

# It's been 15 years since Winter came

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LIFE EDITOR

Fifteen years ago, audiences were introduced to and captivated by the Targaryens, the Starks, the White Walkers and the Iron Throne. Since then, the world of Westeros has only grown.

"Game of Thrones," based on the book series "A Song of Ice and Fire" by George R. R. Martin, was introduced to the world with one of the most fitting pilot episodes, "Winter is Coming."

The first episode jumps right into introducing almost all of the main characters, including the show's central family, the Stark family, including Ned, Catelyn, Robb, Jon Snow, Sansa, Arya and Bran. Audiences also meet the King of Westeros, Robert Baratheon, his children, his wife, Cersei Lannister, her twin brother Jaime, and their brother Tyrion. On the opposite side of the world are Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen, the "rightful" rulers of Westeros.

While it might seem like a lot of information from the start, the way Tim Van Patten, director of the first two

episodes, and writers David Benioff and D.B. Weiss present all of the information makes everything easy to follow.

Throughout its eight-season run, first-time watchers oftentimes could never expect what was going to happen next. In the early seasons, these unexpected twists, including the death of a main character, were very natural and established that no character was safe. But in later seasons, especially the finale, some fans did not enjoy the unpredictability and even chose to pretend it never happened.

The series is the most awarded drama of all time, with 59 Primetime Emmy Award wins and 396 wins across all award shows for all seasons. Among those wins are three Emmys for Outstanding Drama Series and five Emmy wins for Outstanding Costumes for a Period/Fantasy Series, Limited Series or Movie. "Game of Thrones" won 12 Emmys in 2015 alone.

The finale of "Game of Thrones" was not the end of what Westeros had in store for audiences.

"House of the Dragon," released in 2022, takes place 172 years before "Game of

Thrones" and tells the story of King Viserys I Targaryen's children battling for the Iron Throne. This series is based on only about 250 pages in the "Fire & Blood" book written by George R. R. Martin.

Before "Game of Thrones," the Targaryens were always in control of the Iron Throne and Westeros. But in House of the Dragon, House Targaryen is divided on who should be the next ruler.

About 80 years after season two of "House of the Dragon" and 90 years before the events of "Game of Thrones," the newest series, "A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms," takes place. This series, released in 2026, follows the future legendary knight, Sir Duncan the Tall, and his young squire, Egg, as they wander Westeros and become friends.

Both "House of the Dragon" and "A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms" have been renewed for another season.

Martin did not expect "Game of Thrones" to become the massive hit it did, the pace of the show even surpassing his book-writing speed. The series had one of the highest production values for television at the time and laid the groundwork for what



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO

would become the industry's new standard for making high-budget, cinema-quality productions for television.

HBO is also leaning into the 15 year anniversary of one of HBO's biggest shows ever with the "Reign of Thrones" campaign. This campaign features trailers, curated playlists and retrospectives, which reunites old cast members to talk about the show. One trailer even showcases clips from all three shows to "Celebrate 15 years of Westeros." The ad encourages audiences to watch "Every battle. Every Betrayal. Every Death," as "This is the Reign of Thrones. Celebrate 15 years of Westeros



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLLIDER

(Left) Oberyn Martell, Rhaenyra Targaryen, Daenerys Targaryen, and Jon Snow, some of the most influential characters within the world of "Game of Thrones."

all month long #GOT15." Westeros is still just as relevant and alive today as it was then. While the show did come out 15 years ago, the world of

## Anime power-ups need a switch-up

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No matter how awesome it may look, anime power-ups are extremely overdone and lack a level of writing that makes fight scenes interesting beyond the gut punches and uppercuts.

The trope of a transformation or power-up was immeasurably popularized by "Dragon Ball Z", with the use of "Super Saiyan" and subsequent evolutions acting as the key to defeating the villains in each season of the show.

However, this cliché has overstayed its welcome and feels like a lazy way to write a path to victory for the protagonists of many modern anime.

Through flashy changes in appearance and a flaring aura, power-ups are visually appealing and get hearts pumping, but these transformations are often not given much explanation other than blind rage or adrenaline.

If you want a power-up to truly work, it needs to relate back to the progression of the plot or the development of characters. The reason behind the boost should not come from out of left field rather it should come from a place where viewers have been introduced even if for a brief period.

One of the best cases of this well-written form of a power-up comes from "Yu Yu Hakusho", a show where the protagonist, Yusuke Urameshi, comes back to life as a detective solving cases involving demons

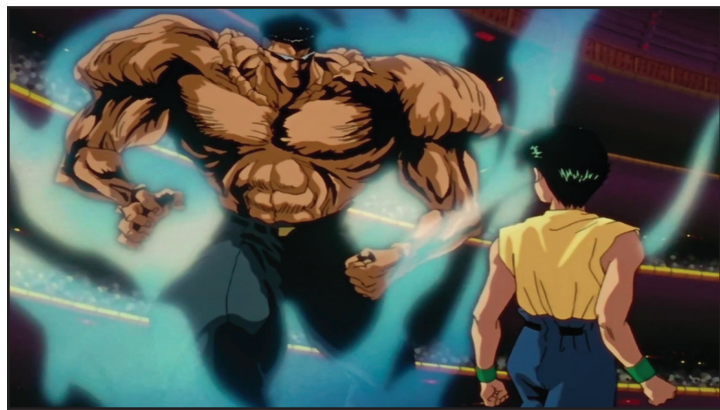


PHOTO COURTESY OF YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

A scene from the anime "Yu Yu Hakusho" where protagonist Yusuke Urameshi faces off in a climactic battle against antagonist Toguro.

with the use of spirit energy.

During the climax of the "Dark Tournament" story arc, Yusuke finds himself outmatched by his opponent, Toguro, in the finals of a martial arts tournament, even after receiving training and donated energy from his mentor. According to his teacher, there is a wall between himself and his emotions that holds the key to unlocking his full potential, which she suggests Toguro exploits by killing one of his best friends.

To finally fight someone of equal power, he jumps on the opportunity and seemingly kills Yusuke's lifelong friend, which shatters his barrier of safety from the reality of his situation and allows him to finally stop holding back his power to overcome this battle. This scenario acts as a moment of major character development that has a purpose in the plot besides being a way to defeat the antagonist.

Throughout the series,

Yusuke has zero regard for his life or the people who care about him. Watching the death of his best friend led him to the realization that his actions have consequences and he needs to take his life more seriously, which broke a mental barrier that held back his power and led to his power-up. It ties together with his development and furthers his progression into a mature character, adding more substance behind his burst of energy.

The trope of power-ups and transformations is not an inherently bad way to write fight scenes. But, when the only use for it is for hype without any depth to its meaning, it feels like a way to breeze past conflict without any progression in characters or plot elements. While it worked for one of the grandfathers of Japanese animation, it's time for the cliché to have a transformation of its own to stay fresh and unique.

## "Project Hail Mary" and the return of the space craze

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"Project Hail Mary," a film produced as a passion project based on the 2021 science fiction novel of the same name by Andy Weir, attracted widespread attention and prefaced the return of yet another inevitable and generational space craze.

The movie, starring Ryan Gosling, follows the story of a failed mission to space, one in which Gosling's character, sassy molecular biologist Dr. Ryland Grace must push his limits to save the world. The character is a renowned PhD biologist turned middle school science teacher, but he is not so eager to take on the challenge.

Grace has been exiled from the scientific community for lashing out over a controversial approach to a theory about extraterrestrial life: that not every organism requires water to live.

Thereafter, though, when a mysterious composition called Astrophage is discovered in a "petrova line" extending from the Sun to Venus, Grace is enlisted to discover the motives behind the Astrophage life form.

Grace's efforts uncover that the Astrophage being requires travel to Venus for its reproduction, while consuming the Sun's energy for its journey. A classic plot point to any sci-fi novel, the recruitment of Grace carries

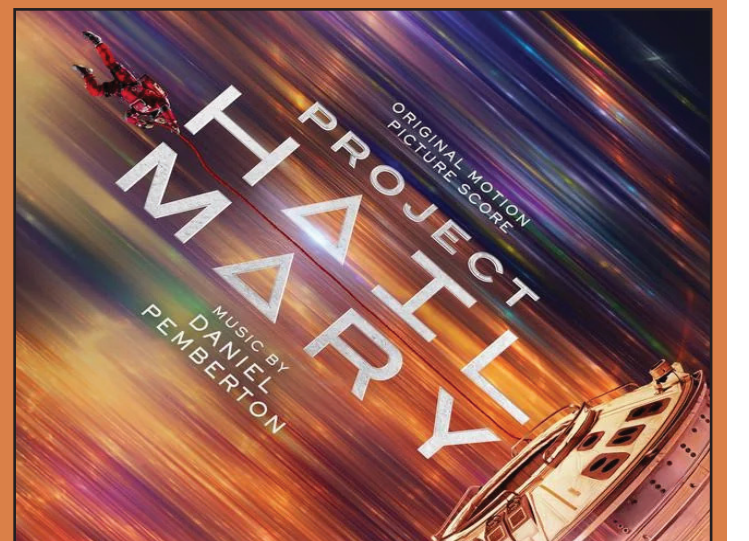


PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB

the implication of life or death for planet Earth, as the reproduction of Astrophage threatens to eat away at the Sun as the main form of energy for the organism.

The objective is direct and simple: figure out why, out of the many solar systems in our galaxy affected by the Astrophage, one solar system's Sun is not dying. A mission that will save the fate of the world, however, comes with the suicide of the crew members set to travel to uncover the mysterious solar system's secret.

The film then picks up in a space shuttle, where a disoriented Grace finds himself stranded in the middle of the galaxy, his entire accompanying crew deceased, and with zero answers to ease his confusion. With the weight of the Earth on his shoulders, he must choose to push past

his fears to save mankind.

When all hope seems lost, though, Grace makes a strange friend, an alien named Rocky, who finds himself on a similar mission to save his planet. Together, the unlikely duo teams up to save their home worlds.

The movie also features the hit and beautiful single, "Sign of the Times," by Harry Styles. When I heard the introduction to this song begin to play in the theater, I think I actually almost levitated from my cushy recliner seat.

Project Hail Mary, though, also revived the public's obsession with space, something that was also motivated by the launch of the Artemis II lunar flyby mission earlier in April.

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