



# 7 Uncomfortable Anime You Should Watch ... *Because It's Uncomfortable*

By Victoria Davis | Dec 9th, 2020, 11:07 am | 23 comments



***\*\*Content Warning: Discussion of child abuse, suicide, and sexual assault.\*\****

There are some life lessons that just have to be learned the hard way—diving headfirst into the dark end, where a metaphorical light, called a lesson on morals, can shine the brightest. And no entertainment genre throws viewers into the peculiar pits quite like anime, where stories riddled with strange and daring themes flourish, be it Hitoshi Iwaaki's worm aliens that take over human bodies in *Parasyte* or Jun Mayuzuki's gutsy move to illustrate infatuations that overlook alarming age gaps in *After the Rain*.



become, or the more discomfort they breed even in “kawaii” settings, the more the stories will unravel the minds of those watching. It’s one thing to cringe at the idea of someone being in love with the undead, but it’s another to realize the full scope of unconditional love.

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These are the mind games anime plays, and if we were being honest with ourselves, we’re likely the better for playing along. From confronting the worst of human trafficking and child neglect to sympathizing with man-eating monsters, watching these anime definitely doesn’t make for pleasant experiences, though some have their brighter moments. But, for those with a light at the end of the eerie tunnels, the journey is worth it. There are some uncomfortable anime we need to watch for the very reason that it makes us uncomfortable.

### **Sankarea: Undying Love**



(Funimation)

Boy meets girl, boy attempts to revive his dead cat with girl, and girl attempts suicide with the poison potion intended to revive the dead cat. *Sankarea* kicks right off with the uncomfortable and disturbing, where a zombie-obsessed boy named Chihiro Furuya crosses paths with a deeply troubled girl named Rea Sanka, who will do anything to escape the prison of her home life and father Dan'ichirō.

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in an attempt to run away from her father, falls off a cliff and, as a result of the poison she drank earlier, becomes a zombie.

The anime not only follows Chihiro and Rea's romantic relationship, but also the couple's growth as individuals who both realize death cannot save them from their living terrors.

*Sankarea*'s charm ultimately stems from Rea's and Chihiro's desire to live life fully, which causes them to eventually face their traumas head-on and taste real freedom.

### *Erased*



(Aniplex of America)

Satoru Fujinuma has a unique gift where he is occasionally launched back in time a few minutes to prevent life-threatening tragedies. While these events are usually akin to accidents like car crashes, this changes when Satoru's awareness gift "Revival" saves a child from what he suspects was an attempted kidnapping.



This event reminds Satoru and his mother, a former journalist, of a string of unsolved child kidnappings and murders that occurred in their old neighborhood when Satoru was in elementary school. When Satoru comes home to find his mother, who had been digging into the old cases, brutally murdered, the shock launches him back to being 11 years-old, with the opportunity to save the not-yet-kidnapped children from their former fates.

Though this anime is a thrilling mystery to follow, *Erased* takes bold steps into the shadows of domestic abuse, child neglect, and serial murder, and it's natural to want to sidestep any show focused on harm toward the young and innocent. But *Erased* offers more than just a mystery to solve. The show brings awareness of the monsters that lurk in a friendly but false light and pays immense homage to the strength of children and, as clichéd as it may sound, the life-saving power of friendship.

### ***Banana Fish***



(Amazon Prime Video)

The story of *Banana Fish*, while only one season, is six-fold, beginning with a mysterious, psychoactive, and mentally disabling drug used on American soldiers in Vietnam and leading to an extensive and organized Corsican mafia group in New York City, specializing in human trafficking. The anime's focus, however, centers around Ash Lynx—a seventeen-year-old gang leader, former sex slave, and heir to the mafia's criminal empire—and Eiji Okumura, a nineteen-year-old college student who's assisting another photojournalist on a story about New York street gangs.

Eiji and Ash, to everyone's surprise, become fast friends, Eiji admiring Ash's strength and toughness while Ash is amused and charmed by Eiji's innocence, optimism, and above all, freedom. As their lives become more intertwined by Ash's investigation into the disastrous wake of the drug, now called "Banana Fish," which led to his brother's death, Eiji becomes determined to save Ash

from a life in the mafia while Ash becomes increasingly aware that a life with Eiji may not be possible if he hopes to keep Eiji safe.



and rape. But amidst one of the most unhopeful settings imaginable, Ash and Eiji still serve as pillars of peace for each other and a reminder that tomorrow could be better, even if that hope is unbearably fragile. *Banana Fish* really drives home that our lives, no matter how tormented, always have a purpose, and that purpose is always worth the journey.

### ***Attack on Titan***

(Funimation)

What could be more unpleasant than nude, humanoid giants as tall as skyscrapers smashing their way through villages to feast on the residents? Maybe throw in an excessive amount of blood, as well as limbs and intestines being torn from people's bodies, and that pretty much takes first place. *Attack on Titan* is

uncomfortable, to put it lightly, and you absolutely need to watch it.



sanity cracks, and he vows vengeance on the monsters. It's understandable for anyone who watched their mother's head being eaten off by a giant, smiling like it was a day at Disneyland. To fuel his bloodlust for the Titans, Eren joins the Scout Regiment, an elite group of soldiers who fight Titans, with Mikasa and Armin in tow.

Death and blood is everywhere in this series, and its sudden turn into Holocaust allegory has led to a lot of complex discussion, to say the least. *Attack on Titan's* focus is, in fact, not on the extensive action scenes, but on the moments of conversation between battles, when characters are faced with deep moral dilemmas and searching for the point of fighting impossible battles.

### ***Angels of Death***



way out and comes across a serial killer named Zack, covered in blood and bandages, sporting a grim-reaper vibe with a large scythe. The two agree to help each other back to the surface under one agreement: that Zack kills Rachel and Rachel smiles for Zack. Strange? Very.

Things get even more cringey as Zack and Rachel discover they are not the only ones in the building. As they go up each floor, they are met with a set of life-or-death challenges, created by other serial killers to test the minds and wills of Rachel and Zack. And the closer the two get to the surface—and, oddly enough, to each other—Rachel and Zack uncover the secrets of their past, trapped in the corners of their minds for self-preservation.

*Angels of Death* is an incredibly fitting title for this anime that quite literally parallels the serial killers inside the strange building to almost angels with the way they view their murderous games. The show has a twisted way of showing pure-intentioned hearts inside deeply disturbed characters, and you honestly can't help but feel for them as perceptions of their "good" and "bad" actions become a lot more complex.

### ***Gravitation***



(Nozomi Entertainment)

Unlike many other uncomfortable anime, *Gravitation* is actually a generally light-hearted, comedic romance, at least in the beginning. Granted, the unapologetically cheesy dialogue delivery and shameless use of puns is plenty cringey, but it's all part of the '90s anime charm. The show becomes more dicey, however, as the story progresses, diving into darker themes of broken trust, trauma, and homophobic hate crimes.

Aspiring singer Shuichi Shindou and his band, Bad Luck, want to become Japan's next big pop-rock stars, following in the footsteps of the famous idol Ryuichi Sakuma. However, Suichi's confidence is derailed when young, handsome author Eiri Yuki tells Suichi he has no talent for writing lyrics. Suichi's eccentric personality, and his determination to prove Yuki wrong, results in the two actually





Shindou's and Yuki's relationship is met with opposition from homophobic band competitors who brutally attack Shindou and from Yuki's close family, who can't forgive themselves for the attempted sexual assault Yuki almost endured when he was young. Despite the show's bubbly and romantic start, things get uncomfortable fast, but all for the purpose of unpacking Suichi's heartbreaking question after his attack: "Why is it wrong to want to be with the person I love?"

### ***Beastars***

*(Netflix)*

Following the investigation into the murder of an alpaca named Tem on school grounds, both herbivore and carnivore students at Cherryton Academy find themselves on edge and more suspicious of each other than usual. The tension becomes even more palpable for wolf student Legoshi when he finds himself attracted to a





but is that love or a thirst for blood talking?

*Beastars* defies all natural order of the animal kingdom as we know it with the two main characters beginning, at first, an unlikely friendship which leads to more romantic interactions. But within the unorthodox suggestions that come with Legoshi and Haru's potential relationship is the theme of love versus addiction, Legoshi's attraction to Haru often resembling a drug addict going through withdrawals.

The show is also well worth a watch for its multi-leveled narrative highlighting social class and racism between the student species, the way it unpacks Haru's mental state of always being pitied and desperately wanting a purpose, as well as its calling out corrupt government organizations.

—

What other boldly uncomfortable anime are worth the cringes? Let us know what favorites we missed in the comments below!

(featured image: Funimation)

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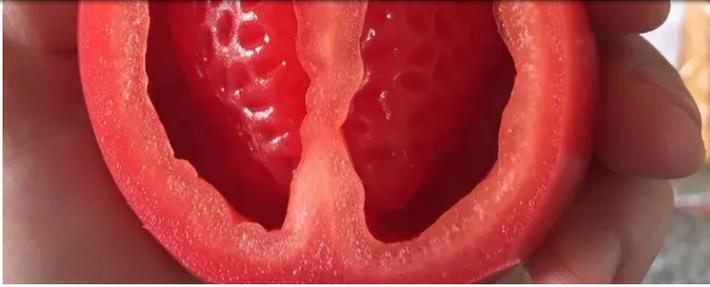
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Times, SDNews and Hidden Remote. An "Otaku" girl through-and-through, Victoria loves all things arts and entertainment. She has a particular affinity for anime and film, spending most of her free time at the movies or with her nose in a manga.



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**Stereo Nacht** • 5 days ago

The only "uncomfortable" anime in my video library is Serial Experiment Lain. And it's intellectually uncomfortable as it explores what it means to be human in a very convoluted way. I have watched it a few times, and I am not sure I understand \*all\* the stuff in there yet. But it's nowhere close to those suggested here; I am not a fan of gore, although a few of them may get on my list. Erased, in particular, seems to have a few similarities with Ship of Theseus manga by Higashimoto Toshiya (which I recommend, by the way).

8 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

**M. Marius** → Stereo Nacht • 5 days ago

Worth noting that nobody, creator included, fully understands Serial Experiments Lain.

It's well worth watching! But its absolutely one of shows vying for the title of "Final Boss of Anime"

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

**Roc Kit** → Stereo Nacht • 5 days ago

Came here to say the same - it's uncomfortable in its sound design, pacing, and narrative flow, not so much content or images.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

**Lucifer Sam** • 4 days ago

Not a series, but Perfect Blue belongs on this list. It's basically the anime version of Mulholland Drive, but it predates Lynch's film.

7 ^ | v • Reply • Share >





3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Skinkling** → Stereo Nacht · 4 days ago

I thought Black Swan was the live-action version of Perfect Blue.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**SlayerNina Friki** · 4 days ago · edited

No mention to Higurashi No Naku Koro Ni? Or Paranoia Agent? Or Happy Sugar Life? Elfen Lied? Shiki' (School Live/Gakkou Gurashi was already mentioned below)

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Lucifer Sam** → SlayerNina Friki · 4 days ago

Hell yes to Paranoia Agent. Not as "uncomfortable" as some of the stuff on this list but absolutely worth watching.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Man of Tomorrow** · 5 days ago

Berserk. It was gratuitous violence and gore that didn't really phase me until \*THAT\* scene. That's when I got uncomfortable.

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**M. Marius** · 5 days ago

For a challenging, uncomfortable, and deeply fascinating short series? **Rin: Daughters of Mnemosyne**

Just loads of content warnings to get past, but the prize is an excellent story examining immortality, isolation, sexual politics, memetic-growth-as-culture and a work that is sequentially proto-Cyberpunk, actual Cyberpunk AND \*Post\* Cyberpunk

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**VBartilucci** · 5 days ago · edited

School-Live!

I can't tell you ANYTHING about it, it would ruin the reveal. It's about an adorable kid and her friends, members of the "Live at school" club.

Until it isn't.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Sokudoningyiling Laozu** → VBartilucci · 4 days ago

I admit, the twist was totally unexpected for me. It's too bad the anime is so much shorter than the manga.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Stephen** · 4 days ago

'Made in Abyss' says "hello!"

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I found it to have a real edgelordy "dark for darkness's sake" feel to it, where it's more about shocking the audience than actually saying anything.

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**Palmyre Parry** → Lucifer Sam • 4 days ago

I absolutely hate darkness for it's own sake but I love "Made in Abyss". The gore, violence and dark themes always felt like they were there to serve the story rather than for pure shock value.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Stephen** → Lucifer Sam • 4 days ago

That's possible. I guess it depends on how the story goes from here. I haven't read the manga, but "dark for darkness' sake" could possibly turn into amazing world building with the right story.

I have now idea if a season 2 will ever come out, though.

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**Offrezwolf** • 5 days ago

Another I would add to the list is Death Parade, it's one where if they did a film version of it, would be perfect for the Soska Sisters to adapt.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Ewa** • 4 days ago

I found "Baccano!" super disturbing (the violence! The child abuse! The story was very good though) and most recently, "The Promised Neverland" (apart from the uncomfortable story itself, there is also the racist stereotypes the author seemingly didn't even notice?)

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**Skye Fitzgarrett** • 4 days ago

Although technically an OVA/movie, Cossette no Shouzou / Le Portrait de Petit Cossette is a dark, twisty and at times deeply disturbing story that examines obsession, specifically with a young girl and the costs it comes with.

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**Lucifer Sam** • 4 days ago

Black Lagoon belongs on this list, particularly the "Hansel and Gretel arc".

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Beeronious** • 5 days ago

I'd like to add the controversial adaption of **Aku no Hana** (Flowers of Evil), with whom the choice to use rotoscope animation, while incredibly controversial really helps capture the rather unsettling subject matter.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Matthew Wade** • 5 days ago

We have to do the NUK... but not to mention that it's a dark, twisty and at times deeply disturbing story that examines obsession, specifically with a young girl and the costs it comes with.

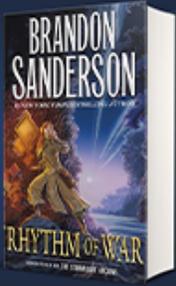




**amboato** • 2 days ago

While it starts out lighthearted and comedic, I'd say Revolutionary Girl Utena belongs on the list.

^ | v • Reply • Share >



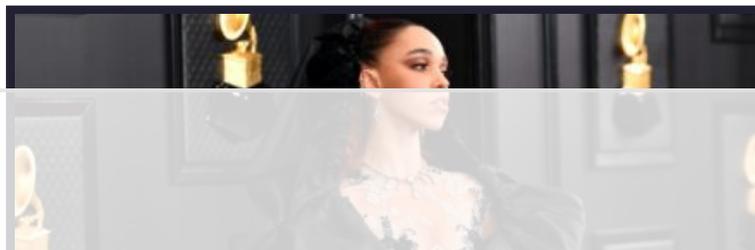
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