

Why fandoms are important

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Being a 90s girl, I'm accustomed to forming mutual bonds with people over books, TV shows, movies, music, and other forms of pop culture from that decade. To be precise, I'm a flagbearer of fandoms.

However, one thing I usually notice these days especially from people who consider themselves 'not-too-mainstream' is a sort of disdain for the whole fandom culture. Those of us fanboying/fangirling are labelled as childish, frivolous, or social media attention seekers with nothing better to do.

But why are the 90s kids so obsessed with and affected by fandoms anyway? The answer seems to lie in the fact that we, the twenty-somethings, are somewhat of a 'nostalgia generation'. This is due to the fact that we were the kids who witnessed the metamorphosis from an analogue world to a tech-dominated one. The ones who saw the transition from dial up connections to Wi-Fi. We spent our younger years playing tag outside while spending our late teens on Hi5, MSN, then Facebook, followed by Instagram, Snapchat and so on. We were lucky enough to experience the best of both worlds.

Sadly, the world around us today is quite sceptical, materialistic and insensitive, exactly why fandoms still continue to appeal to us. It offers us simplicity, the simplicity we remember from childhood. There is a reason why we still binge-watch *F.R.I.E.N.D.S* during dinner time. It was easy, cosy, funny, silly and hardly ever required to be given much thought. It offered escape and the perfect image of a dream: living in New York City surrounded by your friends and loved ones, with everything magically falling into place - which is obviously

When me and somebody carry out an entire conversation about F.R.I.E.N.D.S



far from how reality works. I think we have all fought over deciding who is Rachel and who's Monica and determining which was the most heart-breaking episode - the one where Rachel and Ross take a break or the last one.

Harry Potter is not just a story about wizards; it is a reminder that goodness, loyalty, and bravery can succeed

regardless of odds. Mia Thermopolis from *The Princess Diaries*, even though some might deny, is actually all of us. An adolescent girl in quest of her family, surroundings and including herself is every girl ever! Clarissa Darling from *Clarissa Explains It All* was a character you could actually aspire to, somebody who was actually a decent person, not just a pretty popular one and that is a really important thing within the usually superficial realms of girls and women in kids' television sitcoms.

A good friend of mine has gone through some rough times. She was bullied, was mostly a loner during her adolescent years and during those times she would turn to her favourite books, movies, singers to fill that void. Her favourite fandoms have stood in as loved ones for her. Although, she handles these troubles with more grace and love than I could ever hope to have even on a good day, it has been a reminder to me to consider what is really important. Things that make us happy. Bollywood too is often criticised for being illogical and regressive, but only the greatest fans will know the immense joy it can provide and just the sheer amounts of friendships it can create.

Fandoms are not about frivolous things, it's about becoming a community centred on the love of, and passion for something. It's about friendship, understanding, and opening doors and pathways that you never knew existed.

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Things you don't learn at an MUN

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If you google the actual definition you will see that it is termed as an educational simulation through which you will develop leadership skills and can learn about diplomacy and international relations.

Ideally that should have been the case. However, it's not. Why? To understand that you will have to know how MUNs are actually promoted and what goes on during the conference.

If you see the event link or website of any MUN, you will notice that the way they promote the conference is by marketing the venue, the luxurious restaurants for socials and performances by bands which, by the way, is a great promotional strategy because it works really well. Over the years, MUNs have become one of the most popular past times for teenagers. But does it serve the purpose of learning diplomacy?

Well, not quite. When you promote a conference which is about learning diplomacy and understanding international relation by telling people that they will get to stay in fancy hotels, see fancy dance performances, dress up for socials and click pictures that are worthy of making their social media page attractive, that's exactly what they sign up for.

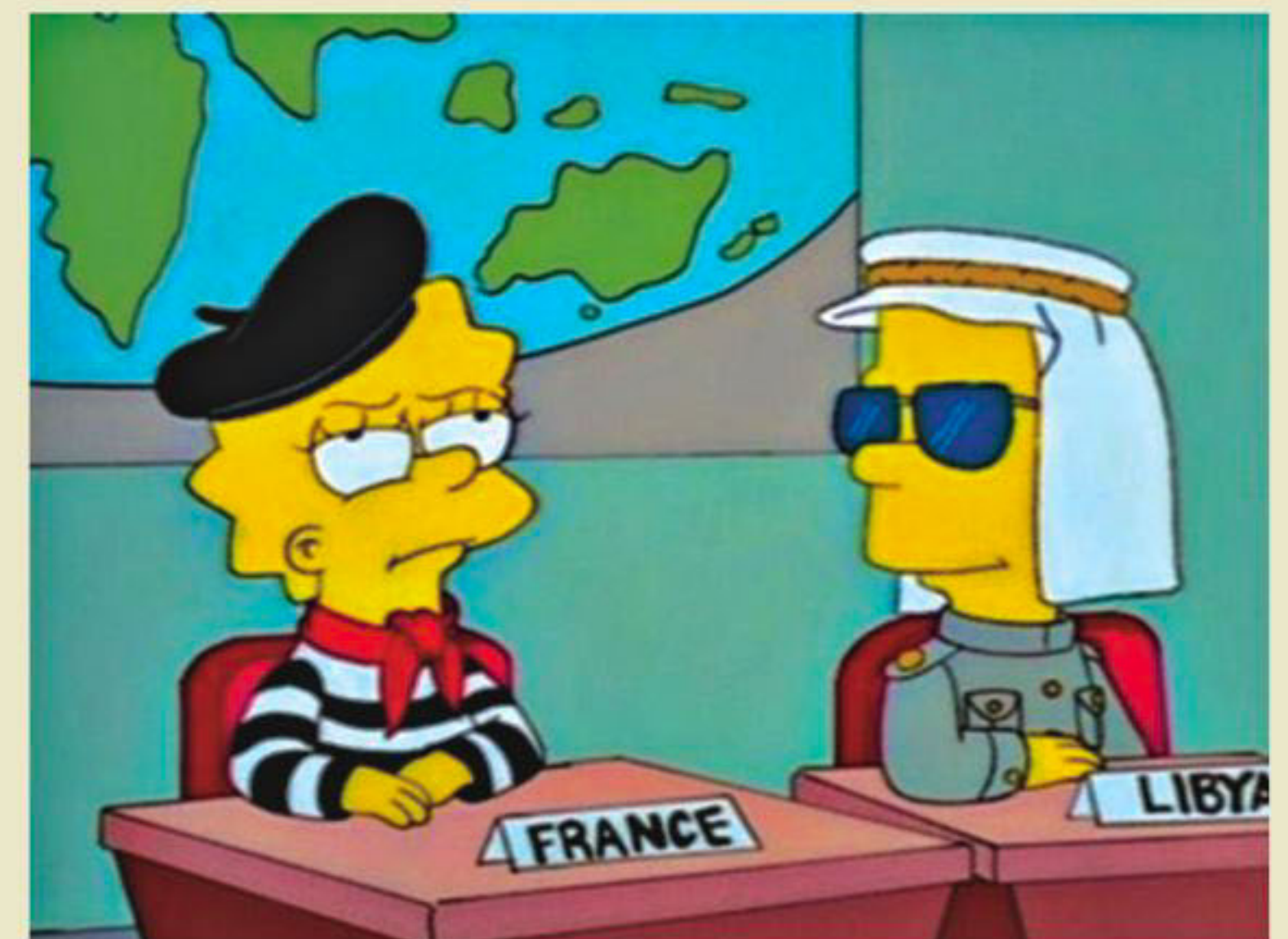
Inside the conference rooms, when sessions are ongoing, you will find only one or two people participating throughout the whole session. Most participants don't even bother to speak once and just wait for the session to end so that they can get back to the main part of the 4-day long event, the socialising part. You will find delegates gossiping or taking pictures while the session is going on, which by the way is prohibited according to MUN rules.

Even the one or two who participate, end up read-



ing out of pages they found on the internet without proper understanding of the subject. There will be times when you see the delegate of USA saying that he/she is glad to be a part of the Kyoto protocol, which is a bit hilarious given USA is not a part of the Kyoto protocol. Once in a while, the delegate of Canada ends up saying that the name of Canadian prime minister is Angela Merkel. Most resolutions prepared by the delegates are just a copy paste version of previous resolutions already passed by the United Nations. Allies are identified not on the basis of foreign policy but how friendly you are with the delegate of that country.

But the worst part is that it defeats the purpose of learning. Because delegates are pitted against each other for winning awards, and the marking procedures for EBs are so arbitrary that you might be saying all the right things and still missing out on awards because the people in your committee has "better connections"



with the delegate who is leading the other block. Sadly, for you to perform to the best of your abilities, you need participation from other delegates because to learn "international relationship" and "diplomacy" there needs to be other delegates participating in the process.

But at the end of the day you do get to make new friends and socialise, which should have some value right? Well, not if you compare it with the amount of money it requires for participating in an MUN. Most MUNs in Bangladesh cost about BDT 3000 to BDT 6000. So you can only imagine how much it would cost if you were to participate in an international MUN.

So, does MUN teach us about diplomacy and international relationship or prepare us for being world leaders? The answer in most cases is no. But if you never got to go to prom, this might be your chance to redeem yourself.