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What We're Watching



# Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

## Teen Transmitters Takeover!

For eight weeks, What We're Watching is being taken over by the Paley Center's Teen Transmitters internship cohort!

Each week a different pair of interns will share their thoughts on the 2023 media landscape along with personalized recommendations. This week we hear from **Eileen Zheng**, a senior at the Queens High School for the Sciences, and **Intia Ibnah**, a senior at Stuyvesant High School. Enjoy this unique educational opportunity to hear directly from young voices about media that impacts them!

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at [eduny@paleycenter.org](mailto:eduny@paleycenter.org).

Happy viewing,

**Rebekah Fisk**, Director of Education

**Carlos Pareja**, Manager of Education

**Joseph Cupo**, TT 2023 Summer Educator

## What We're Watching: Self-Improvement Webtoons

When you read a story, there's nothing more satisfying than seeing your favorite character growing and succeeding, whether it be winning against the villain or even just accepting themselves for who they are. Imagining ourselves as such a character in a piece of media motivates us to change for the better, learning to love ourselves and move forward.

Let's dive into some of our favorite webcomics from [Webtoon](#), a digital platform that hosts a multitude of artists and creators with their compact webcomics across all types of genres. Formerly Naver Webtoon, the service was originally launched in South Korea by JunKoo Kim after the manhwa industry's crash in

the late 1990s. Kim originally had difficulty finding artists because of the unusual layout, but many were willing to try something new to save the manhwa industry.

The international service allowed artists to upload their own creations, which gained large traction in the early 2010s. The service offered plenty of diverse but mature webcomics, branching out in various genres. By 2019, Line Webtoon (renamed Webtoon) also had Spanish and French versions of it launched, as well as countless fan translated versions of official webtoons. As of now, some of the content from completed series must be viewed on mobile because of the Daily Pass system, which allows you to unlock episodes for free from selected completed series.

## This Week's Recommendations:



**Acception (2019 - present)**

by *Colourbee*

*Age Recommendation: 13+*

*Content Warning: Mature Themes*

*Acception* follows Arcus McCarthy through his new high school life in the Netherlands after moving away from England. As the newest student in school, he has to deal with the typical high school indignities; especially when people aren't as accepting as he thought. However, his optimism doesn't dim. When he attempts to befriend Maud, a gothy artist, he doesn't let her prickly nature discourage him from complimenting her talents or trying to bond over their shared passion for fashion. As he progresses through his studies, Arcus and

his friends work through personal issues that allow them to grow and show their true colors—all the while juggling their own burdens.

I highly recommend this Webtoon to teens and young adults who are working through their struggles and trying to figure themselves out. Through themes of self-imagery, mental health, LGBTQIA+ visibility, gender identity, and sexuality, *Acception* highlights the fact that you shouldn't discriminate against others because you perceive them as different. Each character has a unique backstory and problems they struggle with, whether it be neglectful parents or being discriminated against for their identity. The series illustrates very real issues, although it may be exaggerated for the sake of entertainment. With the main cast being high schoolers, the audience can easily put themselves in their shoes and empathize with them.



### **Cursed Princess Club (2019 - present)**

*by LambCat*

**Age: 12+**

**Content Warning: Graphic Violence**

*Cursed Princess Club* tells the story of Gwendolyn (Gwen), a princess of the Pastel Kingdom. Gwen is decidedly different from her family; with her sallow skin, sharp teeth, and stringy green hair. Her looks never bothered her until the day of her engagement, when she overheard Prince Frederick disparaging her appearance and wanting to call it off. Running away from the castle in a grief-stricken daze, Gwen stumbles across the “Cursed Princess Club” located in the woods near her home and meets its fellow members. This club is a group

of misfit princesses who suffer from unfortunate curses, making them “unfit” to represent their kingdoms. The princesses welcome Gwen into the club and teach her how to love herself through various activities and pep talks, and it seems to work—until Frederick’s words come back to haunt her.

While this Webtoon does follow the cliché of “beauty is on the inside,” the story differs vastly. Each character eventually grows from their single-word description and is fleshed out in a way that is believable. With themes of self-improvement and growth through a humorous twist, the message of *Cursed Princess Club* is easily understood. The unique portrayals of emotion in the Webtoon can be easily understood by the audience, and the main message is clear. A positive self-image and kindness are more important than being beautiful in everyone else’s eyes. Lambcat’s writing emphasizes the importance of being yourself, that you don’t have to be beautiful to be considered “normal” in society’s eyes. It’s a must-read for anyone that struggles with their self-image and fitting in.



### **Moon You (2018 - 2019)**

*by Cho Seok*

*Age: 16+*

*Content Warning: Mature Themes*

Moon Yoo, the main protagonist, is a flat-out average man with no hopes, passions, or aspirations, who somehow ended up on the moon—alone. And to make matters worse, an asteroid hits Earth, wreaking havoc in front of his eyes, and now Yoo is the last man alive. Being the last man alive, he doesn’t

have much to live for but he is way too afraid to die. So he wanders through a life on the moon, trying to find a painless and effortless way to die. However, not all is lost. Unbeknownst to Yoo, the disaster fails to wipe out all of humanity. Although it did set Earth's technology back a few decades. And as a bonus, Yoo's life is being broadcasted on every screen on Earth. With the entirety of the world watching his every move, Moon Yoo becomes a symbol of ambition and faith.

Moon Yoo is a sci-fi comedy webcomic with a unique art style that balances the gravity of our main character's situation with a comedic touch that pushes you to keep reading. Moon Yoo is a highly relatable character who has gone out of his way to live his life in the middle, to blend in, to be ordinary, but now that he has been suddenly thrust into an unpredictable and desolate circumstance, he is forced to stand out. Throughout the story, Yoo navigates through his loneliness, unexpected friendships, and hope. Ultimately, he becomes a better man not only through his desperation to live but also to save others.



### **The Makeup Remover (2020 - 2022)**

*by Lee Yone*

*Age: 12+*

All her life, Yeseul has been told to focus on her studies, but when she enters college, people around her start berating her for not paying attention to her looks. This whiplash pushes Yeseul to try, and she goes to a beauty salon to hopefully change her appearance with makeup. But it doesn't really work out.

Despite wanting to try out makeup and learn, she still faces criticism for how she looks (by the salon workers of all people!). Through this experience, Yeseul meets famous makeup artist Yuseong Cheon who offers to help Yeseul in exchange for her cooperation.

*The Makeup Remover* follows Yeseul as her life suddenly becomes entangled with Yuseong once she becomes a contestant on an elimination game show, called "Face Off Cinderella," centered around makeup looks. Being a webtoon about beauty, this comic is beautifully illustrated, especially during its profound scenes, and can even be quite humorous at times.

While this story is marketed as a romance by Webtoons, this comic's main focus isn't the romance, but instead how Yeseul grows to stand up for herself and express herself. Yeseul is a brilliant character who embraces nonconformity and questions the ideals and standards set by society today and uncovers her self-confident nature despite being new to the situations she starts to find herself in. The webtoon doesn't just focus on our main character, but also delves deeper into each contestant, creating a diverse cast of people with their own issues with self-image and beauty, each on their own journey to break the boundaries of conventional beauty and identity.

## Conclusion

We met on the first day of the Teens Transmitters 2023 internship and we bonded over our love of Webtoons—especially the ones we've read and loved. We felt that in our society, people are more focused on what their future entails, which is a good thing but can lead to personal or internal issues being ignored. We believe people should learn to focus on themselves and their own well-being, even if it's something as small as trying to meet more people. Through this collection of webtoons, we hope that you can learn to love yourself for who you are and always look for ways to improve yourself.

## Additional Webtoon Recommendations:

[Surviving Romance \(2021 - present\)](#)

by Lee Yone

Genre: Horror

Age: 16+

### **Surviving as a Fish (2022 - present)**

by DONG9

Genre: Fantasy

Age: 12+

### **Odd Girl Out (2018 - present)**

by Morangji

Genre: Drama

Age: 12+

### **Sweet Home (2018) (with a show adaptation streaming on Netflix!)**

By Carnby Kim & Youngchan Hwang

Genre: Thriller/Horror

Age: 16+

### **Seasons of Blossom (2020 - 2023)**

by HONGDUCK & NEMONE

Genre: Romance/Drama

Age: 16+

Enjoy,

**Eileen and Intia**

Photos—*Acception*: Colourbee; *Cursed Princess Club*: LambCat; *Moon You*: Cho Seo; *The Makeup Remover*: Lee Yone

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