

# Uzumaki Feeds Off the Claustrophobia of a Small Town

by Adeline Panamaroff, Jun 16th 2021

Following the release of a new [teaser](#) for *Adult Swim* and *Hiroshi Nagahama's Uzumaki* anime series, Adeline Panamaroff looks back at *Junji Ito's* acclaimed manga and how the haunting spiral encircles the inhabitants of a small town.

*Uzumaki* by *Junji Ito* is not for the faint of heart. As is usual for any of Ito's work, the story has a deep visual and psychological impact. One of the recurring themes throughout this manga is the inability to escape a horrific situation. The horror that afflicts the town of Kurouzu-cho is slow to build up, and the incidents that occur throughout town appear to be isolated and unrelated to each other at first. However, as time goes on, a feeling of apathy and hopelessness takes over the protagonists Kirie Goshima and Shuichi Saito. The two find it difficult to both emotionally and physically fight the situation, or to even simply escape it.

The story takes place in the small coastal town of Kurouzu-cho, which is nestled between the coastline and a bordering range of mountains. These natural barriers make the town feel both cozy and isolated, as if the town is cut off from the rest of the world. Like many small communities, the residents of Kurouzu-cho are a close-knit bunch; your neighbour's business is often your business and your affairs are often freely gossiped about amongst friends.



The need to escape this town and the psychological disease that is spreading throughout is an ever-growing motivation for Kirie and Shuichi. As they see one after another of their family members

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## Who Would Win? Shaman King's Yoh VS. Bleach's Ichigo

Sep 24, 13:00 [anime](#)

I'm talking Yoh Asakura and Ichigo Kurosaki in an all out spiritual battle between the two! Who would win?

COLUMN [4 comments](#)

## This Week in Games - Maidragon Spirit

Sep 24, 12:30 [games](#)

Things have just gone from really bad to extremely worse over at the ongoing dumpster fire that is Activision-Blizzard corporate.

REVIEW [6 comments](#)

## Mahoraba ~Heartful Days~

Sep 24, 12:00 [anime](#)

Mahoraba isn't the kind of show I'd warn people away from, but it's also not a show I'd recommend particularly strongly.

succumbing to this epidemic, Kirie and Shuichi strive harder and harder to leave town, but there is always someone or something standing in their way.

Social and physical claustrophobia is something that many young people throughout the world have felt at one time or another in their lives. The pressure that other members of a community can place on a person with such phrases as "If only you were more like person X," or, "If you only joined this group you would feel part of the community," or even, "If you just accepted the situation..." can often lead a person to dream of greener pastures, bluer skies, bigger cities or just being anywhere else other than where they currently are. The psychological horror that has infested the town of Kurouzu-cho can be seen as symbolic of the emotional, psychological, and cultural homogeneity that exists in many rural communities around the world. At the same time, *Uzumaki* shows that such homogeneity can and will be resisted: When Shuichi's mother is being drawn into what this writer has nicknamed the spiral addiction by the voice and memory of her husband who succumbed to it earlier in the story, the internal and physical struggle that she goes through to resist the pull of the spiral is evident.



As a person grows into their own sense of individuality through puberty and into early adulthood, the desire to explore a wider horizon, seek out a wider range of cultural diversity or just experience more than what a small community can offer can be a big motivator to move away from what can be a safe and controlled existence. If the opportunity arises, many individuals who harbor such feelings take it and move away from their natal home. Those who cannot, or will not, seek to leave such situations may find, as in *Uzumaki*, the ability to leave and to take similar journeys of exploration elsewhere much more difficult later in life than if they had tried at an earlier stage. These individuals and those that are easily swayed by group mentality can often be afflicted with the same feelings of apathy and hopelessness that Kirie and Shuichi experienced throughout much of the story. Repeatedly, Kirie and Shuichi make plans to leave the town together but there is always something that stands in their way and holds them back – one such instance even involves the eye of a hurricane taking a liking to Kirie and tries to suck her into the storm.

NEWS [29 comments](#)

### Nintendo Reveals *Super Mario Bros.* Film's Cast, Staff, December 2022 Debut

Sep 23, 20:59 [games](#)

Chris Pratt, Charlie Day, Anna Taylor-Joy, Jack Black, Seth Rogen, Keegan-Michael Key, more cast

NEWS [7 comments](#)

### Tatsuhisa Suzuki Cancels Appearance at *Tokyo Revengers* Event

Sep 23, 20:00 [people](#)

Voice of Draken announced hiatus following alleged extramarital affair

NEWS [2 comments](#)

### Seven Seas Licenses *World End Solte Manga*, *Classroom of the Elite: Year 2 Novels*

Sep 23, 19:23 [manga](#)

Azusa Banjo's *I Think I Turned My Childhood Friend Into a Girl* manga also licensed

COLUMN [18 comments](#)

### This Week in Anime - Is Fena More 'Princess' Than 'Pirate'?

Sep 23, 13:00 [anime](#)

Nick and Nicky catch up on the seafaring adventures of *Fena: Pirate Princess* but



As they wait for other opportunities to rise, Kirie and Shuichi witness further psychological breakdowns within their community as more and more members fall victim to the spiral addiction. In their final attempt, Kirie and Shuichi find it is no longer possible to leave, since the spiral addiction has infected even the plant life. In their despair, they realize that their only option is to just hang on to each other till it is over.



Thankfully in real-life situations, the desire to leave a small community can be more easily attainable than it was in the case for Kirie and Shuichi. It is usually our own psychological anxieties and hangups that prevent us from moving forward and out of an emotionally unfulfilling situation, more so than external factors such as the people around us or physical barriers like those put up by the spiral addiction in Kurouzu-cho.

The hyperfocus that *Uzumaki* places on the theme of the inability to escape is very typical of other works by Ito. He likes to extrapolate things to their most extreme, to the point where they become very horrific to look at or even contemplate. This is what makes his work so visually impactful and interesting. The idea of obsessing about a spiral to the point where you see it everywhere, even when you don't mean to, and then being drawn in until it consumes both your mind and body can therefore be paralleled to an emotionally demanding and draining family or community situation that seeks to

hit choppy waters when it turns out the story's titular character is given little agency in her own destiny.

REVIEW [7 comments](#)

### Seven Deadly Sins: Dragon's Judgement Episodes 1-12

Sep 23, 12:00 [anime](#)

It's never been a show that was afraid to be overtly romantic or to torment its characters, and we're really starting to see both of those things pay off as we edge closer to the second cour.

FEATURE [7 comments](#)

### Star Wars' Place in Anime and Manga

Sep 23, 09:00 [anime](#) [manga](#)

It's fair to say that Star Wars would not look or feel the way it does without its roots in Japanese cinema, but do those roots extend to anime?

REVIEW [11 comments](#)

### Kakushigoto Theatrical Edition

Sep 22, 12:00 [anime](#)

What might shock the uninitiated who sit down to experience the theatrical version of this story is how beautifully it is animated and directed, especially with the scenes that feature a now-grown Hime going to confront her father's secret once and for all.

COLUMN [0 comments](#)

twist and conform a person into the shape that the community as a whole deems as correct, while overriding their sense of individuality.

Like all great horror stories, *Uzumaki* looks at the darkest depths of the human condition and drags to the surface the horrific acts that a person or a community can do to both each other and to themselves. Jealousy and pettiness, when viewed through the microscope of obsession, can bring out the worst in anybody, especially if it is allowed to grow, fester, and spread amongst a group of people as it did in Kurouzu-cho.

This is not to say that small communities are the source of darkness and mental illness, nor to deny that these places are nurturing, warm, and welcoming. They can be all these things or none of these things. It is up to the individual who lives in any situation, be it a small rural community or a large metropolis, to make the most of what is around them. *Uzumaki* serves as a story that reflects the internal feeling of isolation and social claustrophobia that can develop within anyone who does not have the means or the strength to look outside themselves and find connections to the wider world around them.

Whether *Junji Ito* meant *Uzumaki* to be a cautionary tale about being blindly dragged into herd mentality or not, this manga can serve as an extreme reminder of the importance of evaluating a group's philosophy or ideology for yourself, to see if its goals are indeed something that you want to put your time and effort into, before committing yourself wholeheartedly to it. Even by the end of *Uzumaki's* story, when outside officials try to enter the town to either investigate the problem or save the townspeople from the spiral addiction, it proved to be impossible for them to make any meaningful impact. This is demonstrated when a group of reporters try to enter the town only to be run down by a hurricane at the very edge of it. It is only when a reporter enters the town on foot that the havoc wreaked by the spiral addiction becomes apparent.



The same can be true for people trying to reach out to others who do not want assistance. The parting message that *Uzumaki* leaves us with is to choose your battles carefully, know what you want from life and don't wait too long before trying to make changes for yourself and for others. If one waits too long, it may just be too late to escape.

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## The ANN Aftershow - Shigaraki Goes Super Saiyan

Sep 21, 14:38 [anime](#)

In the penultimate episode of *My Hero Academia*, Shigaraki has a breakthrough in the worst kind of way. Also: the latest news on game censorship coming out of China, and an interview with BEASTARS voice actress, Kayleigh McKee!

REVIEW [11 comments](#)

## Star Wars: Visions

Sep 21, 12:00 [anime](#)

*Star Wars* is a Disney IP vehicle, yet another cinematic universe carefully curated for the largest fandom demographic possible. Can any originality be found in what has become another highly homogenized Disney property?

INTERVIEW [0 comments](#)

## Star Wars: Visions Producers James Waugh and Kanako Shirasaki

Sep 21, 10:00 [anime](#)

Anime has exploded culturally, there's no doubt about it, but we're all fans and have been since before that happened. I do think there's a whole host of people who haven't given anime a shot or haven't really tried it, but are *Star Wars* fans.

COLUMN [5 comments](#)

## This Week in Anime - Can't Someone Cut Jahy a Break?

Sep 21, 09:00 [anime](#)

One tiny former lead demon does her best to survive in the modern world...and is barely making it. Steve and Jean-Karlo try



[RightStuf - Anime, Manga and More](#)

to find the humor under the crushing weight of adult responsibilities. Someone get Jahy an ice cream or something.

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