



Why young people should read The Adventures of TINTIN

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I first came across *Tintin* in my school library when I was ten. The thin, worn-out comic book about a young reporter fighting bad guys around the world captivated me enough to read it during lunch breaks. Several months and multiple comics later, I was hooked.

Almost a decade has passed since then, and *Tintin* still remains a timeless classic that I read from time to time. As the beloved series turns 95, here are a few reasons why I think more young people should consider delving into the world of Tintin's shenanigans.

Fun characters

One of *Tintin's* most appealing fronts is its diverse and witty characters. The courageous and inquisitive titular Tintin serves as a role model for young readers. His strong sense of justice and occasional dry humour are complemented by his eccentric sidekick, Captain Haddock, whose polysyllabic curses and short temper make him a fan favourite. Moreover, Tintin's loyal canine companion Snowy, bumbling detectives Thompson and Thompson, and scientist Professor Calculus all add remarkable depth and humour to the narratives.

Thrilling narratives

In all the stories, the gang finds themselves in between criminal rings, political abductions, and a lot of trouble in places like the Belgian Congo, Peru, the Middle East, Soviet Russia, and even the moon. From uncovering ancient mysteries to foiling evil plots, they embark on action-packed escapades infused with excitement, suspense, and wit.

Enticing artwork

Authored and illustrated by Belgian cartoonist Hergé, the series' distinctive art style is a visual feast that brings the reading experience to life. The clean lines, meticulous details, and vibrant colours make the books immersive and contribute to the suspense and storytelling. The simplicity of the artwork makes it more palatable to young readers while conveying a sense of timelessness that transcends generations.

Diverse content

The Adventures of Tintin comics house 24 books in total, each in a new location with distinct cultures, vibrant communities, and newer mysteries to be uncovered. They span a wide range of genres and themes, ensuring that there is something for every reader. This variety, however, doesn't come without some controversy, as books like *Tintin in the Congo* have been flagged on several occasions for racial prejudice and stereotyping. In response, the author did make changes to inappropriate scenes in order to retract some of these negative representations.

Ayaan is a private A Level candidate.

The struggles of being older than your peers

"Now, I actually feel a lot more comfortable with my age and myself. Changing grades helped me make many new, good, and different friends, who changed my perspective on a lot of things,"

NADERA NAEEMA OHI

Stress, low self-esteem, and struggling with grades – these are some of the many things that are common to most students' academic and personal lives. These aspects of our lives are usually acceptable to talk about and considered to be important factors determining our well-being.

However, not every student's experiences are symmetric or given equal importance. One such issue is a student's age.

In our schooling system, it's quite common for children to be admitted to school two or three years later than most of their peers. In most cases, it might not be a very memorably difficult or disadvantageous circumstance for the student as they grow up. As Tanzika Tabassum, who studied

at Maple Leaf International School, stated, "When I was really young, I did feel a little insecure about my age because I was scared that I might get treated differently or even bullied. But as I grew up, I actually never had any problem telling my friends my age. I wouldn't say it affected my self-esteem in any way."

For most students, having a close group of friends from childhood, especially with varying ages, ensures that they never end up feeling very different for their own age. On the other hand, students who have had to shift down a grade or have unsupportive families tend to have more mixed or negative experiences of being older than their peers.

Bushra Taen, a private A Level candidate, has both bad and good memories of making friends from different age groups. She shared the struggles of trying to socialise in spaces where she was left

out or judged. She said, "People have judged me for being older than them, saying things like 'someone your age should know better', or 'it's weird to be friends with someone older' as if I'm more of an aunt. Worst of all, it sometimes felt like they see me as a loser who must definitely have failed, and that is why I was in the same class as them."

But eventually, despite these incidents, Taen found her fulfilment.

"Now, I actually feel a lot more comfortable with my age and myself. Changing grades helped me make many new, good, and different friends, who changed my perspective on a lot of things," she said.

Hridoy Chishty*, a private A Level student, has felt that their age has been a source of negativity from people in their life, which made finding friends or even connecting with their family much tougher than it would be for someone who does not have to face discrimination for their age.

"You are always reminded of the idea that you are 'falling behind' and that you are an example of exactly what parents and teachers don't want their kids to end up as – late in any aspect of life. People joking about your age, without even knowing the context of your life, is normalised and never verbalised as something wrong," said Chishty. A fairly common

practice for families is to age down their children on official certificates to be the same age as their peers. This, in Chishty's experience, has been held against them, even though the discrepancy in their actual age and the age according to their certificate was not a result of their own choice.

"Conversations in my family about this are not conversations as much as they are sudden bursts of anger, accompanied by unkind remarks meant to shame me for being older than my peers. In families where there's a general lack of communication, any kid undergoes a huge amount of shame and guilt due to the stigma of this topic."

"If you can't trust someone with your age, you definitely can't trust them with your struggles. It's hard not to feel isolated because of this anxiety at times, and it has made me hyper-independent in the last two to three years. Taking an extra

year academically put a complete 180-degree turn on my social life. I no longer had the friends I grew up with and it felt like being handed bricks and cement and having to rebuild a social life. I am constantly reminded of the fact that I'm falling behind, and it is something that erodes your self-esteem down to pebbles at some point," Chishty shared, giving their conclusion on how difficult such age discrimination has been for them.

For anyone going through tough experiences because of their age, you are not alone. As each of these people has pointed out, being older than your peers is okay. After all, only you know what you have gone through. Find people you trust, and focus on yourself and your own academic progress, and it will get easier to believe that life has good things in store for you.

*Names have been changed upon request.

