

“ TRANSCRIPT ”

This is Gudetama. It's an egg yolk with a little butt crack. Gudetama looks like a character someone gave up on... it has limbs but no fingers or toes. It has a mouth but no teeth — and yet people can't get enough of it. You can find it on backpacks, cups, airplanes, credit cards, and it even has its own themed cafe. But Gudetama's cute looks aren't the driving force behind its insane popularity. Its main attraction is its lazy personality. Gudetama comes from a Japanese company called Sanrio. You might have heard of them. They're the creators behind Hello Kitty.

In 2013, Sanrio held a company wide competition to come up with a food-based character. And once people voted, Gudetama didn't end up on top. Kirimichan, the salmon filet came in first — we actually started to release products based on the salmon filet and its friends. Gudetama, the lazy egg came in second, but we also released products based on Gudetama.... and it really really took off.

The appeal of Gudetama's melancholy stands in contrast to the American concept of cuteness, which is pretty straightforward. The idea of cute represents goodness and optimism, while pessimism tends to define evil. This is evident in some of Disney's early films.

SNOW WHITE Oh, they do look very delicious!

WITCH Yes...

As you can see — there's a clear divide between good and evil.

Villains are usually depicted as unappealing, scary, and old — draped in shadows and dark colors. They are meant to be identified as evil, which means that they can never be cute. But in Japan, there's more of a gray area to this. The word "kawaii" is widely used to describe the quality of being like a child — which means that you can be cute and lazy at the same time.

The term emerged in the 1970s and became a big part of Japanese culture. It was shown through fashion, handwriting, and even behavior. And many Japanese artists and academics believed that

this popular culture around cuteness happened for a reason. In Japan, the kawaii culture is often linked to the country's post-WWII years.

TRUMAN ... a message from the Japanese government.

I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration...

The idea is that because of its trauma and defeat, the country leaned into its vulnerability. And since then, the concept of kawaii has grown and even formed smaller subgroups.

This is kimo-kawaii which is sometimes also called gro-kawaii. And there's Yuru-kawaii. Yuru means relaxed and calm. According to cartooning expert Aya Kakeda, this particular group became popular because of the stress in modern society.

She points out that in the US, people are drawn to spas and meditation for relaxation. But in Japan, Yuru's calm appearance brings comfort to a lot of people. You can also see a shift in Sanrio's characters throughout the years. They've started giving them a personality to make them more relatable.

When Hello Kitty came out in 1974 — she was more traditionally cute than Gudetama but she has remained somewhat emotionless. She doesn't even have a mouth to smile or frown with. And that makes her more of a blank canvas; she can be whatever we want her to be. But many people feel a connection with Gudetama because of its gloomy personality. This approach to cuteness extends beyond appearances — it evokes a reaction.

These characters can make you laugh, or feel relaxed, and you can relate to them by observing

their personality. So at a time of confusion and turmoil all around the world — maybe this is just what we need. An egg yolk with a little bum, that's just done dealing with life.