

Slice Of Life:

Use of the Kishōtenketsu (conflict-absent narrative) method of storytelling in animation to create appealing stories.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Animation Department
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Abstract

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The East has a long tradition of conflict-less storytelling that originated in Chinese poetry and spread to all formats including prose, journalistic writings, graphic novels, and filmmaking. This style of storytelling, known as *Kishōtenketsu*, consists of a story in four-acts which can exist without a conflict driving it. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that *Kishōtenketsu* is commonly used in the slice of life genre in Japanese live action and animation, which is made up of the mundane, every-day stories of regular people. These stories of regular people, which are devoid of conflict, still have a lot of substance and are made all the more compelling with the way they are told using *Kishōtenketsu*. In the following paper, I will consider the roots of this type of storytelling and the how it came to be. Using feature and series animation examples, I will discuss how this unique kind of story-telling enhances the appeal and strength of the stories in the slice of life genre. Lastly, I will touch upon the idea that greater usage of conflict-less plots in all formats could lead to a more peaceful world.

Keywords: *Kishōtenketsu*, slice of life, Hero's journey, conflict-less storytelling, Western animation, Japanese animation, conflict-driven writing, four-act stories, plot twist, Chinese poetry.

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