



Why we Love Coming-of-Age Stories?

COMING OF AGE STORIES
GIVE US THE SATISFACTION
OF WATCHING CHARACTERS
BLOSSOM.

BY
NATIONAL
LIBRARY
BOARD

PHOTO BY
EMO
WEEMHOFF



Stories of young adult protagonists growing up never seem to get old. Every now and then, new coming-of-age stories emerge in popular drama series, films and books. Whether it's *Atypical*, a drama series about a teenager on the autism spectrum finding love, or *Lady Bird*, a film about a financially disadvantaged student trying to get into a prestigious university, what is it about these stories that captivate us over and over again?

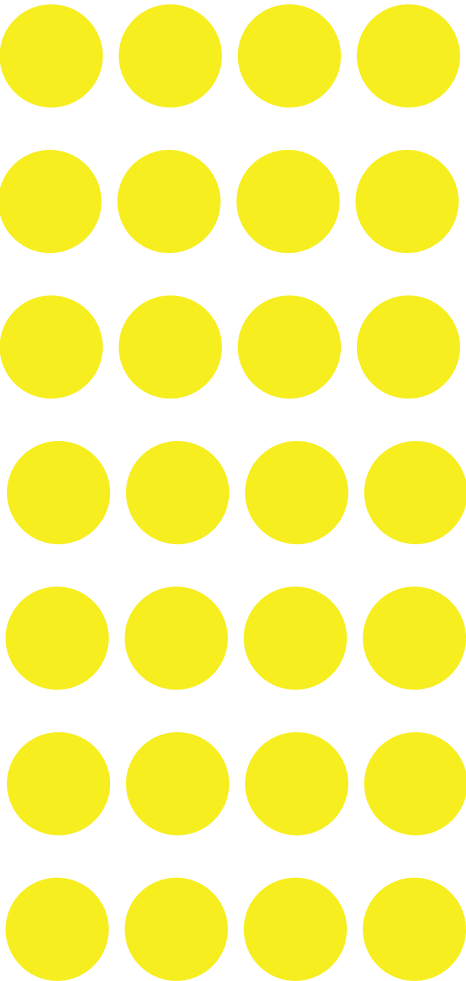


Sara Luna Zoric as Alma (l.) and Ernad Prnjavorac as Emir (r.) in Ena Sendijarević's *Take Me Somewhere Nice* (Photo by Emo Weemhoff. © 2021, Dekanalog)

**CHEESY, AWKWARD, UNREQUITED, SWEET —
THE FLAVOURS OF CHILDHOOD ROMANCE.**



CHEESY, AWKWARD,
UNREQUITED, SWEET
—THE FLAVOURS OF
CHILDHOOD ROMANCE.



1. Growth is great

At the heart of every powerful story is personal transformation. Coming-of-age stories set the stage perfectly for character growth, simply because no teenager stays a teenager forever. The drama that is about to unfold is only going to supercharge their evolution, and we become emotionally invested in what happens next. A young Peter Parker gets bitten by a radioactive spider and evolves to become the villain-fighting Spider-Man. Neglected orphan Harry Potter gets an unusual letter one day, finds out that he's a wizard and goes on to save the world from evil. The list goes on, and we're here for their delightful character arcs.

2. Knowing We're Not Alone in the

Exploration of Messy Relationships Teenagers are still very much dependent on other people: their parents, caregivers, friends, siblings, teachers, etc. Coming-of-age stories cast a spotlight on these personal relationships, and how various incidents and decisions test these bonds. It's rewarding to see troubled or distant relationships get stronger, and equally heartbreaking to see characters drift apart.

As readers and viewers, we get to explore the what-ifs of messy human relationships in the imaginary world of fiction. Those of us who have had strained relationships with loved ones while growing up might even take comfort in the affirmation that relationships are hard, and that we're not alone in navigating them.

Young audiences might be able to see similarities in the stories and their current experiences, while older audiences are able to relate to the protagonists' personal struggles that they also experienced in their younger years. These stories tell us that we aren't the only ones feeling lost and confused while trying to figure out the world, and however different our life experiences, we've all struggled to figure out who we are.

3. Sweet Nostalgia

Reading about puppy love can be nostalgic. Many of us can relate to falling for a peer during our secondary school days and wanting so desperately to be noticed by them. We miss the giddy infatuation, sweet innocence and bright-eyed joy often associated with teenage crushes. Being transported back into these moments help us to temporarily forget the harsh reality of our real-world, maybe not-so-cheery relationships.

Similarly, teenage friendships bring us fond memories of our own adolescence, when days were simpler without life peting for our time and attention. Teenagers are still very much dependent on other people: their parents, caregivers, friends, siblings, teachers, etc. Coming-of-age stories cast a spotlight on these personal relationships, and how various incidents and decisions test these bonds. It's rewarding to see troubled or distant relationships get stronger, and equally heartbreaking to see characters drift apart.

As readers and viewers, we get to explore the what-ifs of messy human relationships in the imaginary world of fiction. Those of us who have had strained relationships with loved ones while growing up might even take comfort in the affirmation that relationships are hard, and that we're not alone in navigating them.

Young audiences might be able to see similarities in the stories and their current experiences, while older audiences are able to relate to the protagonists' personal struggles that they also experienced in their younger years. These stories tell us that we aren't the only ones feeling lost and confused while trying to figure out the world, and however different our life experiences, we've all struggled to figure out who we are.

Because coming-of-age stories are character-driven, they give us a glimpse into other people's perspectives. What is it like to be born in another race, religion, coun

4. A Deep Look into Provocative Themes

Great coming-of-age stories usually feature the main characters navigating a myriad of issues while growing up. Themes like betrayal, self-identity, sexuality, class structure, racism, injustice and violence are often woven into the story to set us thinking and reflecting. How might we react if we were confronted with similar situations? The characters' search for answers alongside our own helps us gain a better understanding of who we are.

5. A Different Perspective of the World

Because coming-of-age stories are character-driven, they give us a glimpse into other people's perspectives. Reading about puppy love can be nostalgic. What is it like to be born in another race, religion, country, time period, societal class, and so on?

People all over the globe go through similar life stages—graduating from school, entering the workforce, finding love—but as everyone's circumstances are unique, we're instantly transported to new worlds just through the experience of living someone else's life. At the heart of every powerful story is personal transformation. Coming-of-age stories set the stage perfectly for character growth, simply because no teenager stays a teenager forever. The drama that is about to unfold is only going to supercharge their evolution, and we become emotionally invested in what happens next. A young Peter Parker gets bitten by a radioactive spider and evolves to become the villain-fighting Spider-Man. Neglected orphan Harry Potter gets an unusual letter one day, finds out that he's a wizard and goes on to save the world from evil. The list goes on, and we're here for their delightful character arcs.

Because coming-of-age stories are character-driven, they give us a glimpse into other people's perspectives. What is it like to be born in another race, religion, coun

6. Unpredictable Endings

It's not easy to predict how a coming-of-age story will conclude. Open endings aren't unique to coming-of-age stories, but we'd say it comes with the territory of having characters that are still growing and still constantly evaluating their values and choices. This element of surprise is another reason why this genre remains fresh, time and time again.

ny of us can relate to falling for a peer during our secondary school days and wanting so desperately to be noticed by them. We miss the giddy infatuation, sweet innocence and bright-eyed joy often associated with teenage crushes. Being transported back into these moments help us to temporarily forget the harsh reality of our real-world, maybe not-so-cheery relationships.

Similarly, teenage friendships bring us fond memories of our own adolescence, when days were simpler without life peting for our time and attention. Teenagers are still very much dependent on other people: their parents, caregivers, friends, siblings, teachers, etc. Coming-of-age stories cast a spotlight on these personal relationships, and how various incidents and decisions test these bonds. It's rewarding to see troubled or distant relationships get stronger, and equally heartbreaking to see characters drift apart.

As readers and viewers, we get to explore the what-ifs of messy human relationships in the imaginary world of fiction. Those of us who have had strained relationships with loved ones while growing up might even take comfort in the affirmation that relationships are hard, and that we're not alone in navigating them.

Young audiences might be able to see similarities in the stories and their current experiences, while older audiences are able to relate to the protagonists' personal struggles that they also experienced in their younger years. ter-driven, they give us a glimpse into

COMING OF
AGE STORIES
GIVE US THE
SATISFACTION
OF WATCHING
CHARACTERS
BLOSSOM.





Cybercrime's Loss of Innocence

**From Tech Optimism
to Regulatory Realism**



Cybercrime, once associated with idealistic visions of freedom, exploration, and boundary-breaking innovation, has matured into a global threat prompting extensive regulation. Initially emerging from a hacker ethos advocating openness, decentralization, and technological creativity, cybercrime now evokes complex, bureaucratic international frameworks and pressing debates about digital security and freedoms. This essay examines the maturation of cybercrime and its regulatory responses, focusing on how optimistic ideals surrounding technology have gradually eroded in the face of increasingly sophisticated cyber threats. It analyzes how regulatory measures have developed or stagnated amidst rapid technological advancement, weighing their effectiveness and implications for innovation and civil liberties. By analyzing historical developments, case studies of landmark cyber incidents, and contemporary legislative frameworks, this paper critically evaluates whether existing regulatory maturity successfully balances security imperatives with innovation and individual freedoms. Ultimately, this reflection seeks to highlight the delicate and crucial balance regulators face, arguing for adaptive regulation that captures the complexity of modern cyber threats without stifling the very digital freedoms it seeks to protect. In a dimly lit interview on the YouTube channel Soft White Underbelly, the hacker known only as Gummo reflects nostalgically on the early days of the internet—an era marked by curiosity, optimism, and boundless creativity. He recounts sleepless nights spent discovering vulnerabilities, driven not by malice but by sheer fascination and an idealistic belief in digital freedom. To hackers like Gummo, cyberspace was a frontier for exploration rather than exploitation, a landscape of endless possibilities where rules were few and innovation thrived.

In a dimly lit interview on the YouTube channel Soft White Underbelly, the hacker known only as Gummo reflects nostalgically on the early days of the internet—an era marked by curiosity, optimism, and boundless creativity. He recounts sleepless nights spent discovering vulnerabilities, driven not by malice but by sheer fascination

and an idealistic belief in digital freedom. To hackers like Gummo, cyberspace was a frontier for exploration rather than exploitation, a landscape of endless possibilities where rules were few and innovation thrived. Yet, Gummo acknowledges that this innocence could not last; as technology matured, so too did its darker applications, prompting increasingly rigid and bureaucratic regulatory frameworks aimed at controlling what had once been seen as uncontrollable. This maturation from optimistic idealism to complex regulatory realism epitomizes the very notion of “Coming of Age”—marking cybercrime’s loss of innocence and posing critical questions about how effectively our legal systems balance security, innovation, and freedom in an ever-evolving digital world. As Gummo speaks, the flickering shadows cast across his face seem to echo the ambiguity of his message. There is both pride and sorrow in his voice—a reverence for the early ethos of the internet and a quiet mourning for its transformation. In those early years, digital spaces felt almost utopian: decentralized, anonymous, and fueled by collaboration rather than competition. Hackers shared knowledge freely on bulletin board systems and IRC channels, united less by a desire to break things than to understand how they worked. It was a time when the word “hacker” still carried a hint of romanticism, evoking images of digital pioneers rather than criminals.



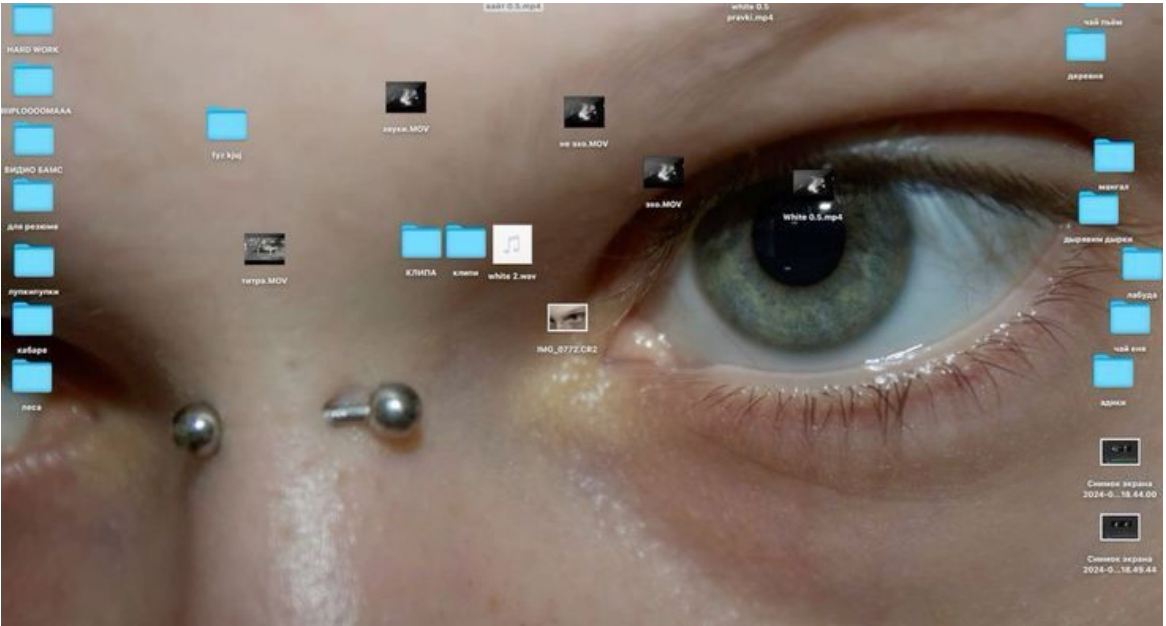
This tension between innovation and regulation is not hypothetical—it plays out in real-world arenas every day. Consider the case of whistleblowers like Edward Snowden or Chelsea Manning, whose actions, though illegal under current statutes, were motivated by a deep sense of moral obligation to expose government overreach. To some, they are traitors; to others, heroes. What their stories underscore is that the digital world has created new ethical landscapes where traditional laws struggle to keep pace with technological capabilities and moral nuance. Even outside such headline-grabbing events, the line between ethical hacking and cybercrime remains blurry. Penetration testers—professionals paid to probe systems for weaknesses—use the same tools and techniques as malicious hackers. What distinguishes them is context, consent, and intent. Yet legal frameworks in many countries still lag behind, often failing to account for the difference between malicious exploitation and responsible disclosure. White-hat hackers who uncover vulnerabilities without authorization can still face prosecution, even if their goal is to help.

This legal gray area has led to the rise of “bug bounty” programs, where companies like Google, Microsoft, and even the U.S. Department of Defense invite hackers to find flaws in exchange for compensation. These initiatives represent a small but significant shift in attitude—a recognition that security is a collaborative process, not just a top-down imposition. They offer a potential blueprint for the future, one in which ethical hackers are not marginalized but embraced as allies. Still, this approach is far from universal. In many parts of the world, outdated cybercrime laws continue to criminalize curiosity. The Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) in the

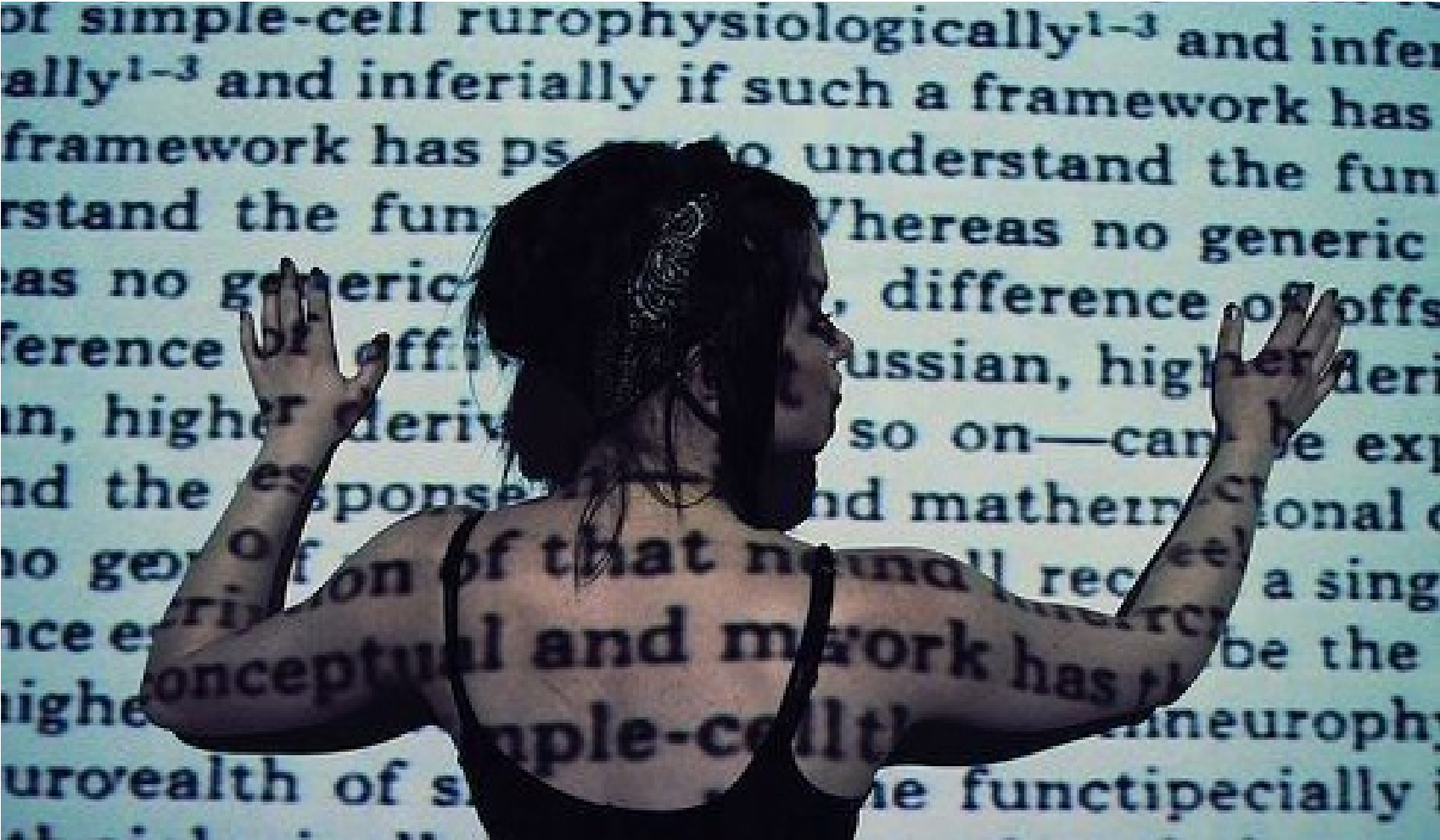
These laws, born of a legitimate need to safeguard systems and data, often cast too wide a net, ensnaring the very people best equipped to defend against real threats.

And herein lies the central irony: in attempting to sanitize the digital frontier, we risk extinguishing its most powerful feature—its ability to evolve through the friction of competing ideas, ethical dilemmas, and creative subversion. The hacker ethos, at its core, is not about destruction but discovery. It’s about asking, “What happens if I push this button?” and in doing so, revealing the strengths and weaknesses of the systems we’ve built. Suppressing this instinct in the name of security is like refusing to crash-test cars for fear of damaging them. In both cases, the real damage comes from not knowing the limits. Looking ahead, the challenge will be to foster a digital environment that cultivates both safety and imagination. This means crafting laws that are flexible enough to accommodate intent, fostering cross-disciplinary dialogue between technologists, lawmakers, and ethicists, and above all, preserving the cultural memory of that earlier, more innocent internet—a place where learning meant breaking things, and breaking things was how we learned.

In that dimly lit interview, Gummo is not just reminiscing. He is issuing a warning and a call to action. As we formalize and codify the digital world, we must do so with humility, remembering that today’s rules may not fit tomorrow’s realities. If cyberspace is coming of age, then we are its stewards. And like any parent, our job is not to impose rigid control, but to nurture growth, resilience, and the capacity to question. Only then can we hope to create a digital world that remains not just functional, but free. And like any parent, our job is not to impose rigid control, but to nurture growth, resilience, and the capacity to question. Only then can we hope to create a digital world that remains not just functional, but free.



“HACKING IS NOT ABOUT
BREAKING THINGS.IT’S
ABOUT UNDERSTANDING
THEM”





dream unburdened,
running water,
swelling blood beneath my skin.

the mountain is a ladder is a system
but moving boxes stand soaking up Merlot.

my sister calls me fit for it which kills me
and I know nothing

if language is a game then what is this?

the more I learn the more I feel like falling
running water, sweet Merlot, come catch me!!
I'm liquid smooth, a game that's fit for mountains,

until they settle like a flock of birds in boxes
I fold and unfold, dream unburdened, surely not?

the mountain is a ladder but who am I

