THE COMEDIC SHIFT IN VOLTRON: LEGENDARY DEFENDER

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I, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE,
HAVE APPROVED THIS THESIS

THE COMEDIC SHIFT IN VOLTROn: LEGENDARY DEFENDER

BY

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THE COMEDIC SHIFT

ABSTRACT

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The Netflix Original Series, *Voltron: Legendary Defender* (VLD) (2016), by creators Joaquim Dos Santos and Lauren Montgomery, is an animated, science fiction series targeted toward young viewers (5+). As a reboot of the famous Japanese anime series, *Beast King GoLion*, and the *Voltron* Franchise, VLD’s main plot focus is on an intergalactic war between five teenagers from Earth against an advanced alien race. These five characters are chosen to pilot five different robotic lions, which come together to create the powerful robot Voltron, the “Defender of the Universe.”

In addition to defending, humor is also present in VLD. By comparing the comedy in episodes from Season 1 and 2 to episodes in Season 7 and 8, this thesis looks at the specific instances and characters associated with comic relief. The three main characters include Lance, Hunk and Coran. By recording the frequency of jokes in relation to these characters, the most popular instances are identified. My research question therefore is: how has the comedy changed throughout VLD?

This thesis examined these episodes and characters through a classical approach, specifically using Cicero’s five canons of rhetoric. Doing so helped identify the specific choices made by the show’s program creators, regarding how they chose to appeal to their targeted audience and intended audience of young adults.

Keywords: humor in children's television, audience influence, *Voltron: Legendary Defender*
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the many functions of television is to create a source of entertainment and to appeal to viewers’ interests. When it comes to fictional series, this is often achievable through interesting storylines, meaningful messages, and even through humorous characters or events. However, this can raise questions of what exactly is considered “funny” and humorous for a television show, and how comedy is enforced, especially in children's animated television.

One example of such television is the 2016 Netflix Original Series, Voltron: Legendary Defender (VLD). With VLD having a fan base consisting of more young adults rather than the supposed target audience of children, the creators have to find a variety of ways to attract young viewers and engage them with their interests. The creators of VLD, Joaquim Dos Santos and Lauren Montgomery, are both known for their work in other popular animated television series such as Avatar: The Last Airbender (2005), and The Legend of Korra (2012). By partaking in this new project with Voltron, their work helps brings back memories for the old fans, as well as attracts new ones.

VLD is an animated, science fiction reboot series of the famous Japanese anime series, Beast King GoLion, and the Voltron Franchise. Other variations in the franchise include Voltron: Defender of the Universe (1984) and Voltron Force (2011). VLD, being the latest addition, has a total of eight seasons, with a premise of an intergalactic war between five chosen teenagers from Earth and an entire alien empire. Voltron, known as “The Defender of the Universe,” is the only weapon able bring peace to the universe. It is a giant robot comprised of five colored-robot lions, each piloted by a paladin from Earth: Shiro, Keith, Lance, Hunk and Pidge.
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Throughout the paladins’ journey to bring peace, as violence ensures, so does comedy. The majority of the comedic instances throughout the series typically involved one of these three characters: Lance McClain, a 17-year-old, Cuban-American and a self-proclaimed “ladies-man”; Tsuyoshi “Hunk” Garret, a heavy-set, 17-year-old Samoan-American food lover; and Coran Hieronymus Wimbledon Smythe, a 500-year-old elder Altean, a member from an alien species.

Looking at these three main characters will help answer my research question, which is: how has comedy changed as the series progressed? To answer this inquiry, I used Cicero’s canons of rhetoric to determine ways in which messages were delivered in comedic manners. This search model helped us understand how the writers’ certain choices can influence a viewer’s perception on what they (viewers) consider funny.

The thesis includes a literature review, discussing six scholarly sources and connecting them to the themes of humor and audience. A methodology section follows, with a more detailed explanation of how the comedic instances will be recorded and analyzed within a selected 56 episodes. Subsequently an analysis and interpretation of the comedic instances is the next section, specifically applying Cicero’s canons of rhetoric. The final portion of the thesis is the conclusion, discussing the findings, limitations and future suggestions.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review first discusses the importance of current research as it relates to how television impacts its viewers, followed by the relationship between humor children and children’s shows. In addition, I will also address the current issue, as there is little research on animated children’s television series and its relation to comedy. The lack of research on humor and its relationships with animated children shows leads to my research questions and selection
of using VLD.

Television has countless of impacts on its viewers. Commercials for a product can draw viewers’ interest and encourage them to shop. The way news reporters provide information can influence people’s perceptions on real world issues. Even scripted television shows, whether live or cartoon, find a way to leave lasting impressions. One of the most frequent TV viewers is children. They are one of the most susceptible audiences toward TV influence.

For example, in their journal article entitled “Cartoon’s Effect in Changing Children Mental Response and Behavior,” Habib and Soliman (2015) analyzed the positive and negative effects cartoons had on the mentality and behavior of children. The amount of hours children watched animated cartoons weekly were documented, along with the specific content these cartoons included, such as violence and sexual comedy. Also observed was how certain scenes affected children's real-world understanding and children’s outside behavior. The study showcased how cartoons and television have a greater influence over its young viewers depending on the content. This can be a useful source in understanding why cartoons appeal to young viewers and how certain devices, such as violence and even humor, are used to appeal to children.

There has been more research conducted on the content of children’s cartoons and their lasting impressions. Fyfe (2006) also analyzed how cartoon content could affect the minds and perceptions of its young viewers. In “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing: A Content Analysis of Children’s Television,” the amount of violence that is evident in popular children's animated cartoons is highlighted. By analyzing multiple television shows on networks such as Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Disney and ABC Family Channel, instances were recorded to fit in with specific violent categories. Children’s programming content ranged from violence, to
offensive language, to sexual innuendos. Though Fyfe’s report focused on the violence present in the majority of cartoon television series, many of the instances coincided with comedy and humor points, as most were portrayed in a humorous fashion. This can be a viable source in understanding the use of humor in children's animated television shows as a means to desensitize viewers from violent themes. In addition, this also allows for a comparison on the different ways humor is used to affect the understanding of viewers.

Humor is often used across all of these televised mediums and allows for viewers to feel engaged and interested. Comedy also plays a part in influencing viewers’ perceptions. In her review of research literature “Humor and the Young Child,” Lyon (2006) introduces the idea that humor promotes a positive and healthy outlook on life among children. In addition, humor is a social phenomenon that can be learned and developed over time. It can also be influenced by one’s personality, age and gender. In relation to television, there are certain effects television and media have on one’s sense of humor, especially a child’s sense of humor. This helps in analyzing how the comedy in VLD is used to purposely to influence an individual’s perceptions on what is considered funny or comedic.

The effect television can have on a viewer’s perception of humor can correlate with what certain devices and elements cartoons use for comedy. Bartlett (2015) studied Danger Mouse (1981), a British animated children's television series from the 1980’s. This series revolves around the adventures of a mouse spy, where most of the humor in the series lies right behind the parody of many cultural contexts, such as the James Bond (1962) series. Other humor points include pun-based jokes, characters “breaking the fourth wall” (directly addressing the audience), and the overall contrast of having a “unflappable” and “for-squared” character as the main hero (Bartlett, 2015). The humor incorporated into this animated series allows for playful
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storytelling and can be seen as relatable and comedic to young viewers. The use of puns, irony, and slapstick humor illustrate the role or certain comedic elements in regard to appealing to people’s interests. In conjunction to VLD, this brings to light the use of humor in the Netflix animated series as a means to relate to a younger audience.

Though not just found in cartoons, humor is also present in live-action television, such as in children’s educational programming. Bryant, Hezel, and Zillmann (1979) analyzed the use of humor in children's educational programs in their journal article “Humor in children’s educational television.” They chose four educational television programs — Captain Kangaroo (1955), Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood (1968), Sesame Street (1969), and The Electric Company (1971) — to observe the use of humor as an attention-getting device for young viewers. These authors identified and divided humor into three units: tendentious, nonsense and presocial. By recording the frequency and duration of funny instances, this study found that the producers of the different shows used humor as a way to add levity to their messages and influence their audience’s perspective and attention. This study categorizes the different types of humor used in television, and can help raise the question of other popular comedic elements used in children's television to define humor and engage a young audience.

There has even been research done on humor in relation to animated films, such as in López Gonzalez’s (2017) journal article “Humorous elements and translation in animated feature films: DreamWorks (2001-2012).” Fourteen selected DreamWorks animated films were analyzed to conceptualize their relation with intertextual humor. Analyses were done on films such as Shrek (2001), Madagascar (2005) and Kung Fu Panda (2008), to identify the most humorous elements and how they were used to gage viewers’ interest and enjoyment. The findings concluded the frequency of certain humorous elements, including both visually and slapstick
THE COMEDIC SHIFT

humor. Just like the films used for analyses in this study, VLD is also a work from the
*Dreamworks* franchise. López Gonzalez’s work can be used to compare how *Dreamworks*
incorporates comedy into their films and shows. This can allow for an even deeper understanding
of how humor is portrayed across *Dreamworks* shows and what they interpret to be funny and
comedic.

In summation, there has been a great amount of research on the impact television has on
its viewers’ perceptions. However there is very little research on how animated children’s
television has an influence on children, even more so in relation to comedy. With the lack of
research on humor and children’s animated television, this raises the question on how humor is
used in children’s cartoon series to obtain their interest, attention and enjoyment. The remainder
of this thesis uses VLD as an artifact in identifying humor’s role as a form of engaging their
young targeted audience, even after there being a shift in viewer demographic.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

According to the official Netflix page, VLD is labeled under “TV Shows, TV Cartoons,
Kids’ TV, Kid’s TV for ages [5 to 12].” With a show that revolves around intergalactic war, loss
and death, sacrifice and violence, the question is raised of how a show can appeal to a younger
audience to appropriately be labeled a kid show. VLD creators incorporated comedy, humor and
lighthearted scenes to attract their target audience of children. At the same time, they still aimed
keep older viewers interested through plot advancement and character development.

This thesis analyzed a total of 56 episodes in four selective seasons of VLD, recording
the amount of comedic moments in each episode, and the frequency it occurs through each
season. The amount and types of comedy were compared from Seasons 1 and 2, to Seasons 7
and 8. The reason for selecting these four seasons is that they are the first and last seasons of the show. Collecting data from these four seasons determined how the humor changed as the plot and storyline advanced.

Per each season, these episodes were analyzed and evaluated:

**TABLE 1. List of Episodes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season 1</th>
<th>Season 2</th>
<th>Season 7</th>
<th>Season 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Rise of Voltron</td>
<td>1. Across the Universe</td>
<td>1. A Little Adventure</td>
<td>1. Launch Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Some Assembly Required</td>
<td>2. The Depths</td>
<td>2. The Road Home</td>
<td>2. Shadows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tears of the Balmera</td>
<td>5. The Ark of Taujeer</td>
<td>5. The Ruins</td>
<td>5. The Grudge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. Lion’s Pride, Part 2</td>
<td>13. The End is the Beginning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This thesis looked at which specific characters were associated with more of the humorous scenes and given the most comedic lines. The characters this thesis focused on were: Lance McClain, Tsuyoshi “Hunk” Garret and Coran Hieronymus Wimbleton Smythe. For the remainder of this thesis, the characters will be identified solely by the following names: Lance, Hunk and Coran.

The search model used for the analysis of these seasons was through the classical approach, using Cicero’s five canons of rhetoric:
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Style: The specific vocabulary and word choice of the jokes, such as patterns of word choice and figurative language.

Delivery: The manner a joke or message was delivered through nonverbals, such as gestures, tone and appearance.

Invention: Using creativity when delivering jokes or in comedy scenes; creators creatively using humor to deliver the message in their own way.

Arrangement: The organization or structure of message, such as general patterns or how a joke is set up.

Memory: How these jokes created a lasting impression of the characters.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Findings

Below is the total number of jokes per episode in relation to the three characters. Instances recorded ranged from types of jokes, to puns, to sarcasm, and even to physical instances such as falls. Following each chart is a description of the plot of each season:

TABLE 2. Recorded Amount of Jokes in Season 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Episode Title</th>
<th>Total Number of Jokes</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Lance</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Hunk</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Coran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Rise of Voltron</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some Assembly Required</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Return of the Gladiator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fall of the Castle of Lions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tears of the Balmera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Taking Flight</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Return of the Balmera</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rebirth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Crystal Venom</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 2. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Episode Title</th>
<th>Total Number of Jokes</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Lance</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Hunk</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Coran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Collection and Extraction</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Black Paladin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Season 1 introduced the main paladins of Voltron: Shiro, Keith, Pidge, Lance and Hunk, as well as their new alien allies: Princess Allura and Coran from planet Altea. The season revolved around the growth of each character as they became a central part in forming Voltron, a giant robot made up of five magic, robot lions. Zarkon, an evil alien warlord who has taken control of the universe for the past 10,000 years, was also introduced as the main villain. Corrupted by dark magic, he seeks Voltron to be the most powerful ruler in the universe.

TABLE 3. Recorded Amount of Jokes in Season 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Episode Title</th>
<th>Total Number of Jokes</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Lance</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Hunk</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Coran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Across the Universe</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Into the depths</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shiro’s Escape</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Greening the Cube</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Eye of the Storm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Ark of Taujeer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Space Mall</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Blade of Mamora</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Belly of the Weblum</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Escape from Beta Traz</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Stayin’ Alive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Best Laid Plans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Blackout</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Season 2 continued with Zarkon as the main villain, with the paladins discovering he had more history with Voltron than they originally thought. They also learned there were several good Galra (Zarkon’s Alien race) secretly working to overthrow Zarkon to bring peace. The paladins worked together with fellow Galran characters as they tried to defeat Zarkon once and
for all. The death of Shiro changed the team dynamic for future seasons, and the injury of Zarkon led to the introduction of a new villain: Lotor, Zarkon’s son.

TABLE 4. Recorded Amount of Jokes in Season 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Episode Title</th>
<th>Total Number of Jokes</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Lance</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Hunk</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Coran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A Little Adventure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Road Home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Way Forward</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Feud!</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Ruins</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Journey Within</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Last Stand, Part 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Last Stand, Part 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Know Your Enemy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Heart of the Lion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trial By Fire</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lion’s Pride, Part 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lion’s Pride, Part 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Season 7 continued after the defeat of Lotor, Zarkon’s son. After defeating Lotor, the paladins began their journey back to Earth. Along the way, Earth was invaded by Sendak, a Galran warlord, who became the main antagonist in this season. The last half of the season focused on the battle against him as they tried to prevent Earth from being destroyed.

TABLE 5: Recorded Amount of Jokes in Season 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Episode Title</th>
<th>Total Number of Jokes</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Lance</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Hunk</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Coran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Launch Date</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shadows</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Prisoner’s Dilemma</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Battle Scars</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Grudge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Day-Forty-Seven</td>
<td>4</td>
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TABLE 5. Continued

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<th>Jokes Pertaining to Hunk</th>
<th>Jokes Pertaining to Coran</th>
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Season 8 revolved around the search and fight against Honerva, Zarkon’s wife and Lotor’s mother. After the death of both her husband and son, she used her powers to create ro-beasts even more powerful than Voltron. Her goal was to go back in time or to another reality where both her husband and son were alive, not caring if she hurt or destroyed other beings/realities in the process. Unable to succeed, she threatened to destroy the rift against realities and destroy all life. Voltron was able to defeat her and the series ended with humans from Earth and alien species living in unison as they rebuilt the universe, free from evil.

As evident in the diagrams, there is a significant difference in number of comedic scenes and jokes in the first two seasons compared to the last two. Season 1 had at least two jokes per episode, and all but one episode had at least one joke in Season 2. When it comes to Season 7 and 8 however, there is a drastic change in amount of humor included. Season 7 had a total of seven episodes with at least three jokes per episode, while the remaining five episodes had no jokes, at least in conjunction with Lance, Hunk and/or Coran. Season 8 also had seven episodes with at least one joke, and six episodes with no jokes, once again in conjunction with Lance, Hunk and/or Coran. Though there were comedic moments and jokes from side characters, they were not counted for in this analysis since they were indirect.

Using Cicero’s lenses, the rest of the analysis will discuss the types of comedy that was most prevalent, such as patterns in style and delivery, along with the varied arrangement of the comedy. This thesis will then continue to discuss the progression of VLD, and later its effect on
the development and lasting impression, or memory, of the three characters. Following will be an analysis of how a shift in audience viewership, leads to a shift in their intentions and goals for the show.

Types of Comedy

Comedy comes in all sizes and forms. In VLD specifically, the type of comedy founded varied. Jokes and comedic scenes ranged from sarcastic comments and retorts, to puns, to nonverbal gestures. Of course it depended on the context of the scene, and the character who was partaking in a joke. Regardless, as varied as the types of jokes were in the series, there were a few recurring patterns found, especially for each character.

In the early seasons, most of Lance’s scenes involved him flirting with women. Being labeled as the “self-proclaimed ladies’ man,” his character tended to make advancements on any women he saw beautiful, human or alien alike. His flirting often had nothing to do with the progression of the scene, as it only enforced his bravado character. A few of his pick-up lines and attempts include:

I’m Lance, and you’re right here in my arms. (S1, E1)
Talking? Eating? Are you asking me out on a date? (S1, E6)
I would absolutely travel across the galaxy to find you. (S2, E6)

Other attempts Lance made throughout the show were through nonverbal gestures, such as winking, smirking, flexing, and making his signature finger guns at whoever catches his eyes. To go along with this flirtatious personality, he was also portrayed to be boastful. He acted confident, often complimenting himself and highlighting his most prominent features. Whether true or not, many of his self-boasting compliments were incorporated as a form of comedy within a scene. Some of his comments include:

Hold up, let me guess. Takes the most handsome slash best pilot of the bunch? (S1, E1)
Those rays are super cool, just like me. (S1, E7)
Sharpshooter is on the way. It’s my new nickname that I gave myself. (S2, E10)
When it comes to the later seasons, the comedy associated with Lance’s character shifts. Leading into Season 7 and 8, Lance is portrayed as “the dumb” one of the group. Scenes had him asking unintelligent questions, making obvious comments that often resulted in eye rolls and annoyed looks from the rest of the members. There is even an entire episode in Season 7 dedicated to this newly comedic point. This shift in type of comedy and the effect it has on his character development in the show will be analyzed later in the thesis.

Another type of recurring joke in the series involves Hunk and his love for food. In the show he was seen as a gourmand, always hungry and having food on his mind. The type of humor that involved Hunk often included side comments during serious conversations that involved food or eating. Examples of his comedic lines include:

- You guys thinking what I’m thinking? [Shiro responds] ...actually I was thinking about desert. (S1, E2)
- Oh, I’m hungry again. I hope some food goo comes oozing out of these walls. (S1, E8)
- That looks like a big delicious curly fry. (S2, E4)
- Do these raptors have eggs? Maybe we can steal some and make breakfast. (S7, E5)

Hunk’s style of comedy involved using food as imagery and metaphors. There are times he used food to make sense of a situation or express how he was feeling. Other times the creators showcased his hunger through a rumbling stomach or drooling facial expression. This was then followed by an eating comment. Usually Hunk was seen interrupting a serious conversation with a joke unrelated to a scene. Similar to the responses Lance got, the rest of the characters responded with annoyed looks, or completely overpassed his comment.

Also like Lance, the amount of jokes and comments Hunks made regarding food tend to decrease in number in the later seasons. In both Season 7 and 8, Hunk’s character focused less on food as a joke and more as an art form. Because of this, there isn’t a consistent pattern of comedy that follows Hunk in the last two seasons. The rest of his jokes range from sarcasm to puns. What
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Hunk’s shift in comedy means in terms of the writer's intentions will be analyzed later in the thesis as well.

Coran’s character can be seen as the epitome of comic relief. Similar to the stereotypical “quirky uncle,” his comedic actions and comments were very much at random throughout the season. There was no identifiable theme to organize his jokes or comments in. However, with every scene that didn’t involve a life-threatening battle against a villain, Coran can always be seen cracking a joke or partaking in a funny scene. A few specific instances involving Coran are:

- Having the slipperies, an alien virus that causes excessive sweating. (S2, E5)
- Singing “Exus, plexis, ceedus, flee,” the alien-equivalent to the ABC’s. (S7, E2)
- By passing as a Galran guard to rescue the paladins from a prison ship. (S7, E3)
- Partaking in a yelmore- (an alien animal) -calling contest. (S8, E8)

A pattern found in jokes pertaining to Coran’s character was his delivery. Often jokes and funny scenes that involved Coran were followed by an exaggerated animation style. His facial expression, his body gestures, and even his pitch and tone would all differ when he was telling a joke verses when he was serious. Whenever he was partaking in a humorous scene, it was quite the opposite; having loud voice, animated movements and a variety of facial gestures. Though there were no identifiable patterns within the types of jokes or comments he made, there were still outside factors that contributed to his character as comic relief. As the comedy in the series progressively decreased, so did the amount of comedy associated with Coran’s character. This change in character was also analyzed, along with Lance and Hunk’s character and their role in conjunction with comedy.

This is not to say that comedy in the show was only found within just these three characters. Like briefly mentioned earlier, there were more comedic scenes and jokes found in
the series that were not from Lance, Hunk or Coran. Other main characters would sometimes add their own side comment or partake in funny scenes as well. For example, comedy associated with Pidge often involved her love for science and technology. Being “the brain” of the group, she would sometimes go on tangents as she excitedly explained her new inventions, often forgetting her friends had little to no idea what she is talking about. Her wide range of scientific vocabulary usually resulted in confused stares from her team. Other times her character was animated to visibly express her love for advanced technology, such as having stars or hearts in her eyes.

In addition to the female character Pidge, Allura (an alien princess from the planet Altea) was shown to have a few funny scenes as well. Though her character arc revolved around her efforts to defeat Zarkon and strengthen her team dynamic with the paladins, she was still given a few comedic scenes. She is seen playing with her pet mice for example, having scenes where she’s gossiping with them about the other paladins or letting them play with her hair. Other times comedy with Allura is included during intense situations, like when she’s infiltrating a Galran ship and must disguise herself by passing as a guard. Either way, she had significantly less humorous moments; this demonstrates that comedy in the show wasn’t just excluded to Lance, Hunk and Coran. However, this thesis will continue to solely focus on these three characters, considering they contributed most to the amount of comedy and jokes in the series. Later the thesis I will also discuss how their specific comments and actions developed throughout the show.
Comedic Arrangement

As stated, comedy associated with each character differed throughout the series. Though the comedy in the show was reliant on the characters and their role, it also has matter to do with the placement of their comments in a scene or episode. When it came to the arrangement of comedy, most of the scenes and jokes from Lance, Hunk and Coran would be included in one of three ways:

1. Jokes would be included during a serious scene or conversation, where one of the three characters would interject with their own comment that would be unrelated to the advancement of the scene and/or plot.

2. A scene would be dedicated for comedic purposes; this scene would also be unrelated to the advancement of the episode and/or plot.

3. An entire episode would be dedicated to comedy, which could also be unrelated to the advancement of the plot.

The use of one of these three methods varied depending on the season. For example, having comedy incorporated during a specific scene was mostly evident in earlier seasons. At the start of the show, Lance, Hunk or Coran would often interject during a group meeting or conversation and make a remark unrelated to their topic of discussion.

Take, for example, Hunk’s food jokes. Often, he would insert a comment about food during a serious conversation that would fail to have any meaning or influence to the situation. A specific instance is in Season 2, Episode 3, where the paladins are interrogating a Galran intruder, obtaining more information about his secret base. Ulaz, the Galran, informed the characters that in order to get to his base, they have to travel through a space pocket. In response, Hunk mentioned the space pocket “Is like a space taco. Or a space calzone. Or a space-reme soup
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dumpling and we’re the soup.” He then inquired, “Hey, is there a cafeteria on this thing?” These types of comments diverse from the original conversation, and only enforces his hungry character. The imagery and metaphors he used can help portray a picture for young audiences, all while still supporting his character as a glutton. There are many more instances similar to these in the first few seasons, not only adding to a character’s persona, but also adding to the humor of the scene.

Other times, there would be entire side plots/scenes within one episode with running jokes or funny situations. Scenes like these were included throughout the entire series, though were still most prevalent in earlier seasons than later ones. The first episode of Season 2 includes a comedic scene from the start. Continuing from the last episode of Season 1, the lions are separated from each other as they all entered in different wormholes. Allura and Coran, who are still in the ship, were stuck in a continuing time warp as they tried to get the castle’s systems working. Through the wormhole they encountered a black void. With every collision, the scene reset, with Coran becoming younger with every impact. Coran continued aging younger as the scene continued, going from young adult, to a moody teenager, to a rowdy kid, to finally a defenseless baby. The point of the scene is to show Allura struggle with a broken ship and her attempts to find her teammates, however the entirety of the scene having Coran de-age is for the sake of comedic purposes. Scenes such as these are incorporated throughout, even in later seasons. However, the most predominant use of comedy in Seasons 7 and 8, are through entire episodes themselves.

In comparison with the earlier seasons, Season 7 and 8 included more comedic episodes in its entirety. While Seasons 1 and 2 had humorous instances and jokes scattered throughout each couple of episodes, the last two seasons dedicated entire episodes toward comedy, one
example being Episode 4 in Season 7, “The Feud!” In this episode, the paladins were in another universe on a game show titled “Garfle Warfle Snick,” a game aimed to mimicking the famous “Family Feud.” The episode involved Bob, the alien game show host, running the competition between the paladins and their opponents, who consist of Zarkon, Haggar (Honverva), Lotor and another Galran general named Morvok. This entire episode had little to do with the advancement of the plot. The first half of Season 7 in general had the paladins traveling across the universe trying to find their way back home to Earth. This specific episode basically took place in an alternate reality and had no relation to their journey. The most it does is reinforces Lance’s character, portraying him as “the dumb one” as he answers questions wrong and loses the game. If anything, this episode can be labeled as one of the starting points of where comedy associated with Lance shifts from flirting to being portrayed as “dumb.” Aside from this ongoing joke with Lance, the episode had no remarkable features to add to the plot; it solely adds to Lance’s role as a character and comedy for the season.

Season 8 also has two to three whole episodes dedicated for comedic purposes. Season 8, Episode 7, “Day Forty-Seven” and Episode 8 “Clear Day.” Episode 7 is shown through the eyes of a video camera as Ryan Kinkade, a side character, records the daily happenings in the Atlas ship, a space vessel created by Earth. Although the comedy doesn't necessarily revolve around the three main characters, the episode in its entirety can be classified as a humorous one. “Clear Day,” Episode 8, had the paladins and other side characters attending a carnival-like festival on an alien planet. The viewers see the paladins playing carnival games, winning competitions and going on rides. In the midst of the hunt for Honerva, the paladins still found time to enjoy themselves and have fun. There is a noticeable difference in the way humor is used in different seasons, the reason being the advancement of a more mature plotline.
Comedic Invention

The way humor is incorporated goes a long way in the creation of the show and the arrangement of comedy varies per seasons, this only adds to the development of the show as a whole. As the series advances however, so do certain darker elements of the plot. VLD revolves around a war, and with war often comes violence, casualties, destruction, and death. Throughout the series, beyond the sole four seasons selected for research, there is a building of more mature content as the story advances, content that isn’t necessarily considered appropriate for a kid’s program. Many mature and dark components in VLD’s storyline include enslavement, torture, mind control, electrocution, murder, genocide, and almost the entire destruction of reality. There are even graphic scenes depicting Lotor’s melted corpse, for example, or aliens trapped in life-sucking incubators. Honerva, the antagonist in the final seasons, is seen trying to end the universe’s existence all together. These sub-topics and elements create a completely different image of the show compared to when VLD first started.

Earlier seasons of VLD displayed a more wholesome theme as a kid’s show. It emphasized team bonding, friendship, and hard work, all which added to the innocent-like aspect of a kids program. Not only that, but even battle scenes were engaging. The colorful animation, the laser and sound effects, even Voltron’s fight against Robeasts, were all aimed to attract young viewers, and even add to kid’s interest in the toy market. The comedy especially found in Seasons 1 and 2 only continued to aid in engaging their young target audience. With more sporadic slapstick humor and recurring joke patterns, earlier seasons had a more innocent take on character interaction and on the plot in general. The inclusion of Hunk’s random food comments and Coran’s quirky personality, for example, added to the comedic progression of the series. There was a certain formula followed, for whenever serious conversations or scenes were to
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arise, one of these characters would come with a joke to lighten the mood. It was almost expectant for Lance to make a joke or Hunk to bring up food in every scene. There was consistency in the earlier seasons that kept the flow of comedy going, and this type of consistency tends to lack in later seasons. For that reason, there’s a drastic change and different feel between the first and last seasons.

However, just because there are more dark and advanced elements in the final seasons doesn’t mean comedy still doesn’t serve a purpose. The jokes and scenes are used as a form of balance between the lightheartedness of the show, and the severity of the plot. The use of comedy and its incorporation in the last two seasons, though far less, is still strategically placed. As the series advances in more dark content, the possible plot can be overwhelming for their target audience of kids. For this reason we get episodes like “The Feud!,” “Day-Forty-Seven” and “Clear Day.” It takes away from the immense amount of information and storyline, bringing a more lively sense to it. Without dedicated comedic episodes, the entire season would be completely plot based. With elements such as mind control and death, it can appear overwhelming for a children's TV show.

Overall, as the later seasons focus more on plot advancement, character development and overall mature scenes, comedy is seen as less of an attracting component for viewers, and more as an alleviating component for its dark content. It still has its role in appealing to young viewers, however its role slightly shifts from its true intent. In conjunction to the three characters, the shift in comedy and specific placement of it only adds to their development. The lack of comedy in the last two seasons, as it pertains to Lance and Hunk in general, provides an opportunity for more of their development. This shows there’s more to their character than just a comic relief.
Memory Through Comedy

As much as comedy was used for engaging audiences and alleviated the heavy plot, it was also used to create a lasting impression of the characters. The way comedy is used in VLD is not solely to balance the amount of serious and humorous concepts, but also to help represent and develop each of the characters in their own way. The specific jokes, comments and scenes that Lance, Hunk and Coran partook in were to viewers remember and characterize their role and advancement in the series.

Let’s take Lance, for example. As stated earlier in the thesis, there is a continuous pattern throughout the first few seasons of him flirting with women, whether they be human or alien. However, Lances jokes aren’t simply limited to flirting though, and in general most of his offside comments are used to bring more levity to a scene. Jeremy Shada, Lance’s voice actor, stated in an interview that “usually his lines are kind of there to lighten the mood....and try to make people laugh” (When Nerds Attack, 2017). Lance’s original role in the show is for the sake of comic relief from the start. And it is through Lance’s character that VLD utilizes comedy to create a more enjoyable show for younger audiences. Even his confidence is enforced through comedy. All of his lines pertaining to how great he is adds to his self-perceived ego, and incorporated to add to the humor of a scene or conversation.

Yet with this boasting comes a deeper meaning to his character. The VLD writers use Lance’s comedy in a unique way to demonstrate his self-esteem issues. Not only do the writers use Lance as a source of comedy for outside viewers, but to help develop his maturity in later seasons. Dos Santos mentioned that Lance’s “bravado” is not just used for comedic purposes, but also for a self-defense mechanism against his self-esteem (AfterBuzz TV Animation, 2019). All of his insecurities add to his confidence, self-boasting and even flirting. As the show continues,
Lance is seen battling these inner insecurities and, eventually, relying on less humor as he matures into a man.

There tends to be a shift in the type of comedy associated with Lance in later seasons however. As Lance begins to develop more serious feelings for Allura, he no longer resorts to flirting with other females. This takes away from his playboy persona as he becomes more romantically mature and committed to one relationship. With a more developed romantic arch, the VLD writers Montgomery and Dos Santos, have to find a new source of comedy to associate Lance with and ultimately decide to implement this “dumb-like” character. As mentioned before, the episode “The Feud!,” for example, helps enforce this new source of comedy in regards to Lance. Not as prevalent in earlier seasons, this new running joke with Lance continues to support his character as one of comic relief, even if the specific comedy he partakes in changed itself. Yet the scarcity of his jokes and attitude are due to his growth as an individual. Though that's slightly carried on through the rest of the last two seasons, he is still more developed compared to earlier seasons, and his overall character is more focused on the danger and consequences of the war, rather than the glory and praise that comes with being a hero.

Hunk’s character is similar to Lance’s, since his style of jokes that were once used to add to his stereotype of a glutton tend to become less frequent as the series progresses. All through the first couple of seasons, Hunk’s jokes include being hungry, and always thinking about food in general. It isn’t until later seasons when his comments tend to shift from simply wanting to eat, to actually enjoying cooking as a form of art. Hunk’s love for food as more of a culinary art is briefly seen in Season 1 and 2, such as when he creates a delicious dinner for this teammates after Coran’s failed attempt, or when he is forced to cook dishes at Veprit Sal’s, a restaurant in an alien mall. However his well-prepared dishes were usually followed by a joke, and more often
than not his comments throughout the entire seasons were more about wanting to eat rather than wanting to cook. Yet this change in mindset slowly shifts and is clearly evident in the last seasons. For example in Season 8, Episode 7, while seeing Hunk with a dessert cake, no joke is made about being hungry. Rather, he shows his appreciation for the art of cooking and all the love and work he put into his cake, offering to share his process and recipe with others. His fondness for cooking as a form of art allows for a character shift from a hungry glutton to a respected chef. In the last episode, it shows Hunk one year later, having his personal alien cooking team as they work to lead a universal culinary empire. Though his character is still associated with food, it’s for the sake of his character and his growth as an individual rather than the sake of comedy.

This doesn’t mean comedy with Hunk ends completely as the show advances. There are other running jokes and random comments throughout the series leading into the last seasons. Though not under one theme, he is still found making puns, sarcastic retorts, and nonverbal expressions. Hunk, as a general comic relief character, is evident from the start, and regardless of his character development in later seasons, he still partakes in the humor of the entire show. Both Lance and Hunk’s roles are eventually expanded on beyond humor, giving even more time for Coran to shine.

“Coran, Coran, the gorgeous man.” At least that’s how he refers to himself, in Season 2, Episode 4. What stands out most with his comedic lines is not just what he says, but how he says it. His delivery plays a vital part in portraying his character as one of a comic relief. Coran’s character is able to attract viewers, encompassing a “goofy” personality with a memorable accent, a unique range of vocabulary, and an iconic bushy mustache. His entire persona is used to incorporate comedy throughout the show. Rhys Darby, Coran’s voice actor, describes his
character as random. “He has a weird sense of humor and really enjoys his own jokes. You’re not really sure of what he’s saying most of the time. He’s a nut” (*CherryLosAngeles*, 2016). This is most true due to his species. Being an Altean, an alien species similar to humans, his knowledge, history and experience quite differs compared to the paladin characters. And it is because of this difference in species in culture that adds to the weirdness of his character. Coran is often seen describing situations using imagery and metaphors from his home planet, such as naming unknown alien creatures or games Alteans used to play. Darby says “he’s definitely an intellectual, but his intellectual knowledge....a lot of the times is not usable. It’s useless information” (*CherryLosAngeles*, 2016). The fact that Coran has all of this “useless” knowledge adds to his general random personality. Him spurting out information that’s often not relevant or helpful to the plot is used to his advantage as a character of comedy.

His humor creates a lasting impression of him as “quirky” and “goofy.” There is a sense of expectancy whenever his character appears; as if you’re waiting for him to make a joke or humorous comment. Knowing Coran is in the scene, you assume the following line out of his mouth will be funny. One the rare occasions when Coran wasn’t cracking a joke or sharing random Altean facts, his entire demeanor changed. His style of words was easier to understand, his delivery was more serious, as his voice deepened, his posture stiffened, and his face stayed stoic. Examples of this shift in character were most prevalent in times when he was worried for the paladins’ wellbeing while they fought Zarkon, Sendak or Honerva. This separation from Coran and comedy shows that though he is still labeled as a comic relief character, he is an ongoing important element to the plot and the characters. He can shift to a serious mode when in danger or in dire situations, similar to his character from the original 80’s series, *Voltron: Defender of the Universe* (VDU).
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In VDU however, there wasn’t much emphasis in comedy, especially in relation to Coran. Coran’s character in VDU was much more serious and stoic compared to the current series. Rather than an emphasis in comedy, there was more focus on the action and adventure that came with giant fighting robots (*CherryLosAngeles*, 2016). The character of Coran itself in VLD helped shape the humor included in the show.

Regardless of the character difference in comparison from the old Voltron series to this new one, his role still plays a relevant part to the show. His role as comic relief is one that continued all the way to the end of the series. Even in Seasons 7 and 8, as the war intensified with Sendak and Honerva, and as Lance and Hunk ceased their comedic flirting or food jokes, Coran was still seen making light hearted comments. Not only did they fit his character, but they also added levity to the scene and engaged viewers if the plot became too overwhelming.

By looking at VLD, not did I classify the types of comedy associated with a few of the main characters, but I also examined the use and placement of comedy and its effects on the series as a whole. This gives us insight on how comedy is interchangeable in a series. And part of this reason is due to the writer’s shift in audience and their ultimate goals.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION

VLD is labeled as a children’s television show, and the reason for this is because of the market the VLD showrunners were originally targeting. In an interview with *Afterbuzz*, Joaquim Dos Santos, explained how he, Lauren Montgomery and the rest of the VLD writers and showrunners were taking on a project franchise originally marketed towards young boys (*AfterBuzz TV Animation*, 2019). This set franchise was also enforced and represented through Voltron-related merchandise, such as clothing, toys, beginner level books, and comics for such a
young age group. Because of this original path in making this series, the showrunners approached the show as such, incorporating not just powerful robot fights and colorful laser effects, but funny jokes as well. Montgomery described how she and the writers would sit in the room making a list of jokes, slapstick humor, potty humor and in general funny moments characters should be a part of (AfterBuzz TV Animation, 2019). This demonstrates there was an effort to attract their child target audience with their jokes, and make lasting impressions through reoccurring stereotypes and gags.

Yet as the show progressed in popularity, so did the writers’ intentions. VLD became more than just the typical robot-fighting, mecha cartoon; it became an evolving story, with deep and personal meanings, with strong character development and advanced plot and storylines. And the reason being was due to the shift in viewer demographic. As stated earlier, VLD was originally targeted towards young boys, hoping the animated robot fights and funny gags would attract young kids. However Dos Santos noted that when he and the VLD cast and creators would attend Comic Con panels, they would notice “more and more female representation in the crowds,” compared to their target audience of young boys. And in comparison to their intended target audience of children, this new audience showed more interest in character development and storyline progression rather than big robot fights or funny potty humor (AfterBuzz TV Animation, 2019). It was through these conventions and interacting with their fan base that the creators realized their viewer demographic was changing. They realized their audience was diverting from their intended target, and eventually played that to their advantage.

One possible reason for the new fanbase’s desire for a more advanced plot and deeper character arches can be due the current political climate. With the increase in efforts for female rights, such as the #MeToo and #Times Up movements, there is a rising demand for more women
empowerment. And though progress is being made in society, change in female representation is continuously sought out through all forms of entertainment, such as in films, music, literature and even animation. With the majority of VLD viewers being teenage and young adult women, it would make sense that there’d be a strong desire for more significant roles for women in the show. This high and continuous demand for female representation in television is probably what inspired the creators to introduce strong female characters, such as Pidge and Allura, and focus on their character arches as the plot advances.

In relation to the original 80’s version (VDU), the way Allura and Pidge are portrayed, for example, drastically differ. Allura for example, though still a princess, was often the damsel in distress, having to rely on her male teammates to save her from Zarkon or Lotor. In the contemporary version of VLD however, rarely she is reliant on a man or needing to be rescued by a male character. In addition to challenging the notion of a stereotypical princess, she is also a woman of color, playing a vital role in the defeat of Honerva in the last season. Pidge too adds to the notion of a strong female character. In VDU, Pidge’s character is actually a boy. Regardless of being reanimated as a girl in the 2016 reboot, Pidge’s intelligence in VLD is still an identifying element of her character. Also not conforming to the girly stereotype, as she is seen embodying this tom-boy like appearance and personality, she is also a pilot of her own lion and a smart character overall.

The creators’ decisions to focus on these women as key points in the series shows their emphasis in appealing to viewers desire for influential and inspiring women representation. The noticeable shift in the audience only helped direct the way they wrote the show and how differently they decided to approach female characters versus male characters. By allowing more dominant roles for the women, not just with Pidge and Allura, but with other females throughout
the series, this resulted in the need for the writers to readdress the roles of male characters. Allowing for more opportunity for female contribution shows this change in values and a reflection of a new era, where we’re now having dominant and influential females entering roles originally dominated by men. This is a major factor in not just the shift in roles in the show, but also in the comedy as well. Perhaps this is the reason for Montgomery’s and Dos Santos’ decision to portray Hunk, Lance and Coran as comic relief. In order to allow for Pidge’s and Allura’s character arches, they had to re-evaluate the direction they would take when portraying the males’ roles and development. This, in turn, leads to them being the show’s’ source of humor. Though they do have their own character development, there was more focus on their jokes and puns (compared to female characters). Nonetheless, the emphasis the creators put on Pidge and Allura’s role influences the Lance’s Hunk’s and Coran’s, as they are now seen as less of a priority in having a more advanced role in the show. This idea is even something to consider in other shows. With the increase of strong female characters in television, what does this say about the direction that is being take with men’s roles and their importance?

The outcome of the story, the advancement of the plot, the focus of comedy, the character development; all of this was affected and shifted as support and fandom grew. As it progressed over time, character arcs developed, and all in all writing changed. Comedy and attracting young boys are no longer the main goal; now, the creators and writers aim to create and tell a more meaningful story with an overall purpose for all audiences, especially their female audience.
THE COMEDIC SHIFT

CHAPTER 6

LIMITATIONS

For the nature of this thesis, we only considered one artifact to analyze and interpret. Considering this thesis only addressed one show, more research and questions remain to investigate for comparatives in other children’s television and other elements of comedy. In addition, this thesis was subjected to only look at three characters. More comedy ensured throughout the entire series aside from Lance, Hunk and/or Coran. There is opportunity for more analyses regarding additional characters use and placement of comedy outside these three characters. Due to the nature of this thesis, only four selective seasons were chosen. There are an additional four seasons that can be considered for a more in-depth analysis for comedy present throughout the entire series.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Overall, the comedy in VLD certainly plays its role as the series progresses. Starting off as an attracting and attention-getting device for young kids, the role comedy plays changes to more of an alleviation mechanism against the mature and darkness of the plot. And this sudden shift in the humor revolves around this newly found age and gender group. Though the majority of VLD viewers did not consist of the intended young boys the writers were expecting, they chose to cater the show to the viewers they knew they did have. This allowed for a shift in comedy use to drastically differ in later seasons, and also allow for more character development and an overall example of the direction television could be heading in the future.

However, even with a shift in writing and change in viewer age and gender group, VLD is still labeled as a kids TV show. With the more mature plot advancement evident in later
seasons, this brings up certain questions on what constitutes the borderline of a show appropriate for kids, yet still mature enough for adults. Most likely the comedy in the show helped maintain this balance and keep the ratings as such. The interchangeable quality when it comes to comedy plays a great role in the progression of VLD, and there’s even more potential for research regarding comedy in other similar children’s TV shows.
THE COMEDIC SHIFT

References


