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Spring 2017

The Animated Phenomenon: Impact Beyond Childhood

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Recommended Citation

Jagels, Diane, "The Animated Phenomenon: Impact Beyond Childhood" (2017). *Department of English Capstone Abstracts*. 18.
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Diane Jagels

Title: The Animated Phenomenon: Impact Beyond Childhood

Abstract

This paper responds to the stigma that animated shows are “just for kids,” and that animated cartoons and films have as much importance as shows which star live actors. I analyze several American cartoons from the 2000s and 2010s, such as *Phineas and Ferb*, *Steven Universe*, *Gravity Falls*, and *Over the Garden Wall*, which contain themes that are accessible by multiple age groups, including adults. Some of the themes include: the intelligence of cartoons; representation and the fight against stereotyping; family structures and dynamics; and foreboding themes of insecurities, growing up, and death. Many cartoons have become impactful for older audiences and I draw on firsthand responses from fans, interviews with the shows’ creators, and the episodes themselves to convey the significance of cartoons.