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## What We're Watching





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

### Hearst High School Media Interns Takeover!

This is the sixth and final What We're Watching newsletter written by our amazing youth leaders who participated in this past summer's Hearst High School Media Internship! We thank our young people for sharing their insights and highlights of the media they watch, hear, analyze and enjoy.

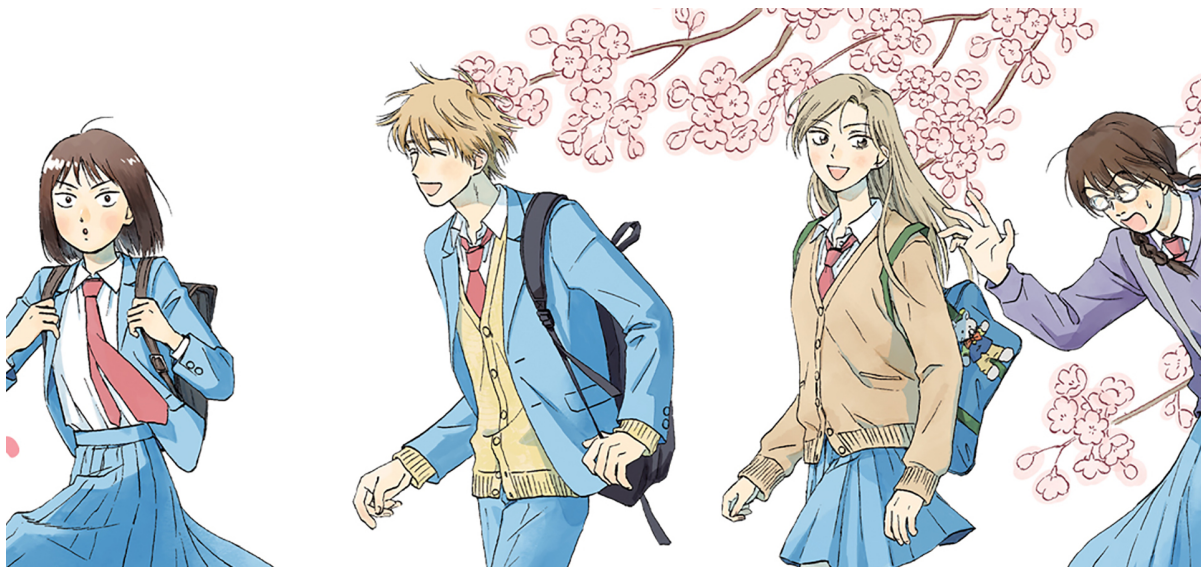
This week we hear from **Winnie Huang**, a rising senior at The Bronx High School of Science, and **Sagata Das**, a rising senior at The Groton School, who share their thoughts on the 2024 media landscape along with personalized recommendations. Enjoy this unique educational opportunity to hear directly 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





## What We're Watching: Cozy Animes That Feel Like Home

Whether it's the cartoons we watched as kids or the more mature anime we discovered as teens, animation has always been a big part of our lives. Through the hard work of artists and animators, anime can portray fantastical elements and characters that fulfill viewers' visual desires in ways other media cannot. From psychics in small towns to detectives in palaces, animation offers something for everyone. In this newsletter, we're diving into the cozy, feel-good side of anime—the shows that wrap you up in a blanket of nostalgia, laughter, and heart. These stories feel like coming home after a long day, no matter how otherworldly they may seem. Here are some of our recommendations.

### **Skip and Loafer (2018)**

*Recommended for Grades: 9+*

*Available on Crunchyroll and Amazon Prime*

If you're looking for a show that showcases the awkwardness of adolescence in a funny and comforting setting, *Skip and Loafer* is for you.

*Skip and Loafer* stars Mitsumi Iwakura, a small-town girl with big dreams. This lighthearted narrative follows Mitsumi's journey as she moves to Tokyo to attend a prestigious high school, determined to make a positive impact on the world. Although Mitsumi is studious and hardworking, she struggles to adjust to city life after growing up in the countryside.

On her first day of school, she arrives late, throws up in front of everyone, and bombs her class introduction—making a less-than-ideal first impression. However, her charming eccentricity and headstrong kindness allow her to form new friendships and adventures while staying true to herself. Each episode left me smiling and deeply relating to the characters.

*Skip and Loafer* is a slice-of-life anime that realistically portrays the struggles of coming into our identity as we grow up. The show explores common human experiences like peer pressure, fitting in, self-esteem, studying, and even a character's complicated relationship with their gender identity. The standout feature

of the show is its cast. Each character receives a spotlight, showcasing their good and bad qualities and creating well-rounded, complex individuals. All in all, *Skip and Loafer* is a humorous and wholesome watch.



### **Mob Psycho 100 (season one) (2016)**

*Recommended for Grades: 9+*

*Available on Crunchyroll, Disney+, Hulu, and Netflix*

*Mob Psycho 100* is a comedic, action-packed, and feel-good series all at once. The story centers around Shigeo Kageyama, nicknamed “Mob,” a middle school student with extraordinary psychic abilities. Despite his immense power, Mob's greatest wish is to lead a normal life. This internal conflict causes him to bottle up both his powers and emotions, until they inevitably erupt, causing chaos.

What sets *Mob Psycho 100* apart is Mob’s resolve to continually improve himself. Unlike typical protagonists who seek to overpower others, Mob strives to live a fulfilling life without relying on his psychic abilities. Instead, he focuses on learning to control them. After one particularly intense outburst, Mob seeks guidance from Reigen Arataka, a self-proclaimed spiritual consultant...who is actually a con artist. Unexpectedly, Reigen becomes a mentor to Mob. Their relationship evolves as Reigen helps Mob understand his powers and, ultimately, himself.

My favorite aspect of the series is how it explores relatable themes despite its

supernatural elements. Mob really is just an ordinary middle school boy; he faces everyday challenges such as social awkwardness when making friends, a growing childhood crush, and doing well on his exams. His journey from a shy, insecure individual to someone who accepts his powers and identity is genuinely inspiring.

At its core, *Mob Psycho 100* is a story about personal growth and the importance of relationships. The mix of slice-of-life comedy, intense action, and insightful life lessons ensures you're always entertained and engaged.



### **Spy x Family (2022)**

*Recommended for Grades: 8+*

*Available on Amazon Prime, Crunchyroll, Disney+, and Hulu*

Set in the rivaling countries of Westalis and Ostania, *Spy x Family* follows Agent Twilight as he is assigned the mission of spying on Donovan Desmond, the chairman of the National Unity Party of Ostania. However, the only way that Twilight can get close to his target is through an elite private school by the name of Eden Academy. To complete his mission, Twilight takes the alias of Loid Forger and forms a fake family by marrying office clerk Yor Briar and adopting five-year-old Anya Forger. Unbeknownst to Loid, however, his wife and daughter have secret identities of their own as an underground assassin and a telepath. As each of the characters tries to play the part of a perfect family, a beautiful bond forms between them.

*Spy x Family* tells a heartwarming story of a healing and found family. The characters' past wounds start to heal as their connection grows. Despite the hidden secrets and identities the protagonists have, the family they form gives them a chance at normalcy they didn't have before. Through each episode, the characters learn more about one another and viewers gain insight into the evolving dynamics between them. Other than the touching moments sprinkled throughout the show, *Spy x Family* is also a funny and lighthearted watch—perfect for relaxing after a hectic day.



### **The Apothecary Diaries (2023)**

*Recommended for Grades: 9+*

*Available on Amazon Prime and Crunchyroll*

*The Apothecary Diaries* follows the adventures of a young apothecary (an old English term for a person who made and sold medicines) Maomao after she is abducted into the palace as a servant. Accepting her misfortune, Maomao aims to survive and peacefully leave the dangerous palace. Unfortunately for Maomao, however, her wits and medicinal skills catch the attention of the head eunuch Jinshi. This leads to her getting embroiled in the different schemes of the people in the palace. Throughout the series, we follow our protagonist as she uses her skills to solve cases and uncover years of hidden secrets within the palace.

As a show, *The Apothecary Diaries* is an engaging and interesting watch. The anime

features an extremely charming protagonist that we grow to like and root for. We follow Maomao as she explores the world she is put in and discovers new things about herself and the people around her. Additionally, the unique setting (the fictional country of Li, which is based on China during the Tang Dynasty) allows an exploration of themes like power, class, and gender. Through Maomao's eyes, we're able to see the lack of choice of many of the characters despite being at the center of power. Despite the exploration of darker themes, the show remains relatively funny and lighthearted. Almost every episode follows a new adventure of Maomao, so the series is relatively easy to get into and watch. Overall, I would recommend this series to anyone who would like a bit of mystery and intrigue with comedic relief sprinkled throughout.

## **Additional Recommendations**

### **Watch**

*Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* (2023)

*Fruits Basket* (2019)

*Kimi ni Todoke* (2009)

*Ouran High School Host Club* (2006)

*The Disastrous Life of Saiki K* (2016)

That wraps up our journey through the world of cozy anime! Whether you found a new favorite or rediscovered an old love, we hope you found something of interest.

Happy viewing!

### **Winnie and Sagata**

Photos—*Skip and Loafer*: PA Works; *Mob Psycho 100*: Warner Japan; *Spy x Family* and *The Apothecary Diaries*: Crunchyroll





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