

Review: *Watching Cartoons with Boys* (2017)

By Emma Michelle

Review by Jessica Gately

It stands that any book that introduces its themes using *The Simpsons* and links it in with such classics as *Pokemon* and *Futurama* was always going to grip me from the beginning. That Michelle then went on to fit in *Family Guy*, *Howl's Moving Castle*, and *Adventure Time*, amongst others, signals a winner. Adept at weaving iconic quotes into the narratives of her various relationships, Michelle compares the similarities in her relationships or examines the changes in her perceptions, carefully selecting each reference and skilfully executing each stage of her story.

Each chapter in this book is focused around a different cartoon and how Michelle relates it to a new relationship and its inevitable end. At times she compares the characters within to the people in her life, at other times she is reflecting on how different people react to the same cartoon and the influence it has on the dynamics of her relationship.

In particular, the chapter about *Howl's Moving Castle* is especially impressive as Michelle uses each of the movie's characters and some of its more iconic lines as metaphors and quotes for the various people involved in her own story.

Whilst the main focus of this book is the context of cartoons around relationships, Michelle does take some time out to discuss the political and social impacts of cartoons. Reflecting on the conflicting depictions of femininity in *Futurama*, the offensive nature of *Tin-Tin* comics particularly in the portrayal of the Jewish community, and the

discussion around the role of women in the family when watching *Bob's Burgers*, Michelle acknowledges that cartoons have a big role to play in the socio-political landscape.

Her research into cartoon representation does however lead her to the conclusion that:

"all of us are basically a bunch of biased dorks watching the exact same cartoon and projecting our own different readings onto it."

If you're looking for a fun, easy read with a healthy dose of nostalgia and plenty of adoration for *Adventure Time's* Lumpy Space Princess, then this is the book for you.

Nostalgic, clever and funny, *Watching Cartoons with Boys* is a reminder of all the ways that cartoons intersect with and reflect our own lives. Michelle's shrewd contemplation of the roles cartoons have played in her relationships over the years, is both insightful and amusing.

RRP \$19.95

You are invited to attend the official launch of *Watching Cartoons With Boys*
Thursday 23rd November 2017
At Brunswick Bound Independent Bookstore
361 Sydney Road, Brunswick, Victoria
6.30pm onwards