librarian, I'm citing my sources, and he was really happy to share that. But the way this guide is set up is I have the home page here, which welcomes you, and kind of basically tells you how the guide is set up. We have resources from the library; we have manga and anime by genre. Now this is not an exhaustive list. I've only included four genres here: action, adventure, history, and memory, nature and environment, sci-fi and and mechas, or robots. But I'm going to be including more on gender and in some some other subject areas as well. So you could go to any of these pages as well to find out more. I also have a tale the tale of the Ganji, which is really important to the history of manga. It was written in the eleventh century—it was an eleventh century scroll—and if you're familiar with Japanese scrolls, you roll them out so that you can tell a continuous story, and this is really where comic books begin. This is where manga begins, and the really cool thing is that the tale of Ganji was written by a woman. She was a cortisan in the aristocracy at that time, and one night she went out, and she was so moved by how beautiful the moon was, she started to write this story, the tale of Ganji. And it's been just such a seminal piece within the

culture of Japan, and it's influenced their poetry, their art, etc. So I have a page on the tale of Ganji, and then I have a page on studio studio Ghibli and Hayao Miyazaki. I know, for many of us, we may have come to anime through his, through his films, and I consider him—he's definitely one of my favorites. In my office I have a stuffed animal of No Name which I love, because when you're an archivist, you're constantly filling stuff up, like terabytes of data. So he's kind of my symbolic archivist character, I guess So anyways that's how this is organized. I think there's some really helpful information, again, thank you to my colleague at Illinois, the University of Illinois, because he was really helpful. So, anyways, this is available, and it's linked from the special collections and university archives web page on the homepage if you'd like to explore this in greater detail. If I go to a couple of pages, like I can go to manga and anime by genre, I have a little video tutorial that wikipedia did here about manga. It's really good, really helpful, tale of Gangji—this is the page that I mentioned earlier. So there's videos here, we have library books that are available that you can view online and physical books that you can check out from the library. And then here's the Miyazaki page as well. So there's library books listed here as well, books that we have in our collection as well as some items, like we do not have Nausicaa unfortunately, but that is something that we will be ordering. Actually, it's so wonderful that you asked me to do this because I found that we had no primary source—we had very few primary source mangas, very few novels or actual manga. We had a lot of secondary sources about manga, like the cultural history of manga, the art history of manga. You know the cinema history of anime, but we didn't have a lot of manga in house. So I have actually started to order some. And my colleague, Jamie Noy Decker, she grew up on manga and she's a librarian at CSU Stanislaus as well, and so she's been helping me, and together we've been ordering quite a few titles, and we're trying to order the multi-volume sets too, so probably within a couple of weeks you'll see that. We'll do a display in the reading room on the first floor of the library and that's where we'll put all the the actual manga as it comes in.

Autumn: That's gonna be amazing, wow!

Nikki: That was pretty extensive, like I'm excited to see how it grows in the future. To ask the final question, since we're

running short on time, do you have any particular titles, like a manga that you like, because seeing as how you talked a lot about the subject, I'm assuming...

Mary: Yeah, I'm a huge fan of manga, and especially—I teach art history, so I love and I teach art history, I teach a few different classes like art appreciation, but I've also taught history of the non-western world, and it's so exciting to talk about the Heian period. And this would have been the period when the Tale of Genji was written. But I especially love the Edo period, the 1600s through the 1800s, part of the 1800s. And, of course, that's when you see the wood block prints come out, and the wood block prints led directly to the development of manga. Earlier, of course it was the scroll paintings then that led to woodblock prints, and what's really interesting about the wood block prints, like I'm sure many of you have seen "The Great Wave of Kanagawa" by, let's see what is his name, I'm trying to think...Hokusai, Hokusai. You've probably seen "The Great Wave." It's almost as ubiquitous as Edvard Munch's "The Scream," or even Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," which is so beautiful. It's so amazing to see that that ("The Great Wave") has become such a familiar image to us, but the artist who created that, Hokusai, he actually coined the term manga, and he didn't—it wasn't referring to his wood block prints, which are amazing and which are mostly what we know him for today. But it was actually a set, a 13 series set of drawings that he had done, and basically, translated from Japanese, manga means means whimsical drawings. And so, I just, I love that history, and also love how woodblock printing and the creation of scrolls was a very collaborative art form. Oftentimes you had writers, you had people that did the artwork, you might have had different people creating the artwork with the wood blocks. And so it's very collaborative, much like manga and much like anime, still very collaborative. And another thing I wanted to say about the history of manga is, what I find so fascinating is that kind of crowded perspective, and the asymmetrical compositions that comes directly from the scroll paintings, and from that grand tradition that started in the eleventh century through the wood block prints through today. So it's really exciting. But I did want to also mention that we ordered—because I know we're short on time—but I wanted to share that we did order quite a few titles that you should see coming in *Akira*, *Full Metal*

Alchemist, Death Note, Pretty Guardian, Sailor Moon, The Ghost in the Shell, The Drifting Classroom, Loan Wolf and Cub, A Bride Story, Real Vagabond, A Silent Voice, Fruits Basket, Barefoot Gen, Hiroshima, Blade of the Immortal, Battle Angel Alita, Card Captor Sakura, and that's it. But we'll be ordering more, and if you would like to request more manga, just reach out to us librarians. You know where my page is now, and we'll be happy to to order more as well. And I really thank you for actually inviting me to this interview and making the library realize that we needed more manga. And so I just think it was really wonderful that first you invited us and that we've been able to develop the collection because of that.

Nikki: I actually have to thank you because I did not know this much about manga until like you came on, like, I am a fan, but now I'm just like disappointed in myself.

Autumn: I want take a class on manga to learn from you!

Mary: No, I, honestly, I learned so much just by creating the lib guide! And again, I have to thank my colleague at the University of Illinois, but I learned a lot. Honestly I really love Miyazaki and I've seen a lot of his films, so I felt like I was very pigeon-holed, too. So I feel like I learned a lot as well, so I'm glad you did, too. And take a look at the guide! If there's anything else that you would like to see on the guide, let me know, and we can add more resources there as well.

Autumn: Well that's great for our listeners, too, so you guys remember if you're like us, and you're feeling like you're learning a lot about manga right now, with the lib guide you can learn even more. That's amazing.

Mary: Well, thank you so much for having me. Are we out of time for my segment?

Nikki: Sadly, yes, but honestly I could listen for you talk for hours, if I were being completely honest here.

Mary: Oh, you're so sweet! Well, I will be very happy to come back at any time, and come and see me on the third floor sometime. We're up there, and I'm usually there Monday through Friday, 8 to 5. Usually, most days. Tuesday, Thursday I'm there like 7 to 4:30. But we're there and you know we're always happy to get people to tour the special collections, too. So, thank you so much again. I really appreciate it.

Nikki: Thank you for being here, Mary. We hope you have a great rest of your evening.

Mary: You as well, take care! Bye, everybody.

All: Goodbye, bye!

Nikki: And I suppose now we should go to the next segment of our podcast, in which we'll be discussing three titles: *A Silent Voice*, *Death Note*, and *My Hero Academia*. I should warn our listeners, though, that we will potentially be discussing spoilers from each title. So if you haven't caught up or care deeply about being spoiled, this isn't the podcast for you. You can come back after you've caught up.

Autumn: Yeah, we're a pro spoiler podcast for almost everything we cover. But yeah, if you are not wanting to be spoiled, then make sure you stop after Mary's interview.

Nikki: Okay, to continue on, the first title I'm thinking we should talk about is *A Silent Voice* like in...it's kind of reached some popularity in recent years, and it's basically a manga that discusses an important aspect of our lives(...)problem in our lives that are still...that is still relevant today, and that is basically bullying, and along with disabilities and mental health. So, or people will probably be familiar with the movie that (*A Silent Voice*) came from, but we're gonna be sticking to the manga here. So I found the the manga extremely heartbreaking like, especially when it came to one of the characters Shoko, because she is like a deaf girl in the manga who experiences isolation and discrimination from her peers because they don't understand the disability she has, and because they don't understand, they feel as though that gives them the path to be cruel to her, because she was different, and she basically grows up feeling that...feeling like, that pain, and just guilt. She blames herself for the bullying that she had been caused. Then comes another character named Shoya. He was one of her bullies from like, elementary school, and he, in the manga basically, it starts out with kind of like him, being suicidal, but he does all these things. These like kind of last things, things to do before he commits suicide, and one of the things he decides to do is apologize to Shoko, and that's basically where the story begins so this...anyone else want to share their thoughts on?(*A Silent Voice*)

Autumn: I did, I did wanna mention that. I think Mary mentioned that this is one of the ones that they have on the list to be ordered at the library right?

Andrea: Yeah, no, Mary said that that was one of them, which is really convenient. I don't know if she knew we're gonna talk about that or something like...did she just read our minds?

Autumn: (...) almost everything we're gonna talk about today.

Andrea: Everything but My Hero. I guess that's an outlier. I'll have to say, "Hey, get that one in there!"

Autumn: Put your request form in Andrea.

Essence: And we also have to force everyone who's only seen the show to read it too!

Nikki: The funny thing is I didn't mention it all, like what titles we're discussing in the email to her. So I do not know how she knew.

Autumn: Wow! She got, she had quite a few of them. So yeah, shout out to Mary.

Andrea: Well it is definitely...sorry Autumn yeah, no. It's definitely a very unique and influential manga and anime, and like the movie itself. I know we talked a little bit before how beautiful it is, and yet these themes are so like, very strong, you know, dark themes about suicide, about mental and physical disability, and how kids behave. It's just so shocking to me how the school handled Shoko's disability so poorly. Like, I don't know, it was very eye-opening, I suppose. I don't know what you guys...like, I don't know if that's unique to Japan. I, I don't think so? I think even in America, kids have the potential to be very cruel. Especially girls, because I saw one of the bullies and, I believe her name...is her name Ueno? Nikki?

Nikki: Was it the blonde, or like the dark hair girl?

Andrea: Dark hair, dark hair.

Nikki: Dark hair, Ueno.

Andrea: Because she is mean! Oh my gosh! Because I know the main story is about not, not her. Well, she's in it, but it's mostly about Shoya, Shoya right because he's the one trying to redeem himself, and like he's the one who realizes you know the wrongs that he's done to Shoko, but she (Ueno) is the subtle bully who is not...she does not try to understand Shoko. It's just so disheartening to see that she doesn't grow, she doesn't care. Like surely, yes, she probably does have a lot going on in her life too, but we don't get to see that as readers I don't think. Right?

Nikki: No.

Andrea: I don't think right? No, no yeah no, but it really shows how mean girls can be to girls, which is true. I know that's kind of stereotypical like the caddy bullying of girls, especially in that age like elementary, junior high, to high school like, that whole age group honestly.

Essence: It's like this creative cruelty girls have a tendency to do because of how we're told to behave, so it's like that weird underhandedness where you learn how to do it while getting away with it because when you act out in a certain way that's when you get noticed, kind of.

Andrea: Yeah she gets... It's just so. We see, it's clearly shown, I think in this manga and in the movie to, you see it, too, and it's just so...it's in your face, and it's like. Wow, this is so common. I mean, it's a very specific scenario, right? There's not many deaf girls named Shoko with little sisters. But you know, what have you. But this is such a (sigh). I feel like this...many young girls fall victim to that kind of bullying and victim to being a bully, like both. There's also people who bullied in the past and that's what's nice about this story. You know, it's redemptive for those who want it. Those who are like. Oh, my God, Shoya, those who are like Shoya, who realize like: "Why did I do all of that?", "Why was I being so stupid?" So, sorry, that was a lot of talking for me. Nikki, you you start talking some more!

Nikki: That was fine. You said earlier that like Ueno was like more subtle. I'd, argue like Kawai was more subtle because she was kind of like that gaslight—she reminds me like a gaslighter, like almost because she like, she brief... She does have some character growth in the manga when she realizes what she does, but she never apologizes or admits to anyone else that, oh, she was just as bad, like...

Andrea: That's true.

Nikki: Maybe not, maybe not physically like Ueno it was, but she was subtle.

Andrea: She never admits to actually being part of the problem. She doesn't want to even associate with it, like, "No! I could never, I never did that!" Right? Is she that girl?

Nikki: Yeah.

Andrea: Yeah that's also bad, also pretty yucky, and that's unfortunately a reality, too. That some people act like that too, and are like: "I, I wasn't like that." It's like hmm, okay.

Nicole: Yeah. There was a lot of aggressive bullying in this one. I'll say that. Like it's really exaggerated to go with the theme of course, but like there were times where even I was like, oh, come on, really? There was no need to bully, but like something I kept thinking about too, and I was watching the movie to refresh my mind, but something I could think about is how her mother reacted to her child's bully. Like that was pretty interesting, too, because his actions had a lot of consequences like pulling her, her aids like her hearing aids out. Those were apparently expensive, like, he learned, and he automatically felt bad about that, and he took that out on her as well, which was pretty intense. Like it really goes deep into the consequences of everyone's actions in the scenario, especially the bully.

Nikki: I think the most depressing part about it is like not every bully gets...every bully pretty much except Shoya gets away with it, that's what I feel. It's realistic, which a part of me is like, a part of me appreciates the realism, as disappointing as it is, but the other part of me just wishes like the rest of them all, just owned up to it like at some point, you know, because it did so much damage to like not even, not only Shoko and just like, even some of the other kids, because, like a lot of their friendships were torn apart.

Andrea: Yeah, so much of the story seems to be (about bullying) —oh sorry, Nikki—like reconnecting with people and seeing where they're at now, after not seeing them for a while, which is very realistic, like you grow apart from people after elementary school—that just, I mean, that typically happens—and you see who they've become. Some maybe got better and some kind of stay in their ways, and it's like, "Oh,...I wish you didn't. So—their true colors certainly show yeah; Shoya definitely gets a reality check when he realizes, "Wow, no one's on my side. What the heck?" Like, that was...the realism's there. It's just, you know, bittersweet I guess?

Nicole: He was like really trying to be friends with her when he grew up. Doing everything he could to make up for his actions.

Andrea: Definitely.

Nicole: Yeah, that's what I like about the movie, too, like it was interesting to see from his perspective. Like, how horrible he was when he was younger, and now we get to basically watch him redeem himself throughout this whole movie, and in a way it

almost makes you root for him too because you know he wants to change. Which was interesting and made it more unique and relatable.

Andrea: Yeah, it's...sorry, Nikki, you're gonna say something?

Nikki: That like...I'll let you finish up that thought.

Andrea: Thanks! Cause I'll forget it soon. No, I like how it kind of frames the story we get. We start with how does Shoya see all this, but then later we realize that, you know Shoko has been blaming herself this whole time and internalizing—like you mentioned earlier on—internalizing everything that has happened to her. Like; “Oh gosh, I'm the burden. I'm the one with the problem. If I just went away this wouldn't happen,” and then the readers and the audience says, “Oh my gosh, wait, that isn't at all what Shoya thinks.” Like we have this cognitive dissonance going on and it's just, it's refreshing and sad and very realistic I think. I mean, some aspects obviously aren't like the coma, and there's a lot of things that are perhaps not realistic, but those feelings definitely are, and those realizations, like what you thought was true is actually not what another person believes.

Nikki: Yeah, I'd like to change the topic a little bit to something else. That partially also happens to the school setting is our next title, *Death Note*, which is not as sweet as *A Silent Voice*, and almost every character in that show, you like, almost every character in that show you kind of wanna just, kind of punch in the face, because they're all. It's fine! Almost all of them are corrupt.

Nicole: Every character's actions in that show are questionable.

Essence: Yeah, and I just (...) I dont know, just like the body count of the death notes of everyone who gets them is kind of insane with how fast they can work through people.

Nicole: Adding to that. Oh, sorry! How you were talking about how the Death Note works there, I was thinking about like there's so much rules that come with the Death Note, like so much world building, and lore. It's so amazing and interesting.

Nikki: I'm just wondering how Light's ideology came to light because...I did not mean to make that pun. I did not. Oh, my God, that was totally...okay, but moving on. So we all know, like Light Yagami, or the Japanese version Raito Yagami, his father is a cop. I, I just kind of like had a thought of like how much of

his father's influence led him to become a serial killer, because I feel like throughout the story, Light...one of Light's idols was his father ultimately. Like, I just get the feeling from that, like when he, how he like, pursues what he calls "justice." Which is apparently murder, which we can disagree on those differences, but I'm just wondering. Like, this is just mainly theory, but I'm just wondering if maybe Soichiro was like, made some certain like passing conservative comments, like, to him in the past, that might have led him to build..

Essence: I think the fact that he's a cop too, because when you look—oh, sorry!

Nikki: Oh, I oh, like I'm done my thought.

Essence: When you look up, into how like, arrests and convictions work in Japan as soon as you realize...like that quick time of turn around with arrests, and making sure that people actually serve time and kind of sees a very extreme thing with Light where everyone he thinks are guilty need to go as quickly as you can get rid of them.

Nikki: That's an interesting point. It just, I don't know, it's just like a little theory I had, just. Like...that I had that I thought was interesting, because it's just, it's just strange how he... Like, something I know from the manga is like, he says the world should only be for good hard working people and I'm just like, what groups are included in that. Like, if you're like disabled and unable to work does that mean? You're like the bad guy like what what is your..? Like, what is your rules like for who's good and evil right like that's a little bit concerning.

Essence: Yeah, it's like such a specific phrase.

Nicole: You know, the power got to him. You thought, you know, the irony there, of course, he thought he was doing good by using the death note. Hard work, good, hard working people. He could have meant anything. Now that I think about it, good hard working? Like good people who are hard working, or are they hard working?

Essence: Like what makes them good in that mindset?

Nicole: Exactly. And L he's shown to be questionable too you're like wow! He's gonna help out a lot. Like no, he's not never mind.

Nikki: The only thing I like about L, like the only thing I appreciate about L is how weird he is, but that that's what

that's all. I draw a line. He like, just God. He is, he is like arguably, equally as bad as Light in my opinion. He like, what's the word for it he... He probably broke so many human rights laws over the course of the manga. It's ridiculous and it's alarming. Just to imagine...

Nicole: I'm trying to remember, Did Light's father disapprove of L's methods? Right... or something like that.

Nikki: What was that, Nicole? sorry?

Nicole: Oh, I was trying to remember. Did um, didn't Lights Father disapprove of L's method?

Nikki: Yeah, he did, but like he still kind of went along with it. So I am not giving him any slack. Like, the police like when L is like torturing Misa and Light, they're just like, "Hey This is kind of this is kind of like messed up I guess we'll just sit around and just complain about it and do nothing." so honestly the police are just equally as complacent, because they, they, they do raise, they raise opposition, but they let L set up the cameras, they let him like torture Light and Misa; even if Light and Misa are criminals you you shouldn't torture them because they're still human beings. Anyways, that's just my 2 cents.

Essence: It is interesting to be aware and think about the killing and the torturing and what the things we think of as inhumane. Where does it stop in the lines of the people doing it? When do you like, no longer become a person that are no longer lines that can be crossed. Who knows? I feel like they cross multiple lines like they're both doing it.

Nicole: Who knows? I feel like they cross multiple likes...like they're both doing it. Light, and L are both doing what they're doing for the sake of justice, they're doing whatever it takes to get justice, but how far they're going for justice is what is crazy.

Nikki: I will argue one point sorry Essence I'm going to take over this for a second in the Manga, L seems to state more that he's doing it because he enjoys it. He enjoys figuring out puzzles and stuff. I feel like, like, he makes it seem like just saying it's for justice is just an excuse, maybe a part, small part of him is doing it for justice, but ultimately, it's for his own amusement. As like all rich people do weird things for their own amusement.

Nicole: Yeah. I totally agree with that. It's like a challenge to him basically.

Nikki: Yeah, and you'll even see it's like a challenge. It becomes a challenge to like over As it goes on to like, because after like spoiler, L dies Light talks about constantly of how he misses L, and how he missed how what a fun opponent L is, and like this, this jerk isn't as fun as L was and it's like dude. You, you killed him, you do, have you. This is on you. It was just interesting to see how...

Nicole: Yeah, it was um...

Nikki: Oh Sorry it's just

Nicole: It's fine

Nikki: it's just interesting to see how what they originally started out for like the greater good of people, justice.

Nicole: It basically became a game to them. To both of them.

Nikki: I lagged pretty hard There didn't I?

Autumn: That's okay

Nikki: Okay, It's just as I say before in case you didn't get it. It's interesting to see how they originally went for justice or may have originally went for justice, but then they, it just became a game for their own amusement.

Autumn: That's becoming like more popular like in media and just in general, the idea, like the good guy becoming bad or kind of losing a little bit of their morality. Like, that's becoming more common then just like the straight "Here's a hero, here's a villain." Well, maybe there's heroes who can be villainous, and then there's villains who can do heroic things. It's a little more complex.

Andrea: Moral ambiguity is more like complex and tasty. I don't know, it's more interesting, it's more fun. I think it's more fun. So I agree with you guys.

Essence: Thing about the straightforward black and white. You get bored in here because like well we know how this is supposed to end now and we don't (...) at this point.

Andrea: Right, it gets boring. I've seen...we need to add some spice here, and make people question "Is that good? Is that...?"

Essence: They always do it well, but...

Autumn: A little spice, little bit of murder, little bit of vengeance, and it makes for a good work.

Nikki: Speaking of murder and vengeance. Should we move on to our next session or should we talk about this a little bit more? Because I have a feeling *My Hero* is the most popular one.

Autumn: Let's hear about that. Explain...can somebody give a little bit of back story on this one? Because I don't know as much, so, or maybe for the listeners.

Nikki: I know Andrea was very excited, very eager to push this topic into consideration.

Autumn: Give us your best synopsis, Andrea.

Andrea: Okay. So, in a world where 20% of the population... Er wait, no. I'm gonna mess it up. He introduces it the same like every time in the intro right? So this is a world where people have developed these things called quirks. Most people, it's not every person, let's get this straight. Because our main character is an anomaly. Our main...I'll even—for viewers who are watching this visually—here's Izuku Midoria, so cute. Here's his little mentor and idol, who's supposed to look very American. The idyllic hero All Might is by him, who the idolizes. So Izuku or Deku is...he's our main character. He's someone who doesn't have the special power that seemingly most people in this new world have developed, and this power is called quirks. And it's very interesting, the world building, because it's set up as a superhero kind of show and manga and, I mean, even the colors are very bright, and it's very much I feel marketed for those younger kids that love superheroes like Spiderman, and you know, Superman, like, you know, all of the superhero genre. But they present all of these like moral dilemmas and problems within the society. So most people have these things called quirks, Izuku does not have a special power, and he's very upset by this, and this causes a chain reaction of things. It causes him to...he does receive a power, uh...like, that's not a spoiler right? If you know the first, if you watch a couple episodes—

Essence: I feel like if you've already watched any of it.

Andrea: Yeah! If you read like...

Nikki: Spoilers are fine! We warned the audience.

Andrea: Spoiler warning, the reason it's called *My Hero Academia* is, he goes to a school for heroes, because he gets a power, so he doesn't have one, but he gets one, and from his *idol* from his, you know, the number one hero, because in this society heroes are basically glamorized to celebrity status. So, which is interesting! And there's also a school, so people here love heros so much. They want to become one as a career for money purposes and what have you.

Autumn: It's giving me, I don't know if you guys have seen the Prime TV series, *The Boys*.

Nikki: It is very similar to *The Boys* in terms of premise. Like superhero society.

Nicole: I was thinking about watching that.

Autumn: Awesome! So if you like *The Boys* then this would be a good one to read.

Andrea: Yeah! Maybe expand your horizons. So yeah, I mean, one of the most...interesting thing to me is how it's like, the beginning, the premise is very much like for kids. Like, oh this little kid, he wants a power, and then he gets a power, and he can train it, and he's gonna become a hero, that's like his number one goal. He wants to be like his idol, All Might, and he goes to this school called UA and the teachers are heroes, and it's all great, but then what happens throughout the series and throughout the manga especially—because the anime itself is not quite caught up—it gets darker and darker and darker, not just in like the villains, but also like the main characters. Like the reader realizes “Wait that's kinda messed up,” like their motivations and their thought processes. Even Izuku himself becomes a bit like, concerning...? Actually very concerning. Because a lot of what he does...a lot of habits he picks up from All Might ends up being pretty evidently harmful, because All Might, his thing is that he wanted to be the number one hero and to have everyone look up to him and to lean on him, to depend on him. And this has consequences. Society has, in fact, become dependent upon him, and the villains point this out, like, “This is a bad thing. Look what you've done.” Like, a lot of the villains' rationale is like, you know, this society has no place for us. It's very much...it looks down on people with weird quirks. Like, it's like another way to categorize people and discriminate people, cause there's these quirks that make people...how do I...what's the word, like? They look more animalistic? I forget the word...

Essence: Transforming? Was it?

Nikki: Is it hybrids or something?

Andrea: I don't know off the top of my head, I'm so sorry, but there's like, there's certain quirks that make people—it seems like it doesn't benefit them. It seems to just make them not fit in, like stand out and stick out and actually be discriminated. Like, I'm kind of getting on a tangent, but there's a

specific...like Himiko Toga is this young school girl. Um, high school age. She's a girl that's been discriminated and looked down on and repressed like all her life, because she has a quirk that's kind of weird. Her quirk is that if she sucks the blood of someone she can kind of become them. It's kind of...it's very vampireistic, kind of, but she has always liked that—she has. It's almost depicted...like especially in the manga, there's these frames that looks kind of like, perverted? Like this subject, like people—even her parents have said, “You need to hide that, that's weird. Like, the fact that you enjoy having that quirk, and that's how you show love, like, to people, like wanting their blood? That's weird, you need to keep that to yourself.” And that's one of the reasons she despises hero society and people that are like her parents and her older friends before she dropped school. So she's someone who is repulsed by the society who, you know, rejects people like her, and there's tons... The villains all have their motives, and I think that's really fun. The he little—now that I'm talking about it I might as well—the little band of villains is really quite endearing in a way because they're not professionals. They're just a bunch of guys that aren't fitting in, but just working together kind of, not really well, but they all just agree like, “Heroes suck.” That's basically what they all can agree on, and it's fun to see them interact and oppose the heroes, which most of the heroes in the show focus on the the kids, which makes it quite the moral dilemma, making kids fight, uh, battles that aren't even their... Like, I...as an adult, I find that...

Essence: The kids tend to be under the line of fire alot!

Andrea: Yeah, it's quite concerning, um, but I think the manga draws attention to that. Like, that's not something... Heros do a lot of shady things.

Essence: Yeah, like even giving Izuku the power in the first place.

Andrea: You know...since you brought it up. Why don't we talk about that episode?

Nikki: Yeah, speaking of the power, this is gonna go off a little from like the point you're trying to drive in? But I'm gonna say it anyway, I think it would be a stronger storyline if like, Izuku never got a quirk, but, like he was trained by All Might to become like the first quirkless hero. I think that would be a stronger storyline.

Andrea: Yeah, I mean, many people have—okay, I'm gonna talk about fanfiction. Many people have written, and they're like, "This is how it should have been. This is better. This is like, more impactful. He would have been a more influential, more inspiring hero," like "Oh, you're the first quirkless hero," you know. But All Might...instead we have the story that we have.

Essence: Yeah, like his brain is fascinating and the power he has and the things he can do, make such a good story, but to...getting the quirk from him and then getting trained to be a kind of All Might clone makes him repress that in a way that is just like, kind of draws away from the story. In a way that I think...

Andrea: Yeah. It really belittles what he believes about himself; he really discounts himself. I know he is bullied, in fact, since we talked about it. He's definitely looked down upon by other people. But he even...

Essence: He (All Might) almost confirmed it for him.

Andrea: Yes, he even—

Essence He (Izuku) showed that he could be heroic without a power, and immediately after that he's given one.

Andrea: Yeah.

Essence: So what are you trying to say?

Andrea: I don't, it always struck me...I'm sorry Nikki, are you gonna say something?

Nikki: I would, I also want to add that it would be like...you know how Bakugo eventually apologizes for bullying him? I think it'd be stronger if—it would even add to that, because he never got a quirk to make Bakugo respect him, and like prove himself to Bakugo. Not that he had to, that he should have. But you know that he...that he could be a hero of his own strength, even without any (...)Made everything so much stronger. It would have made everything so much stronger story wise.

Andrea: No. I definitely see your point. But I see why All Might did what he did. That first episode, because—but it's also very concerning to me, as an older, as a not-child watching it or reading it. It's like, okay, you gave that quirk to him because you saw that he was someone who's willing to die like, "Oh, this kid, well, he's the perfect vessel because he's already so selfless." Yes, but also self-deprecating! He doesn't care, he'll just jump in, and that's not(. . .)

Essence: Even knowing what the quirk did to his body, and he (All Might) doesn't like, tell that.

Andrea: No. That is *shady*.

Essence: No warning about it.

Andrea: *That* I don't like. Okay, listen...

Essence: I hate it so much!

Andrea: I don't wanna hate on All Might. I know some people love—

Essence: I don't, it's just *that* thing. It's that one...it's that thing, that's...it's, I just (...)

Andrea: It's like, I want to root for you All Might. I get it, you're a good guy, you're just trying your best, but you saw this kid. You knew, I think. I think you'd know how it would affect him, but you saw, well, he (Izuku) won't care because...he's crazy? This kid's crazy, it's fine, he's so desperate where he'll take... Because he *is*. He was at his lowest point. He's desperate for a quirk. He's willing to do anything, he's like, "Oh, here, sure, you seem good" because...I don't know it, it sets a weird tone for the rest of the show, because, like you're in the eyes of the Izuku Midoriya and he idolizes All Might and so does Bakugo, and so does the the whole society. We all love All Might, but All Might does not love All Might. I, the villains don't love All Might either but...

Nikki: But, to be honest, neither do I, I don't love All Might either. I only like, like the real All Might as I, as I discussed before, like you know, like his skeletal looking sickly form, and the difference between that and his hero form...

Andrea: Small Might

Nikki: His hero form—

Andrea: Yes!

Nikki: His, his hero form seems so much less approachable.

Essence: Hero form is like, what?

Andrea: Absolutely it's, it's such a performance, it's like, Why?

Essence: He literally puts on a new body to become All Might.

Andrea: Yeah, yeah, and it's like he, he keeps it up for so long, and I mean, I know in the manga we're reaching a point where it's very clear this is not gonna cut it for hero society. We need to change, and you know that's the villain's point, too. They also have this point like, "Hey, society needs to change;

this is not how things should be." I mean I'll give it to them there, they have... So that's another, I don't know what the point you wanted to move on to Nikki next, but if you wanted to talk about like-

Nikki: Yes, I do. I am. I appreciate so much how the Todorokis, the Todoroki children each have different responses to the abuse they suffered at the hands of their father. Like you see Fuyumi: she's trying to kind of like, forgive her father in order to get that happy family she's always desired. She's trying to let bygones be bygones, and meanwhile Natsuo, is not—he is refusing to move on, right, yeah, as he like deserves, like, he doesn't have to move on because he's been hurt so deeply by his father's actions. Meanwhile Shoto was hostile towards Endeavor at first, but now he's just kind of waiting to see what he would do next. To see like, "Oh, is this just a fluke? Is it just a phase dad's going through? Or does he actually mean his apologies?" And then you got the last child. Which (spoiler alert) is Dabi, whose actual name is Touya, who is just like—he goes off the deep end, trying to destroy his father's image to get revenge, which on one hand, is valid, but...not like that. You could have had a...this could have been a press conference.

Essence: His image probably needed to be wrecked, but maybe not the way you were doing it.

Andrea: Yeah. I remember when those—not episodes, sorry—those chapters came out, and it's like, oh my gosh, I feel for you. I understand you Touya, but, holy crap, where did we lose you? Like, I know where I mean like, cause his story, like, for Autumn's sake, and for those who maybe don't know, he's the first child. Yes, he was the first child and Endeavor, the father, he's always been second best to All Might, and he—so that hero side, that drive to be the best hero, has damaged him to make his children become, like, basically just vessels to be a hero.

Essence: He does basically try to breed his children into, like, the perfect weapons.

Andrea: Yeah, it's like breeding pokemon. That's basically how he treated it. Cus' like, "I'm a fire type, my wife is an ice type, we want the perfect blend."

Nikki: Now I just had the image of him stuffing his kids into a pokeball.

Andrea: That's like, I mean, that was kind of the rationale. That's kinda how it is.

Nikki: Now he's just chucking them.

Andrea: Yeah, I mean, so he's not a great dad; it's very evident that no one likes him. Okay, *some* people probably like Endeavor, but he's not a fan favorite. But, so, he has his first son Touya who has fire powers, and so he gets his son excited like, "Oh, you're gonna be the next All Might, and you will succeed me where I couldn't." And so Touya has got this literal (ha) fire under him, right, to be the best, but things go wrong when he actually isn't compatible with his quirk, because he actually received his mother's, like, disposition to the cold, like, he's not built for fire in the way that his dad is and the way Shoto is, and so he's kind of seen as, like, a failure, like, cause he gets burn marks, so it... Dabi, if you look at the character's design, if you look on Google Dabi, he-not Dobby. Dabi as in, D A B I. You'll see he has, yeah, he has burns.

Autumn: This ain't (...)

Andrea: Not the Dob-no, this ain't *Lord of the Rings** (*Harry Potter**). This is, this is manga. He has these burns everywhere because of himself; it's because of his own quirk, because he was kinda like...

Essence: When he uses it for too long it starts to eat away at him.

Andrea: Yes, and it's really sad, but he reacts like...the way that he's coping is through revenge, like he hates his father because it turns out his father basically abandoned him. He believed he was dead because he wanted to show his dad, like, "I can do it. I can do the fire thing!" And he basically burns himself alive, and sometimes his dad and their whole family think, "Oh, my God, Touya's dead." And uh, I guess Endeavour copes by making Shoto the new...

Nikki: Guinea pig?

Andrea: Yeah! New Guinea pig! But Touya, or Dabi, does not let this go. This is what's keeping him alive. Like, literally, this, this is his fire, like he wants... He's so upset, and it's not just society, it's his father. It's a very much personal thing because his importance, his significance as a person, was his ability, his quirk, like, it was all about that. He never got any kind of reassurance that he was wanted outside of that. It's just, you're important to me because of that thing that you

have, the fire. So yeah, it just shows...I feel like this movie, this *movie*? This manga, this *story* shows how influential and impactful relationships are, especially family ones.

Autumn: Yeah, I was gonna say like, take that and replace that with like sports or like...parent athletes, they want their kids to be like pro athletes, you know—

Andrea: Absolutely.

Autumn: So like it's, yeah, this is unrelatable in terms of like the powers, and you know this is like—we talked about this a little bit in contemporary fantasy—the idea that there's something about going into another world, reading something that is unrelatable and then being able to relate to it.

Essence: Kind of recontextualize it in a way that in some ways might be easier to absorb for people who don't necessarily want to see it in the world they live in, but know it's a thing and it kind of lets them confront it in a different setting.

Autumn: Yeah, I would agree. Your walls are down because you're going there for enjoyment purposes like, take me out of my world. I wanna be transported, so your walls come down, but then, all these other things...you're able to kind of like, yeah, kind of analyze that, and kind of get down to the deeper meaning of it? I don't know. I think that might be something that really draws people to a lot of these stories.

Nicole: Yeah, I agree with that, too, like that's what I love about fantasy stories in general. How like, even in an unrelatable scenario, you can still relate with their feelings, or like...pretty much, yeah, you can understand where they're coming from and the lesson is still there, like, the point of these are basically to tell a lesson or a cautionary tale about something that we can apply to our daily life.

Andrea: You still want to talk about...?

Nikki: Just one more thing. One thing I super do not like about the series is basically how it treats its female characters, more specifically they did Lady Nagant and Stars and Stripe so dirty and I am so upset about that, because those were two women I found...I fell in love with Lady Nagant when it showed the like the panel of her skipping through the sky all confident in her like, dress, and then just Stars and Stripes, the first panel of her, just chillin' like on a plane, like one of those like, fancy, like American army planes. And she's like ready to go,

she's ready to beat up people, beat up baddies, and all confident, I just...and then they do *that*.

Andrea: It is very frustrating, and I know this isn't just unique to *My Hero Academia*, like a lot of shonen-

Essence: It's like everything. The entire MCU.

Andrea: Yeah, it's not yeah it's not unique to Shonin you're right. It's a lot of superhero anything in this kind of genre of action. Women are looked down- I, I mean on the one hand Yeah, I totally agree with you Nikki. I, I'm frustrated like why put them in at all, If you just gonna blow them off. Because I appreciated the design of Lady Nagant, and you know Nanoshima she's like, the drawings of her are so very, very strong, like physically. strong and I appreciate that they don't shy away from it, they don't try to make her like it. I'm all femminen but I can punch a lot.

Nikki: They show her with muscles!

Andrea: Yeah, cause it's not realistic-

Nikki : And you start to see like, women with muscles that aren't often in like, shonen manga, so I found that really unique about Nana shimura's design.

Andrea: Yeah, yeah absolutely.

Essence: Here's what they're saying, when they kind of write that in, to say we have them, but we don't *actually* want to write them. So we can (...).

Andrea: Yeah, like it's frustrating, because a lot of these writers show that they're capable of writing them. They can do it and they can draw them and it's great, but then they're not a main character or they are proven not powerful like the (...) or they're literally dead like, and that's so frustrating. I'd love to see, for instance, one of the main characters, Uraraka. I'd love to see her developed more, and you start to see that in the manga, now, because at first it's really just very dependent like, "I want to be like Deku. I want to be just like him, because he's such a great guy!" I mean, yeah, that's great...

Essence: Why is that all??

Nikki: That was the most frustrating aspect I found about her character, like she's cute, she's like a cute character that I really appreciate, but the reason she was not one of my favorites is because it seems like her whole character arc is being like, "I want to be more like this guy I have a crush on."

Andrea: Yeah, and that's-I'm sorry Essence, go ahead.

Essence: No, you can go.

Andrea: Ok no, because I have things to say about that, because at—yes, you're very cute but you gotta give me something *more* here. You can't just be string along the main protagonist here, and I appreciate how she does like gundam martial arts like that. That's great and all, she's very...I appreciate her for what she is, and she does have those moments, but I really appreciate when she had these moments with Toga especially. There's more coming up in the manga: you see she has these standoffs with her that are really morally...makes Uraraka think like, critically. About what she does, and why she does what she does, which I really appreciate, and I don't know, I feel like some people might see the Toga Ochako relationship and just probably romanticize or make it...I don't know. There's those who would do that, but I really do think there's something there that's interesting and important and makes Uraraka's character more complex, which I appreciate because it needs it and that's great. I'd love to see a female character having that kind of spotlight, making her think and be more complex, and maybe have some moral grayness, that's great, you know. So I really appreciate that that's happening. I'd like to see more though; that's definitely a valid complaint. Yeah, I don't know, we gotta choose our battles? I don't know, yeah, but...

Essence: I often go to fanfiction that make interesting story lines from characters that feel like missed opportunities when they were in some of the writing.

Andrea: It's frustrating because they can do it. I don't see why they can't just take a male character and just...

Essence: You have the story, you just don't want to put them into a different body, essentially.

Andrea: Yeah, it's like... It wouldn't be hard. I don't understand...

Nikki: Yeah, I think the part of the reason is, this is just total speculation on my part, but the authors are trying to do what sells.

Essence: What they feel like is their target and main demographic. We're targeting boys, boys want to watch boys, and then that's kind of where they stop their thought process.

Nikki: Yeah, like girls are just an afterthought, like, they're like, "We're gonna put some girl characters in for the boys to ogle at I guess or something, and we're gonna do like the

minimum for their character development." That's how I feel like a lot of shonen ends up doing sadly.

Andrea: I feel like a lot of girls actually like shonen, a lot, like—there's a lot of girl fans of manga in general. I feel like...

Essence: This entire podcast is female right now.

Andrea: This entire podcast is female right now! It's something girls want to see. Like, they say—if they're thinking of the demographic, maybe they need like...a reality check, like, hey, wait a minute. It's not all a bunch of guys anymore.

Essence: Maybe just focus on the age range instead of the gender at least.

Andrea: Perhaps. Yes, and yeah, that, I don't know, that's why I thought *My Hero*, one of those reasons I already mentioned, it's really interesting to me how their audience is so wide because I know it's angled for kids, like a superhero movie, but there's so many dark themes getting slipped in more and more that I feel like adults can really appreciate.

Nikki: The Todoroki abuse. Y'know, just sprinkle some abuse for the kids!

Andrea: Yeah, hmm. It's interesting, it's definitely—oh, like, oh my God! Like the backstory of fricking Shigaraki—that's not for children! Like, you learn about the main villain's backstory like way later on. And it's terrible. It is so sad. I wouldn't want a kid to see that because it's another one of those the quirk goes wrong kind of thing. But it's just terrible, because his quirk is like, it's defective, I suppose, and if he touches something with all five of his hands, kind of like Uraraka, if he touches something with all five of...hands, hands, fingers!

Nikki: I just had a thought; do you think the author's going somewhere with that? Maybe...I know this probably won't happen, but like you know how they basically have like, they activate their abilities the same way, maybe? Okay, this is totally out there, but maybe Uraraka is going to be the one to defeat like Maybe, I mean, maybe they're heading...I don't know, maybe—

Essence: Like, she could have a big part in it? That could be a really interesting storyline.

Andrea: I agree.

Essence: If the manga won't, can a fanfiction writer do it?

Andrea: Oh, yeah, the fanfiction writers will do what the writer will not. That's always true. But when it comes to, yeah, with

Shigaraki it's just such a...it is so sad. And our main character Izuku, he's so determined to help our villain, like he, his heart. He just wants to make everything right and it's like, oh my gosh dude I don't know if you can. Like, that's so messed up because you've learned that the real villain isn't Shigaraki because he's like 20. So he's this guy who's been manipulated, he's been played. Yeah, no, no, it's really this other guy called All for One who's just this...manipulator. Can I swear? It's terrible. Oh, go ahead.

Nikki: Yeah, I don't think you can swear in a podcast even though he deserves a couple of—

Autumn: I would give you permission! It's an adult podcast.

Andrea: I just...I find it very interesting. I think I read this somewhere, how like the main character, I mean I know the main characters are a Izuku and SHigaraki, but like the main ones pulling the strings it's really about All for One and One for All. Like, the vessels of One for All, like... It's really about these guys. And someone has made the comparison—I don't have it in front of me, so I'm probably not gonna say this right—but I think the writer Horikoshi was a fan of Star Wars and was inspired by that kind of idea. Using the sons to fight, or like the secret, the plot line of like, "I am your father." I really—

Essence: Things of the father plot line, like you're suffering the consequences for the people above you and using you as puppets.

Andrea: Yes, and I think, I mean, I think you can see that right away in the manga, like, 'cause these children are like, "I want to be a hero!" Their stakes in this are not deep, like, it's not their battle. It is just so upsetting and sad.

Nikki: Yeah, one of the other most frustrating aspects is how I don't know what is with the manga, but this happened(...). They put the kids on the backfield, like in the manga when the war started? And I'm just like, "Why are you having these children as child soldiers?" What is—

Essence: It's kind of a thing and stuff targeting at kids, because they want the kids to follow the kids, so. But if it's a central wat then that means the kids are gonna fight in it.

Andrea: Yeah, I mean you got that in other, you know, like

Essence: All of YA basically.

Andrea: Yeah, no. I'm just thinking like, *Hunger Games*, like. That's such popular—

Essence: Harry Potter Percy Jackson. All of them.

Andrea: Yeah, they put kids as the the means to like. They stick them in the action, and like—

Essence: Yeah, we like it when we're younger than we grow up and we're like, "Why are we doing this?"

Andrea: Yeah, I realize that's messed up, I don't know. I feel like this show, this story in particular, it approaches that it *is* messed up. I think it's going to do that because it's pretty clear that, yeah.

Essence: Especially when you think about them finding out when they're like five whether or not they're going to have it. And those decisions that are immediately made when they're young, how it kind of shapes everything after that.

Andrea: Yeah, that's why I think Izuku's mother Inko is a really interesting character, because she seems like the only one telling the Izuku, "This is dangerous. This is messed up. I don't want you in this." There's a time in the manga where she's like, "You're not going back there, you put yourself—" Well, it's kind of complicated because she is right, he's getting put in the hospital way too many times. He's put in danger so much and it's not okay. That's just not fair to her and him. But, on the other hand, he—it's true that oftentimes he's the one pushing himself so far to make it so it's that life threatening. So it's not just the school, it's also himself. It's also these internalized ideas about what he needs to be, and his perception of himself, like because I really do think he self depreciates himself like, "Oh well..." I think—there's actually lines from the manga that's like, "That's what this power is for!" Yeah, I'm supposed to hurt myself for the greater good. It's like that stuff, and it's pretty clear that other characters have pointed out to him that that is a messed up line of thinking. Like, that is sad; that shouldn't be the case. It's quite...an awful line of thinking and depressing. But it could be realistic, too. If someone thinks down on themselves, but they have this *one* thing they're good at like, "Oh, well, I better do it to the best of my ability because that's all I'm good for." You don't need superheroes or super powers for that to be a plot line, you see. So yes, lot of real life social commentary in *My Hero Academia*.

Nikki: Not to that extent, but yeah, me too, me writing a paper to like 1 AM in the morning.

Andrea: Oh, yeah, you were telling me you were doing that. Yeah, I don't know if that's 'cause you were thinking, "Oh, it's all I'm good for, but that's not good! You should definitely not push yourself too hard, Nikki. Don't be like Izuku—I'm sorry, he may be great—learn from him! Yes, that's what I'd want. You should stop doing that.

Nikki: Izuku Midoriya is a cautionary tale of not to overwork yourself.

Andrea: Yeah, I think that's safe to say.

Autumn: Self care, people, self care!

Andrea: He's such an interesting character, because he plays off everything like it's fine, like, he's so...I can really relate to him.

Essence: Thinking about how the show works with him versus how the manga works with him...

Andrea: Yes, I don't know, I wish—

Essence: There's some weird differences. I mean. I wish the show drew more from the manga and how they like treat his character, 'cause like they tried to go really far in one direction in a way that (...) halts his development oddly.

Andrea: Yeah, I'm really curious how they're going to remedy that in next season, like, 'cause there's some scenes...I'm not sure how they're gonna pull it off, like, stylistically it's gonna look— because the anime is very much still kiddish like superhero style, and the manga is really dark.

Essence: It's not kiddush!

Andrea: I'm not sure what's gonna happen for the future of *My Hero Academia*. I mean, the manga will still be great because the writer is really good. There's some beautiful, creepy artwork in there, like Shigaraki and the hands, and it's so good, I love it. Like, the anime can't compare—

Essence: Like, we were talking about it, just...I'd have less issue with in the anime if it didn't come from a source material so well done, kind of.

Andrea: Maybe if they pay their workers more they will get nicer stuff or something. I don't know, uh...who knows? I really—I'm very hopeful—we'll just have to see. I know they had a movie, so they were probably working on that, I don't know. But *My Hero* is very—it's been very successful.

Essence: For anime, the movie is a good way to transition the tone, so maybe that will be how they do it.

Andrea: That might be...yeah! It's interesting-we'll have to see how it transforms. I'll be definitely watching as I nerd out with my little heroes. I don't know, was there anything else, Nikki, you wanna talk about?

Nikki: I think not. I think it's time to end the podcast, sadly.

Andrea: Sounds good!

Nikki: I could talk about this for hours, just, it's such a fun topic. For the rest of you listeners who are listening to us nerd out, lag, and other things, thank you for showing up and like listening in. We also wanted to let you know, to look out for the next podcast episode: LGBT+ representation with Autumn and Alison. So just keep an eye out for that. I'm sure it'll be a very, very fun discussion. So catch you later you guys!

Autumn: Yeah, thanks for listening. Bye everyone!

All: Bye!