

READING SECTION

- **Read the first part of the blog. Are the statements about anime films and TV shows true or false?**

1. The very first anime film is more than 100 years old.
2. The anime style was developed by artists from Japan and the United States working together.
3. Many anime characters began life as characters in manga (Japanese comics).
4. The majority of anime films are aimed at boys and young men.
5. Science fiction is a popular anime genre.

- **Read the second part of the blog (*What I say*). Do the statements below express the writer's opinions or other people's opinions? Write W (writer's), O (other people's) or B (both).**

6. People don't realise how good anime films are.
7. Cartoons are just for children.
8. There are only two genres of anime.
9. Anime characters' eyes are big and very expressive.
10. The animation in anime films is more limited than in other genres.

Anime

What is it?

Anime is what we call an animation style – it's a Japanese word. The characters all look cute – big eyes, clearly defined hairstyles, very expressive faces. Basically, anime is animated manga – Japanese comic books.

Did you know?

- The first anime film was made in 1917 – some manga artists in Japan brought their drawings to life.
- Colour anime films were first produced in Japan in the 1950s.
- Anime TV series started in the 1960s, first in Japan and then around the world. One of the most popular series was *Astro Boy* about the adventures of a robot boy. He started life as a manga character then turned into a TV star.
- The first anime to appeal directly to young girls was *Kimba the White Lion* – all about a cute baby lion.
- In the 1970s people began to associate anime with science fiction – popular series included *Star Blazers* and *Battle of the Planets*.
- In the 1990s *Sailor Moon*, a fantasy story for young girls, was created. It's one of the biggest selling anime or manga of all time.



What I say

I think anime are really underrated because in my opinion some people take too narrow a view of them. Outside Japan, people tend to think that anime are just cartoons, and we mostly associate cartoons with being children's entertainment. It's true that a lot of anime are aimed at children, but often they are aimed more at adults. This is becoming more and more the case these days. They have quite sophisticated stories and the characters have real depth. You really need to see a full-length anime film to really appreciate this.

The other criticism that people have is that anime only fit into two film genres: science fiction and fantasy fiction. But again, this isn't so. There are anime that are historical dramas, crime stories, romances and comedies. Even better, they often mix genres in a way that no other films do, so you can find anime that are a mix of romance, comedy and disaster.

People sometimes say they can't take anime seriously because the characters have eyes that are too big. Well, it's true that the characters have a very specific visual style. But by making the eyes large, you can really see the range of expressions that a character has, and it allows you to focus on their feelings.

Other people criticise the animation of anime films. They say it's too limited, particularly if you compare it to something like Pixar films. That may be so, but I think anime are better at depicting scenes. They show more depth and create much more atmosphere. I think a lot of other cartoons are very two-dimensional by comparison.

So to anybody whose memory of anime is just cartoons for kids on TV when they were growing up, I'd say go to a recent anime film and see how much they have changed. Go with an open mind – you may be surprised.

