

**Anime TV Show Review: The Human Experience according to *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* / *Sōsō no Furīren***

---

*Nathalie Velasco-Quiroz*

*Department of Sociology*

*California State University, Los Angeles*

In the fantasy and adventure anime show *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, the human experience shown through the eyes of the protagonist, an elf mage named Frieren, takes viewers on a journey of discovery, both of the self and of others. From a sociological perspective, some of the themes reflect the experiences of human life, such as social structure, collective memory and shared experiences, and aging and time. Throughout this review piece, some situations are not too descriptive to avoid spoilers for those interested in watching the anime. From Abe, Yamada, Suzuki, and Saitō's (2023) description on Crunchyroll, a major anime hosting site, here is the plot for *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* explores the following plot:

After the party of heroes defeated the Demon King, they restored peace to the land and returned to lives of solitude. Generations pass, and the elven mage Frieren comes face to face with humanity's mortality. She takes on a new apprentice and promises to fulfill old friends' dying wishes. Can an elven mind make peace with the nature of life and death? Frieren embarks on her quest to find out.

### **SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

For this topic, the nature of relationships is displayed in the anime's world where different beings have varying life expectancies. The biggest example of this is the protagonist herself, Frieren, a long-lived elf who outlived her human friend with whom she shared an adventure. Frieren's long life has influenced how she perceives and values her relationships with others in a detached way that takes social relationships for granted. On the other hand, her human friends treasure the moments they share with their group, knowing that their time is limited compared to Frieren. Her emotional detachment due to her long life makes her unfamiliar with human social norms when it comes to relationships and mourning. When she is confronted with her

friend's mortality and grieves, she understands the neglect in her relationships with them and their significance to her social life.

Frieren also takes on the position of mentor to the new group formed for the journey, particularly to the two young humans, the mage Fern, who is also Frieren's apprentice, and the warrior Stark. The intergenerational interactions showcase the times of peace that the world is in after the accomplishments of Frieren's past group. While Frieren shows Fern the world of magic and mages, Fern's interactions with Frieren teach her emotions and human experiences. This dynamic helps in Frieren's character development as she learns more about human life and its value while both generations learn from each other.

### COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND SHARED EXPERIENCES

Time plays an important role when it comes to the way that Frieren's group, especially how Himmel, the human Hero, is remembered during and after their adventure. Time aids Frieren in getting to know Himmel better through others, as she felt regret not doing so before their past journey ended. The time that passes is not only shown just through Frieren's perspective but also through many individuals who encountered the group and relayed to her what Himmel did for them and what it meant to them. As she and her new group hear the different experiences that others have had with Himmel, the shared stories give more insight into Himmel and his actions to help others. For Frieren, reliving these moments with a new outlook helps her discover the significance of those memories. While her original group's achievements restored peace, what people remembered the most was how Himmel the Hero helped them in small ways, which impacted them so much that the experiences stayed with them for years afterwards.

### AGING AND TIME

Although Frieren herself has appeared almost ageless throughout her journeys, the same cannot be said about her human friends. Dockery, a Senior Contribution Writer at Crunchyroll, (2024) notes that aging is accepted and embraced within the anime as it acknowledges how time can mean different things to different characters, which creates meaningfulness. The human characters

enjoy what is beautiful in the world, knowing that death is inevitable, and enjoy their lives while they can. In the first episode of the series, Frieren mentions wanting to see the meteor shower again with the original party but only when they bring peace to the kingdom. Frieren's human friends are surprised at her promise and agree to it, even though they know they will either be very old or have passed on. 50 years later, she returns to her companions and fulfills her promise to see the next meteor shower. While the time that passed may not have mattered much to Frieren, that was not the case for her human friends, which she inevitably realizes.

### STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

As much as *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* is thought of highly, this show has its strengths and weaknesses. The strengths that have led to its success in the anime fandom are its narrative, journey to understand mortality, and its stunning animation and visuals. Further, the narrative is an interesting take on the aftermath of a group of heroes saving the world, differing from typical anime storytelling. The show's premise about understanding mortality gives viewers an opportunity to look at humanity through the perspective of Frieren, as she learns more about mortality. The art and visuals of this anime are beautiful as they illustrate different types of landscapes and characteristics of the area that change as the characters travel to many places.

The weaknesses of this show involve its pacing and a lack of worldbuilding. Although the show is an adventure and fantasy anime, its pacing can be considered slow as there are few action sequences. This is also because Frieren is retrospectively becoming more appreciative of her experiences with her former group. The lack of worldbuilding is based on the small amount of lore in the world of magic and social structures that are not explored in depth. Despite these weaknesses, they play a role in the development of the show by allowing viewers to reflect on mortality in Frieren's world while coming to a better understanding of humanity's experiences.

### CONCLUSION

Through the anime *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, there is a reflection of human life and the human experience in cherishing

the lives that come across and memories that are made. The exploration of sociological themes adds to the viewing experience as it can relate to our own lives and invites viewers to go on their own journey of growth. Frieren also grows to understand human experiences throughout her new journey, from grieving with the pain of loss to her past and ongoing journey. I highly recommend watching this series as it expresses the different types of human experiences and the one we will all face in death. Dockery (2024) beautifully encapsulates this theme when writing, “In *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, your presence might leave the earth, but where you remain is in the margins. In the moments where you find enough peace to reminisce or to be able to evaluate yourself — that’s where you find the past at its strongest.” Perhaps what we can take away from *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End* is cherishing moments in our lives that make life beautiful and worth living.

#### REFERENCES

- Abe, Tsukasa, Kanehito Yamada, Tomohiro Suzuki, and Keiichirō Saitō. 2023. *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End / Sōsō no Furīren*. Tokyo: Madhouse, Inc.; San Francisco: Crunchyroll, LLC. <https://www.crunchyroll.com/series/GG5H5XQX4/frieren-beyond-journeys-end>.
- Dockery, Daniel. 2024. “Frieren: Beyond Journey’s End and the Beauty of Age.” *Crunchyroll News*. <https://www.crunchyroll.com/news/features/2024/5/4/frieren-beyond-journeys-end-beauty-of-age>.