At 20, "SpongeBob SquarePants" still one of the best kids' shows around

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Twenty years later, that pineapple under the sea is still loved.

People may not believe it, but "SpongeBob SquarePants" turned 20 on May 1. The adored show first aired on the Nickelodeon channel on May 1, 1999. It quickly became a pop-culture sensation that shaped a generation of humor. It remains relevant even into its original viewers' adulthood.

Few television shows have been as popular as "SpongeBob." The series spawned a Broadway musical and two movies, plus another film coming in 2020. It has also brought about comic books, video games, theme-park rides and even a wax model.

The show's anniversary will be celebrated this summer on Nickelodeon. "SpongeBob's Big Birthday Blowout" will be a television special like no other. It will mix live action and animation. The show's voice actors will play human versions of SpongeBob, Patrick, Mr. Krabs and others.

How, exactly, did a talking sponge and a lazy starfish become popular? Why do people love these characters so much?

"SpongeBob" Treats Kids Like Adults

The first "SpongeBob" viewers were mostly people who are now in their late 20s and early 30s. The show became popular by treating the kids who watched it as adults.

Nothing about "SpongeBob" is ever cutesy or condescending. Its characters are adults, if a little childish in their behavior. And "SpongeBob" makes adulthood seem fun and appealing. Its version of growing up is what kids themselves would dream up: working at your favorite place, hanging out with your friends all the time and living in a cool pad with your pet.
The series also makes jokes about the worst part of getting older: losing your sense of fun. Squidward is a straight-laced rule-follower who is always trying to crush SpongeBob's carefree spirit.

"SpongeBob's" odd sense of humor was far ahead of its time. Videos and screenshots from years-old episodes show up often in today's memes. Sometimes it can be hard to describe how you feel. A "SpongeBob" meme from years ago might do the trick.

When you watch famous episodes, it's easy to see the show's quiet brilliance. The jokes cover everything from bodily noises to the government.

**A Show That's Both Strange And Smart**

"SpongeBob" makes smart jokes about daily life just like "The Simpsons" and "Family Guy." Both of those shows were created for adults. "SpongeBob" is aimed at a younger audience but stays smart. One funny part of the show is the presence of superhero characters Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy. Instead of being young and strong, they are old men. Other funny parts include references to famous people and movies.

Writers for the show were never afraid to be strange, loud and daring.

A few years ago, people in their 40s and 50s got a treat. Some of their favorite cartoons when they were kids — "Transformers" and "G.I. Joe" — were made into big-budget movies.

Things from the early 2000s are becoming popular all over again. The "SpongeBob" anniversary is right on time.

The brilliance of "SpongeBob" is that it appeals to both kids and adults just the way it is: peppy, a little grating and totally strange.

Directions: Use the information found in the article to identify the **best** response for each item.

### R1: Cite text evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly

1. **Reread the article's introduction [paragraphs 1-5].**
   - Select the sentence that shows that people want to enjoy the "SpongeBob" characters in many different ways.
     a) People may not believe it, but "SpongeBob SquarePants" turned 20 on May 1.
     b) It quickly became a pop-culture sensation that shaped a generation of humor.
     c) Few television shows have been as popular as "SpongeBob."
     d) It has also brought about comic books, video games, theme-park rides and even a wax model.

### R1: Cite text evidence to support an analysis of what the text says implicitly

2. **Read the paragraph from the section "SpongeBob Treats Kids Like Adults."**
   "SpongeBob's" odd sense of humor was far ahead of its time. Videos and screenshots from years-old episodes show up often in today's memes. Sometimes it can be hard to describe how you feel. A "SpongeBob" meme from years ago might do the trick.
   Which of the following is an accurate explanation of what this paragraph means?
     a) People use old "SpongeBob" scenes to show how they feel even today.
     b) "SpongeBob" is more popular today than when it was first released.
     c) Everyone can recognize popular memes from "SpongeBob."
     d) "SpongeBob" makes jokes that help little kids deal with their feelings.

### R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases

3. **Read the sentence from the introduction:**
   "It remains relevant even into its original viewers’ adulthood."
   What does the word *relevant* mean in the context of the article?
     a) SpongeBob still reflects today’s culture even though it is 20 years old.
     b) SpongeBob can be watched in reruns.
     c) SpongeBob is the most popular television show among adults.
     d) SpongeBob is special because it focuses on adult characters enjoying adulthood.

### R2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text

4. **Which statement is a central idea of the article?**
   a) "SpongeBob Squarepants" will celebrate its 20 year anniversary with a special show on Nickelodeon.
   b) "SpongeBob Squarepants" features a fast-food-restaurant-owning crab and a squirrel.
   c) "SpongeBob Squarepants" is watched by more people than ever before.
   d) "SpongeBob Squarepants" wanted kids to think that being an adult was more fun than it is.