WE’RE ALL FRIENDS HERE:
A CASE STUDY OF IJIME IN THE QUEEN’S CLASSROOM

by

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Japanese schools struggle with *ijime* (bullying) as its various forms are difficult to diagnose and subsequently address. The primary reason as to why it is so difficult is because *ijime* is often hidden under the guise of typical social interactions between students. This phenomenon occurs to the extent that the victim is often led to believe that the situation is one that cannot be corrected even with the help of adults. Hence, the outward appearance of friendship amongst the students of a classroom may hide the sufferings of those who are victims of *ijime*.

This thesis presents the subject of *ijime* by analyzing the issue through the lens of a contemporary Japanese drama (*Jyouou no Kyoushitsu* — The Queen’s Classroom). By utilizing educational studies sources to support my analyses, I interpret the social interaction between the characters in order understand how this television drama series presents its social commentary on *ijime*.

I first trace the meaning of *ijime* in order to create a solid foundation to build my subsequent analyses of the source materials. Different components of the social issue have roots in three separate groups that all interact with each other on some level: the students, educators, and parents. In this drama series, Akutsu-sensei, through her extreme educational philosophy and teaching methods, teachers everyone involved with her class to become better people by overcoming their various hardships rather than place their hopes in ignorance. As a valuable source of social commentary that created some controversy to the Japanese audience during its season on the air, *The Queen’s Classroom* opens up the possibility for future media to provide awareness of other social issues that may be analyzed beyond the surface level of an entertainment piece.
# CONTENTS

*Acknowledgements* .............................................................................................................. ii

**Introduction – What is *Ijime*...** ...................................................................................... 1

**Part 1 – The Classroom...** ............................................................................................... 5

Conformity............................................................................................................................. 6

*Han* groups........................................................................................................................... 8

Interlude 01: The Pure-Hearted.............................................................................................. 11

Forms of *ijime*....................................................................................................................... 12

*Ijime* and suicide................................................................................................................. 17

**Part 2 – The Roles of the Educators...** ............................................................................ 20

Teacher’s Responsibilities and Limits.................................................................................. 21

Interlude 02: The Fallen Angel.............................................................................................. 24

**Part 3 – The Roles of the Parents...** ................................................................................ 28

A disconnect............................................................................................................................ 29

Interlude 03: The Misguided Mothers.................................................................................. 31

The source of *Ijime*............................................................................................................... 32

**Part 4 – Reflections...** ..................................................................................................... 35

**References...** ................................................................................................................... 37

**Appendix I (Character List)...** .......................................................................................... 39

**Appendix II (Episode List)...** ........................................................................................... 40
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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS IJIME?

Japanese *dorama* (television dramas) are no strangers to using schools as the context of storytelling. Whether it is from the perspective of the adults or students, the same issues and plotlines often repeat themselves between different series with completely different characters and contexts. The focus is, then, not on the actual plot of the episode, but, rather, on how all of the characters deal with the issues.

The primary source, *Jyoou no Kyoushitsu* (女王の教室/The Queen's Classroom) is a Japanese drama that aired on Saturday primetime (21:00) during the summer of 2005. The plot is driven with a sense of magic realism that pushes the boundaries of the audience's ability to believe what is portrayed on the screen, yet keeps the content to a level that the viewers, both adults and their children, can relate to. As the drama contains many issues relevant to the home and school lives of everyday Japanese people, I structured my analysis to revolve around a singular theme.

The primary issue that this paper analyzes is *ijime*, a form of bullying within Japanese society, in particular, schools. I started my research knowing that there is a difference between the two terms of bullying and *ijime*. However, the difference was not very clear at first. To address this, I deconstructed what a typical bullying situation is. There are always at least two participants: an aggressor and a victim. The actual act of bullying differs from situation to situation, but physical violence is a common theme. Finally, the primary reason why bullying exists is because the victim cannot, due to situational or personal reasons, defend himself effectively. In the case of Japanese schools, transferring between schools is a difficult process that requires a lot of effort from the parents as well. Because escaping the environment is normally not a feasible option, the victim can either bear with the abuse as much as possible until the end of the year or graduation, or attempt to
stop the bullying. The latter is often not a viable recourse for many students because of the nature of *ijime* that affects them beyond the surface of their mental and physical health.

I turn to the Oxford English Dictionary\(^1\) for the definitions of “bully” as a verb to build a working model in order to base my analysis.

1. *trans.* To act the bully towards; to treat in an overbearing manner; to intimidate, overawe.
2. To drive or force by bullying; to frighten into a certain course; with away, into, out of. to.

As I have previously noted, violence is the common theme. “Bullying” as per these definitions, is a form of coercion in which the bully performs actions toward a victim for some purpose, tangible or otherwise.

I gave the same word study treatment to *ijime*, or rather, *ijimeru*, the verb form of the word. I used Goo Jisho\(^2\), which is entirely in Japanese, so I had to translate the definitions that it gave me using secondary dictionaries\(^3\).

1. とんでもないことを苦しめる。さいなむ。 (To torment/harass/inflict pain on the weak.)

The power dynamic is readily apparent in this definition. Whereas the OED definition can apply to people of ambiguous power level statuses, *ijime* is restricted to those who have a distinct disparity of status. In addition, the action associated with the definition is not one of coercion. Those who engage in *ijime* do so precisely to make the victim suffer. There is no beneficial gain, such as

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I also realize that this is not a renowned Japanese dictionary, but I was not able to find the Japanese equivalent of Oxford English Dictionary online. This was most concise Japanese-Japanese dictionary that I found online.

money or material goods, to the aggressor. If there is a lack of direct benefits for the aggressor, why does *ijime* continue to exist?

The results of my research into defining bullying closely resemble the conclusion that Yohji Morita comes to his study of *ijime* in Japan (Smith et. al., 1999:320). In a cross-national study of bullying, Morita focuses on Japan, and in his research, he includes a fellow researcher’s definition of “bullying”, which is said to be a common definition in Scandinavia, and to an extent, the Western world, to better differentiate the two terms.

*A type of aggressive behavior by which someone who holds a dominant position in a group-interaction process, by intentional or collective acts, causes mental and/or physical suffering to another inside a group.* (Morita, 1985, on *Ijime*)

*Bullying is a longstanding violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself in the actual situation.* (Roland, 1989:21, on Bullying)

In another cross-national study of bullying, Takashi Naito’s findings are similar to that of Morita’s, which is not surprising because his work is a derivative of Morita’s (Denmark et. al., 2005: 175). However, Naito goes into further detail about the differences. He even goes as far as separate “bullying” and *ijime* in terms of physical and mental. In my own studies of the portrayals of *ijime* in *Jyouou no Kyoushitsu*, and other *dorama*, I conclude that the two definitions have enough of an overlap to refute the total separation of the two.

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4 This is a quote from Morita’s section in Smith et. al.1999 that he cites from one of his previous works. Morita is a major Japanese educational sociologist whose bibliography is referenced in several of my other sources as well. Some of his works have overlapping themes, so it is understandable that he may recycle some of his information, especially as some of his previous findings are accepted theories. I have not been able to obtain his early works during the process of writing this thesis to adequately study them, but judging from the quality of his research in Smith et. al. 1999, I believe that it would be beneficial for those who want to learn more about a sociological perspective of Japanese education to explore his self-referenced bibliography on page 323.

5 Morita quotes this from one of his sources within Smith et. al. 1999.
To apply my clarified understanding of *ijime*, I re-watched *Jyoun no Kyoushitsu* to identify relevant scenes to evaluate the possibility of incorporating said scenes into my research. As I have completed this drama several times before, I was not distracted by the plot, and, thus, able to go about my research with minimal detours. The structure of this thesis is built on close analyses of particular scenes from the drama and how they are connected to my parallel research of *ijime*. For the purpose of this paper, the word “bully” as both a noun and a verb will reflect the definition of *ijime* and *ijimeru* unless otherwise noted. In reference to the bullied students, I use both male and female pronouns interchangeably because *ijime* is not a social problem that occurs more frequently in one gender or the other.

This thesis contains four primary sections that represent my research of *ijime* in various situations and how the drama portrays those situations. The topics are sequentially placed to represent my understanding of how *ijime* weaves itself into many aspects of a Japanese student’s life as seen through *Jyoun no Kyoushitsu* and various secondary resources that deal directly with *ijime* as a social issue. In addition to the primary topic, I include three character study interludes, which act as supplementary material to help familiarize the reader with the drama.

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6 One of the problems that I encountered in planning this thesis was that because I am isolating scenes to analyse, I spend a fair amount of time describing the set up of the scenes to provide context to the key events. Even though I provide time stapes for reference, I understand that the series is not immediately available for most to view alongside the reading of this paper.
The majority of *ijime* cases occurs on the peer level, specifically within the same classroom. In the Japanese school system, elementary (grades 1-6) through junior high (grades 7-9) are compulsory years in which children must attend the public school within their residence district or some alternative counterpart, such as a private school. Within the grades, students are split into homerooms, which serve as their primary social group for the year, and usually for subsequent years. Many school events, such as Sports Day, Founding Day, and other school-wide activities are shared within the homeroom. In Erwin Fukuzawa’s work, he and his partner interviewed Japanese adolescents asking, “Why is school important to you?” The overwhelming majority of the students answered “friends” (Fukuzawa and LeTendre, 2001: 88). Despite Japan’s academic-centric society, these students go to school seeking friendships above their future prospects, which are usually imposed on them by their parents.⁷

Even though their study focuses on adolescents, the characters in *Jyou no Kyoushitsu*⁸ carry similar sentiments about school. The drama revolves around Kazumi Kanda, an optimistic child who is starting her sixth elementary school year. In the course of the series, she is the primary victim of *ijime*. She quickly goes from being a very social child with plenty of friends and no worries to a pariah within the classroom. Despite her ordeals as an outcast, she relies on her belief that she can always maintain existing and create new friendships with her classmates, even if they are the ones bullying her. She often states to her classmates and homeroom teacher the importance of making memories together with each other because it is their last year in elementary school. The

⁷ Explained in further detail in Part 3
⁸ See Appendix I
social dynamics of Hanzaki Elementary School, 6th Grade, 3rd Class play a critical role in the *ijime* that occurs during the year the devil teacher comes to their school.

**CONFORMITY**

There is a common saying in Japan that goes, *deru kui wa utareru* (*出る杭は打たれる*), which means, “The stake that sticks up will be pounded down.” The meaning of this phrase does not call for the stifling of creativity and expression in people. Rather, it is more related to social etiquette. Social interactions that involve the least amount of conflict are the ideal in Japanese society that most people strive for when interacting with each other. In the drama, the importance of minimizing conflict, and, in addition, opposing views or actions, fuels the plot with many observable scenes.

With the arrival of Maya Akutsu, Kanda’s class is subjected to the new teacher’s strict rules regarding behavior, in particular, any attempts to disobey the teacher in any way. This is the setup for a scene that depicts a clear example of what it means to be “pounded down.” Yusuke Manabe is the class clown of the homeroom with the grades and personality to match his disinterest in schooling. He presents a comical, yet tough, front and attempts to be amicable with his classmates to no avail as they have no interest in befriending him. After failed attempt to publicly discredit Akutsu in front of the entire school during a safety presentation, she tells them how she knows more than enough about all of the students, particularly things that they are hiding from their parents, that she can easily blackmail them from ever disobeying her.

Being the class clown, Manabe stands up for himself, claiming that there is nothing that he is embarrassed about because he lives with his grandfather, who has lenient parenting skills. Akutsu swiftly and methodically reveals Manabe’s familial background, emphasizing how his

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9 Episode 02 (35:59-38:47)
mother left him because she is a worthless woman who lives to flirt, which resulted in his father abusing him and ending up in prison. She delivers the coup de grace by stating the reasons why Manabe presents a tough front: he cannot stand to be alone, and does not know how to ask for help, especially regarding his lack of future prospects. Thoroughly beaten down, Manabe retreats by sitting down, refusing to respond in any way despite the highly personal abuse that he just received.  

Throughout this scene, several key points to how Japanese interact with each other socially occur. The very act of standing up for one’s self is considered rude because it creates a direct conflict between two parties. Even crying as a response to public abuse is seen as rude, as one should save face, even in their weakest moment, hence Manabe’s lack of reaction. The rest of the classroom sits passively watching the devastation of their fellow classmate, understanding that the same consequences may befall them if they were to intervene.

Kanda is just as outspoken as Manabe is, and almost never hesitates to speak up for herself, or in defense of others against Akutsu. As such, the teacher repeatedly penalizes her, including forcing her to become the class representative with Manabe for the entirety of the year. The representative position and jobs, more akin to chores, associated with it are usually shared amongst...
the classmates, but Akutsu uses this position as a form of punishment because those who are serious about their education have no need to be bothered by menial tasks.\footnote{This emphasis on education will be explored in further detail in \textit{Part 3}.}

Creating conflict between a person and another party is not the only consequence of standing out, especially when the person’s actions also affect those whom they are associated. Normally, this would primarily apply to friendship social circles, but that is not necessarily the case in a Japanese classroom. Alan Milller and Satoshi Kanazawa outline the existence of this phenomenon in a comparison between Japan and the United States’ cultures (Miller & Kanazawa, 2000: 24). Americans view children to be born dependent, and therefore, need to be taught how to become independent people in order to succeed. Whereas, the Japanese believe in the opposite: children are born independent, so social integration is key to their success as adults.\footnote{In American culture, children are expected to become independent adults by the time they reach eighteen, which is the legal age for many of life’s basics: driving, becoming the primary holder of a bank account, living on their own, and so on. In Japan, the dependence of children on others even includes the family. For example, the phenomenon of \textit{parasite singles} is one in which people of adult age purposefully live at home with their parents while working small jobs for spending money because they expect their parents to take care of all of their other expenses. Not only that, but as we will see in \textit{Part 3}, Japanese parents often cater to their children’s needs when the children study for exams or other similarly time-consuming work so that the children do not need to worry about anything else. This kind of behavior may seem foreign to Americans, but these situations are all too common in Japan.} As the school is a social institution in which all Japanese citizens enroll in, that is where social integration exercises exist.

\textit{HAN GROUPS}

The \textit{han} group (working group) is a clear example of group solidarity in effect. These are groups of students that are formed in some fashion, typically chosen by the teacher, that are supposed to serve as community building units. Anthropologist Gail Benjamin describes these groups primarily as a way for students to learn how to depend on each other for academic issues or otherwise (Benjamin, 1997: 53). In addition, the group shares responsibility for everything that the group...
does. For example, whenever a question is given, the *han* group deliberates among each other to provide an acceptable answer that the members all consent to. If they are correct, they are praised as a group, even if only one person in the group actually knew what the answer is. In this particular method, peer pressure would force a member to behave so that the rest do not have to suffer, even if they have to resort to bullying, or in this particular case, allowing others to bully one of their members into submission. A compliant person means that there is no worry of that person disobeying rules and getting the rest of the group into trouble.

Akutsu has motives beyond community building when she creates the *han* groups for Class 6-3. For the school anniversary, Kanda’s class learned a choreograph dance that she and her classmates find embarrassing. During this process, one of Kanda’s fellow students, Hisako Baba, who is clumsy, unattractive, and not that intelligent, gets picked on by Akutsu for her poor performance during dance practice. In attempts to befriend her, Kanda tutors her. The friendship seems to blossom until the three class representatives, Kanda, Manabe, and Hikaru Shindo, attempted to persuade everyone else to boycott the event to embarrass their teacher.

However, somebody revealed the plot to Akutsu, and the three failed in their efforts. As punishment, they clean up the gym after the event, during which they wonder among themselves who could have told on them. Akutsu enters this scene announcing that they would have a supervisor from that point on to curtail their behavior\textsuperscript{13}. It is implicitly stated that Baba is the culprit. The reactions of those present vary widely. Shindo and Manabe twitch in surprise when Baba enters, but otherwise maintain their composure. Whereas Kanda is wide-eyed, shaking slightly at the revelation. To her, the betrayal affects her on a deeper level than the other two because she made quite an effort to befriend the unpopular girl.

\textsuperscript{13} Episode 03 (42:42-44:15)
Despite the complication of their friendship, Kanda attempts to reconcile with Baba at a later point. After Akutsu explains the objectives of the group leaders, which is to report any acts of disobedience and make sure that their group behaves, the tension of the classroom rises. Manabe, fed up with the situation, circles Baba accusing her of revealing their plans. Baba denies the accusations, and Kanda comes to her rescue, rationalizing that Baba must have been threatened by their teacher to reveal the plot, desperate to salvage any part of their friendship. However, Baba's own insecurities lead her to believe that Kanda and the others are just attempting to find things about her to report to the teacher. This reaction of self-isolation is often seen in those who are bullied because they often feel that they have no one else to turn to. While the drama did not show any explicit bullying against Baba before, the students in the class do not talk to her because of her aforementioned traits. It should be made clear that there are many types of *ijime*, both physical and otherwise, that exist, and that they all share a similar goal in tormenting the victim.
INTERLUDE 01: THE PURE-HEARTED

In most stories, the pure-hearted character, one who is innocent, optimistic, and generally good, is portrayed as a protagonist without much fault as he or she is beloved by the rest of the cast. *The Queen's Classroom*, tears apart that notion by subjecting the protagonist, Kanda, who fits into this archetype, to *ijime* by her fellow classmates. From the start of the series, she states that because this is her last year as an elementary school student, her wish is to make a lot of friends and memories.\(^\text{14}\) Despite her friendly demeanor, once the bullying starts, she can do little in response.

After the main story, the negative aspects of pure-hearted characters appear in conversations between Kanda and Akutsu. The first such conversation involves Kanda's junior high school life as she carries the same idealistic belief that everyone can and should be friends that helped her survive the previous year when Akutsu was teaching. In the scene, her class is not enthusiastic about selecting a song for a chorus competition, and when she attempted to rally support and teamwork, she was met with insults and more apathy. Akutsu replies that such a person can hurt those around her, which we later learn that the teacher learned that from experience as she was once like Kanda.\(^\text{15}\) Her days as an idealistic teacher with hopes to become friends with her students led her to a scandal that forced her to escape by quitting her job as a teacher for marriage.

In a later scene, Kanda relates to Akutsu the accusations of being called a hypocrite in the classroom.\(^\text{16}\) She wanted to put an end to the bickering in the class by stating that they are all friends and that they should not be picking on each other. Her classmates retorted that she is the one picking on them. Someone as pure as Kanda may not realize it, but whenever she attempts to

\(^{14}\) Episode 01 (02:10-02:50)

\(^{15}\) Special 01 (8:30-9:40)

\(^{16}\) Special 01 (01:09:25-01:11:19)
make things better, she does not realize the potential her actions may hurt whomever she tries to help. In the above case with Baba, she attempts to ignore the situation that her han group is in by rationalizing that Baba is unconditionally her friend and for a while, continues to act as if there was no tension among themselves, which only serve to drive Baba’s insecurities higher and separate the two further. This near-sightedness is also the primary reason why Kanda becomes the victim of a class-wide ijime because she believed that the true culprit of the missing wallet case, her long-time friend Erika Sato, would come forward. Instead, she descends into suffering.

FORMS OF IJIME

When physical harm is incurred, educational researchers would classify the incident as one of bullying in the western sense. As I have mentioned previously, the primary difference between the western interpretation of bullying and ijime is the intention of the perpetrating party. For instance, at the start of Kanda’s descent into being exiled from the rest of the class due to allegations against her for stealing a classmate’s wallet, she receives both physical and psychological abuse from those whom she considered to be friends.¹⁷

During swimming class, a group of girls, including Erika Sato, eye Kanda while she is swimming and minding her own business, and comments among themselves about how she irritates them. Collectively, they decide to create a distraction for Akutsu while the rest of the girls move to force Kanda under the water, effectively attempting to drown her. The critical point here is that by forcing the adult’s attention elsewhere, they can do whatever they want to anyone they want.¹⁸ In Japanese schools, students can escape punishment as long as there is no hard evidence. Even if dangerous issues such as this occur, it would be difficult to take legal action, especially if

¹⁷ Episode 05 (12:14-15:19)
¹⁸ Explored in further detail in Part 2
the victim is reluctant to admit anything occurred. After Akutsu rescues Kanda, she questions the child about what happened, and Kanda, recovering from her near-death experience drops the issue after noticing the stares of the offending group that dare her to say anything.

Even when faced with near death, a victim of *ijime* still fears her aggressors and remains silent throughout her ordeal. It is difficult to identify a unified reason for why this is the case. In Kanda’s situation, the optimistic in her believes that everything will turn out fine once her friend, Erika, clears the allegations against her. This optimistic spirit is most likely a plot device for Kanda’s character to grow, as actual cases of *ijime* with similar levels of harassment do not have the guarantee of a fortunate conclusion. In Morita’s research, and the works of other researchers who study *ijime*, one famous case study that brought *ijime* to the forefront of public awareness in 1986 stands out. This case depicts a student driven to suicide due to the long-lasting *ijime* that he suffered at the hands of his classmates, including one situation in which his classmates and teacher held a mock funeral for him. Driven to a metaphorical corner with nobody to turn to, including the adult authority figures, this student’s life ended tragically.

Kanda’s determination to remain hopeful about her situation at school faltered when she gets into an argument with Manabe, who was her last resort as a supportive friend, because he quit going to school as he was tired of doing chores and playing by Akutsu’s rules. Abandoned at this point by a person whom she did not really considered to be close friends with, Kanda’s resolve waned. She tries to bear with the bullying as much as she could, until she arrives at school one day to find her desk scrawled with nasty writing. This, compounded with a cup of water dropped on her as she enters the classroom to find her classmates laughing at her, rhetorically asking her why she is wet, feigning that they had any part in the act, pushed her over the edge, and she runs off.\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) Episode 05 (29:10-32:15)
*ijime* is most effective when the entire class bullies the victim. As mentioned previously, being with friends is one of the primary reasons why students go to school, and when a child is shunned into becoming a pariah among her peers, there is not much else for her to look forward to. The goal of *ijime* is achieved when the victim comes to understand that she is being bullied, and that she has no recourse to remedy her situation, which leads to the destruction of her person. After this scene, Kanda’s normally optimistic self wavers and she attempts to escape. Along the way, she confronts Akutsu to blame the teacher for her bullying and the loss of her friends. Akutsu even acknowledges how the loss of friends equates to the end of a child’s life at school and offers to stop the bullying if Kanda were to surrender to the teacher. Even when faced with a solution, Kanda ignores it, and, instead, dwells on her plight. This reaction to a solution highlights the amount of stress a bullied child is under. Once the *ijime* crushes a person’s spirit, it is difficult recover from the drop in morale.

Akutsu’s response to Kanda’s confrontation is one often given in cases regarding bullying: in order for Kanda to stop the bullying, she must stand up for herself. While this is a difficult task for any victim of bullying, it is increasingly so for a Japanese student who lives in a culture in which children rely on their peers to form a large portion of their identity. Group solidarity plays a double-edge role in this regard because the importance of mutual consent applies to the opinions of the individual members of a group as well. If one person is designated to be bullied, then the rest of the class must conform as well, or risk a similar fate. The victim plays a role in her own fate as soon as she actively recognizes that she is being bullied and, therefore, must continue that role to appease the rest of the group. Standing up for oneself effectively means a break from existing social dynamics, which could result in even more frequent or severe bullying. It is a risk that Kanda is unsure about taking until she reconciles with Manabe, and they both decide to bear
through the ordeal with light-hearted comedy acts; in other words, escaping the harsh world by putting up a front that conceals their hurt.

An *ijime* victim’s concealing of her bullying is not without other problems. Within the section on conformity, we see that those who conform to the teacher’s rules do not suffer at her hands. Therefore, conforming to other people’s expectations is seen to be safe. Having a safe space in which all active parties mutually agree on issues, whether or not the individuals believe otherwise, is tantamount to being polite. However, once students are within their comfort zone, particularly one in which an adult is not present, complaining, roughhousing, and *ijime* are prevalent. Due to the prevalent mindset of group solidarity, when one person complains, there are usually others who would agree with her, whether it is an honest opinion or simply polite to do so. The majority of *ijime* occurs because the person that stands out in public often stands out during these times in this zone. Without the barrier that adults bear, students are free to do whatever they want.

Rebecca Fukuzawa wrote about situations in which this distinction is not readily apparent (Fukuzawa and LeTendre, 2001: 89). Play wrestling is common among young boys in schools, which teachers acknowledge and pay little attention to. In these cases, the appearance of playful camaraderie can disguise a hidden agenda. If *ijime* is disguised so easily, how would an authority figure detect it in order to help the victim? The bullied student often does not come forward with the fact that he is being bullied for various reasons. In Kanda’s case, is the hope that things will

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20 What about those students that do come forward with claims that they are bullied? I do not have information regarding teacher protocols to directly answer that question, but from what my sources show, it seems that there is little that a teacher can do besides watching the bullying continue because of the fear of retaliation from the accused bully’s parents. The drama suggests that the most problematic part of being a teacher is the parents because they have a lot of power as a group on a school. It seems to me that the Japanese PTA is much more influential than its American counterpart because it seems to strike fear among the teachers, which pressures them to minimize any problems as much as possible. Of course, if a parent of the victim speaks up, the best the teacher can do is to assure the parent that he will keep an eye out on any problems. I believe that is the best most teachers can do: just watch the proceedings knowing that a child is being bullied and that there is nothing that they can do to alleviate it.
get better eventually. Other, more realistic, reasons include the belief that adults are either not willing or able to solve their problem, or even the belief that it is a personal issue, which he does not want to bother other people, including his parents. In fact, adults are often caught unaware when they find out that their children or students are involved in *ijime*, in either role of the aggressor or victim.

In the second special of the drama, which is the prologue to the main series, Akutsu deals with a situation in which one boy, Eiji Miyauchi, commands the rest of the class to bully fellow students for no reason other than the fact that he was bored. Miyauchi comes from wealthy family, and the primary reason why he is in a public school repeating a grade is because he was sick and missed the entrance exams for junior high school. He harbors a deep-seated hatred for his situation and takes it out on his peers while the teachers of the school praise him for being a well-mannered intelligent student.\(^1\) Akutsu notices that Miyauchi appears to have the strange ability to control the entire classroom, particularly Tsubasa Satonaka, a meek boy, and decides to investigate.

The entire classroom bullies Satonaka, under the rule of Miyauchi. Even those who have no actual qualms with the boy are forced to do so because of the fear that they can just as easily be the target as well. Referring back to group conformity, if a single person holds the majority of the power in the social dynamics of a group, the rest of the group has no choice but to follow his guidance. In an incident that mirrors the theft of a wallet in the main series, Miyauchi and the rest of the class overwhelmingly passed the blame onto Satonaka. Sensing that the class is framing him, Akutsu punishes the entire class much to their discontent until Miyauchi agrees with her.\(^2\) The

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\(^1\) Special 02 (22:03-23:10)

\(^2\) Special 02 (22:11-29:24)
unbalance of power is apparent in this situation; whenever Miyauchi speaks, the entire classroom turns to face him, awaiting his words.

Kanda's plight is minimal compared to this environment because while her aggressors worked as a class to bully her, they did not have the guidance of leader that forced Satonaka's classmates to centralize their efforts to push him over the edge as much harshly as possible. In Satonaka's perspective, he has no hope for making friends even if he tried because everyone is against him out of fear. Kanda, at least, has Manabe, and later Shindo and Baba, to support her efforts to change her social status. Satonaka regularly receives suggestions to die from Miyauchi, which is a contrast to death threats made by bullies in Western schools. Western bullying often revolves around coercing the victim to do something that the bully wants. The bully employs threats of physical abuse to further his own gains. *Ijime* bullies forego the threats and actively mentally and physically abuse the victim. In the extreme cases in which suggesting a student to die end tragically, the bully can claim no part because it would be labeled a suicide.

*IJIME AND SUICIDE*

Satonaka does not have the resolve to stand up to Miyauchi, or even seek help from his parents or teachers. The best that he could do is to stay at home and refuse to go to school. In the Japanese public school system, elementary school students can advance to a junior high school without much trouble because it is compulsory for them to complete their education to that minimum level. The day Satonaka attempts to return to school, Miyauchi catches him, and repeatedly suggests him to die over a bridge. Akutsu later finds him floating in the river, which is irrefutable evidence that he had committed suicide.\(^{23}\)

\(^{23}\) Special 02 (53:00-55:37)
Satonaka has suffered many hardships under Miyauchi, and this was certainly not the first time that the bully suggests him to die. The reason why he chooses this time to finally give in to his tormentor is tied to Miyauchi’s comment on how Satonaka is not going to grow up to be happy anyway, so there is no reason for him to continue living in hope. Satonaka built up all of his strength to return to school after Akutsu confronted him in his home, telling him to stand up for himself\(^{24}\). With his spirit crushed at his best effort to stand up to his tormentor, he loses hope.

Some victims are not able to face their situations with patience and inaction. When Kanda’s friend Sato becomes a spy against the class because Akutsu blackmails her, she is put into a vulnerable position if the truth about the stolen wallet case or her new job is ever discovered. When the inevitable happens, the rest of the class confronts her, calling her names, and blaming her for making Kanda into a scapegoat\(^{25}\). Sato does not have the strength that Kanda has, and even when Kanda steps forward to comfort her, she verbally pushes the other girl away by rationalizing her situation as Kanda’s fault. By placing the blame on another person, the victim relieves herself, but it does not benefit anyone, including herself because she would continue being bullied anyway.

In some cases, the victim of *ijime* may bully somebody else as a method of relieving her negative emotions from being bullied, which is commonly seen in American schools. However, with the way social groups are formed in Japanese schools, there is not much interaction between different age groups. Because *ijime* is often a group action, there is no feasible way for the victim to pass on her anger to a fellow classmate if the rest of the class is bullying her. While this situation involving a forward progression of bullying is unlikely to occur within the classroom, any kind of

\(^{24}\) Special 02 (38:38-41:15)

\(^{25}\) Episode 07 (26:00-27:45)
*ijime* from other sources can explain the behaviors of either the aggressor or the victim in the classroom\(^{26}\).

Trapped because she does not know how to deal with the stress of being bullied, Sato goes mad, and attempts to burn the classroom, believing that the only way to only way for her to move on is to get rid of the room that tormented her\(^{27}\). Kanda and her friends show up to reason with her, but Sato refuses to believe that anybody cares about her. Thinking that it would help to show Sato that everyone does care about her, Shindo brought the rest of their classmates to the scene. Despite this, Erika believes that they are only there to attack her further. This shows that once a victim is thoroughly mentally manipulated from their bullying, she may lose the ability to think rationally. Sato’s attempt is thwarted when Akutsu comes in, subdues her, and proceeds to lecture the entire class on the importance of taking responsibility for one’s own actions instead of blaming or depending on others excessively. Even the teachers of a school cannot effectively help in cases of *ijime*, and in some cases, they may even exacerbate them.

\(^{26}\) Explaned in further detail in **Part 3**

\(^{27}\) Episode 07 (33:03-39:07)
Excluding a students’ guardian/s, teachers are often the adults that they interact with most in everyday life. This is especially true in the cases of tannin, a role similar to homeroom teachers in America. Fukuzawa and LeTendre thoroughly outline the roles of the tannin and the difference between it and homeroom teachers in their research, which I will summarize here. Because of the extent that the students within the same homeroom interact with each other, the tannin serves as the adult mediator who is supposed to foster a community of friendship between the students. As such, the tannin serve a multipurpose role beyond teaching; they have to counsel, discipline, and play an active role in the management of the school due to their position as the “closest” adult to a large number of students. Because of these high expectations, it is unusual for a novice, or newcomer teacher to become a tannin as they occupy a position that is considered superior, in terms of work hierarchy, to the other teachers.

Japanese drama that revolve around classrooms take a liberal approach to this position as it allows certain types of plotlines that can only be achieved with the formula of New tannin + classroom full of problem students. The Queen’s Classroom is no exception to this rule as Akutsu plays the role of tannin in each of her teaching incarnations, all three of which involved highly dramatic episodes. In each of these incarnations, from the overly optimistic novice teacher in the prologue to the devil teacher seen in the main series, we see the various types of relationships that teachers have with their students, their students’ guardians, and other teachers in the school.
TEACHER’S RESPONSIBILITIES AND LIMITS

In Japan’s society, the lines between the family, school, and work are intrinsically tied with each other. In a typical household, the father spends the majority of his day working while the mother stays home as a housewife whose job is to watch over the children and their academic progress, and take care of the home. Parents rely on the school to teach their children more than just academics; they expect the schools to take an active role in raising morally upright and studious children. The extent to which tannin and, to a lesser degree, other teachers are held to this expectation is at such a point that even though there is no official law in place, they have no choice to fill this void lest they be branded a failed teacher.

Corporal punishment has always been an issue in schools regarding how a teacher could effectively rein in disobeying students. Fukuzawa remarks that there is a wide variety of opinions when it comes to this issue as there are parents who feel that physical force is necessary to rear a child, to those who condemn any physical contact on their children at all. For the most part, school dramas primarily work with the latter opinion as it forces the teachers to come up with alternative methods to manage their students. However, more often than not, teachers are forced into inaction.

When Akutsu confronts Miyauchi in the gym, while the class is cleaning up, regarding his motives for bullying his classmates, Miyauchi’s insults against them makes Akutsu angry enough to raise her hand, ready to slap him. He shows no fear, as he knows that the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) will protect him when he claims that a teacher abused him. She backs down for the time being, but takes the chance to lecture him on how wrong his beliefs are. Enraged by this, Miyauchi later catches Satonaka and passes on his frustrations, which finally triggers the bullied boy to attempt suicide.

28 Special 02 (50:00-50:26)
Modern teachers in Japan are well aware of the power of the PTA. Shiori Tendou, a fellow sixth grade tanin in Hanzaki Elementary, often laments about the grief she gets from the parents of her students regarding test scores, behavioral issues, and so on. She claims that as soon as something goes wrong, parents are quick to blame the teacher, which is indicative of how much parents rely on the school, and by extension, their child’s tanin, for the upbringing of the children. This dependence on the teachers places a great deal of stress when it comes to solving problems within the classroom because at some point, a child will be accused of some problem, and if the parent is unwilling to cooperate, the teacher has little recourse but to apologize and be barred from approaching the issue again.

This is seen in the scene after Akutsu thwarts Miyauchi’s attempt to bully Satonaka in the missing wallet incident by punishing all of the students. Various parents come in to complain, particularly Miyauchi’s mother who states that since her son is on good terms with the rest of the adults at the school, there is no possible way for him to even be accused of any wrongdoing. Akutsu’s response that children show a different side to adults than the ones they reveal among each other is dismissed by those who are present. However, there is some truth to this belief.

Earlier, I have mentioned how rough physical play can hide hidden activities, particularly ijime. Connected with the notion that parents usually side with their children, unless the teacher either catch a bully red-handed or force him to admit his wrongdoing, the teacher is stuck with a lack of options. Some teachers maybe keep investigating the situation in order to help the victim, but, according to Fukuzawa, teachers are more likely to side with the bully as it makes teaching easier when they do not have any active conflicts.

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29 Special 02 (30:20-32:02)
30 Part 1: Forms of Ijime
However, even when a teacher discovers *ijime* in the classroom, there is not much that she can do to rectify the problem. When Kanda’s classmates bully her, Tendou discovers that fact after seeing the contents of Kanda’s bag, which was filled with trash and rocks. When Tendou demands to know who did it, silence is the response from everybody, including Kanda, who initially attempted to hide what was going on. I believe that this is universal of schools in any culture; nobody would actually come forward and admit either guilt or names. In addition, the bullied victim is unlikely to reveal to an authority figure that she is being bullied to, especially in the presence of her bullies. If anything, Tendou’s actions only serve to perpetuate the bullying and probably increase the severity of the emotional damage that Kanda would suffer, who now knows for certain that a teacher whom she is very close to cannot do anything at all to help.

This shows how difficult it is to help the victims of class-wide *ijime*. If the overwhelming majority of a class are the perpetrators. As extrapolated from this scene, a teacher’s demand, especially one from a different homeroom, means nothing to the students because without an admission of guilt from the offenders, evidence found by the adult is rendered useless because students can always deny responsibility. As mentioned previously, a victim’s recourse in this situation is usually left at enduring the offences until graduation or rise up against the bullies. However, due to the ingrained way of thinking taught from a young age, the former is a likelier response to situations such as this, which will only perpetuate the problem. On the other hand, if the teacher is the one bullying a student, as is the case in this drama, the student is faced with a different set of problems.
INTERLUDE 02: THE FALLEN ANGEL

Akutsu’s front as a cold, cruel teacher is played up for the purpose of the plot despite the fact that she is an ultra-realist who truly cares for her students. Akutsu’s exaggerated qualities and actions in the classroom are primarily the reasons why this drama contains magical realism qualities, but they actually have historical bases. Fukuzawa and LeTendre’s research on the history of teachers reveals the belief that the ideal teacher is one who makes personal sacrifices for the sake of their students stems back to the late 1800s in written evidence (Fukuzawa and LeTendre, 67). This archetype of teachers is found in productions such as *Gokusen (2003)*[^31], *Great Teacher Onizuka (1998)*[^32], and countless other school dramas. In the prologue, Akutsu is an innocent optimist who goes out of the way to please her students, which ultimately led to her downfall the first time around when she was forced to quit teaching due to the false abuse accusations from one of her students. As she matures in her teaching methodology, Akutsu keeps the love and willingness to sacrifice even her life for her students, but expresses it in a manner that is not immediately apparent to her students, or the audience, at first.

The teacher archetype during the early Showa period most likely influenced the creation of Akutsu’s predominant personality. During this time, Japan’s schools became militarized, and education focused primarily on military training. This resulted in a break from the standard of a compassionate teacher into one that utilizes a classic teacher-learner model in which learning is limited to lectures, discipline is heavily enforced, and there is no relationship between the students

[^31]: The idealistic daughter of a notorious Yakuza family gives up her position as the heir to the clan in order to become a teacher with hopes of making a difference in students’ lives. The plot revolves around a classroom full of misfit high school students who often get into dangerous situations that the teacher saves them from, usually due to her physical prowess.

[^32]: A former bike gang member pursues a teaching job to teach the current generation how valuable education is to their lives. He solves his students’ problems in highly unconventional ways that risk his position as a teacher. To show how much he cares for all of his students, he protects even the students that actively try to get him fired, which shows how selfless a teacher could be.
and the teacher except for one of learning. Teachers during this time enforced the rules with no exception, which Akutsu emulates in the primary story. However, Akutsu’s obsession with caring for her students makes her to create situations that she believes would benefit the children, even if they hate her during the process.

During the first homeroom meeting, Akutsu details how everyone in the class, by virtue of being ordinary people, have a very low chance of being happy in life because those who were born privileged have advantages that they can never have\(^\text{33}\). In order to attempt to break from this bleak future, they must study, get into a good university, and only then can they attempt to find happiness in life\(^\text{34}\). In this case, Akutsu shows how ultra-realist she is concerning a child’s future. However, the main point that she wants to teach them is that each person can make their own happiness, and that is why she creates situations for the students to learn this important lesson.

Akutsu maintains the qualities associated with great teachers in Japan from teaching at a high academic standard to learning everything that she can about her students to better support them. The latter example is taken to the extreme with Akutsu as she demonstrates research that is well past stalking. She then uses this information to control the class to do exactly what she has planned for them. She is the antagonist of the series because she is the one that created almost all of the situations that led up to the bullying of Kanda and other students. The students, at various points in the story, describe her actions as *ijime*. According to my working definition of *ijime*, knowing the Akutsu’s intentions are for the benefit of her students, I cannot justifiably categorize it as such. In a quote from a young woman that LeTendre interviewed for his research, she says “...If the person thinks he is being bullied, then it is bullying.” (Fukuzawa and LeTendre, 2001: 89)

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\(^{33}\) Episode 01 (14:03-22:10)

\(^{34}\) This cultural phenomenon, *gakureki shakai*, will be explored in detail in Part 3.
the one hand, this simplifies the situation with Akutsu’s actions, but I still believe that the malicious intent of the aggressor takes precedence. As such, I use this explanation of *ijime* as a supplement to existing definitions of *ijime*, rather than one to base my analyses on.

Kanda’s bullying was planned from the start before Akutsu even entered the room. Prior to starting the first day at school, Akutsu has already researched all of her students and sifts through the list, attempting to find one that she can use to teach the rest of the class what it means to be happy. She chooses Kanda because the young girl reminds her of herself when she was a pure and innocent teacher. Knowing that they share similar traits, she could foresee how Kanda would react to the torment that she would subject the girl. However, she does not start her plan without any doubts. She had attempted to become a stricter teacher after her son died in the second special, but was thwarted by the efforts of Miyauchi and his manipulations. After that ordeal and surviving the teacher-retraining center, she returns to teaching with a hardened resolve, yet still carries worries for her students. The final part of her transformation into the devil occurs immediately before stepping foot into Class 6-3, and she remains in that role for the rest of the story.

When the students attempt to rise up against her using every method that they can, she counters their efforts easily. A student’s most powerful weapon against a teacher is the PTA, as schools would do anything to keep their reputation from being damaged, often by shifting blame until somebody takes responsibility for any wrongdoings. The students call their parents in soon after Akutsu starts teaching, but once she talks with them one-on-one, the parents are easily persuaded to her side. She knows that the only thing that parents want to hear about their children

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35 Special 02 (1:27:56-1:28:37)
36 Special 01 (09:30-10:26)
37 Special 02 (1:27:38-1:31:50)
38 Episode 02 (18:08-19:56)
is that the students have the possibility of progressing further in life if they follow the rules and study more\textsuperscript{39}. By rationalizing her methods in this manner to the parents, the students have lost any power as they now face their parents as an obstacle as well.

\textsuperscript{39} Episode 02 (22:25-27:00)
PART 3: THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

The heavy emphasis on education does not stem from familial expectations. Rather, it is a societal issue. This phenomenon is called *gakureki shakai*, which roughly translates to school history society. In Japan, the connection between school and work is evident in terms of prestige; in order to be hired at a good company, one must graduate from a prestigious university, which often requires extensive academic preparation that is provided at higher end private schools and *juku* (cram schools). Miyauchi taught Akutsu how privileged children have the upper hand in society, and, by extension, achieving happiness in life just because they are economically well off. Akutsu greatly refutes this claim, believing that everyone can become happy in their own ways, but that is not a common opinion among parents of modern families.

Many parents force their children to study excessively because of the belief that happiness is linked with economics. Kanda's mother is obsessed with making her apply for a private junior high school and constantly laments about how her carefree attitude will only hurt her chances at a good life. When Kanda finally finds a comfortable position in the class with her fellow class representatives, Manabe, Shindo, and Baba, Kanda's mother requests for them to leave their home and not involve Kanda in "anything weird." 40 Kanda later argues with her mother claiming that her mother knows nothing about what goes on in the classroom or her life, despite seeing her everyday at home. The discrepancy found in the lack of communication at home can be traced to the differing goals between parent and child, which can cause conflicts between the two parties. In some cases, parents may be so disconnected with their children that they may not even know that know that their children are going through difficult issues in school.

40 Episode 07 (18:18-21:15)
The communication between children and parents in Japan are often limited to certain issues, usually regarding school and academics. As mentioned previously, a typical family household has strict roles for each member of the family. When a homemaker’s primary job is to take care of the children, she often becomes overbearing. After the parent teacher conference for Class 6-3 that Akutsu manipulated via blackmailing the students from saying anything unnecessary, Kanda attempts to reveal the blackmailing information that Akutsu had on her, but her mother cuts her off with nagging about academics\(^{41}\). Children are usually reluctant to admit any kind of negative experiences or personal wrongdoings to their parents out of fear that they may be reprimanded or nagged, so Kanda’s attempt to be honest carries with it deeper implications.

The parent-teacher conference regarding the student’s future prospects reveal how much focus a parent has on her child’s education. In Kanda’s conference, her mother constantly reminds her about how important it is to get into a private school because it would lead to a better future. Under the guise of concern for future prospects and safety, Kanda’s mother shows that she does not understand what Kanda wants because of her selfish behavior. Parents often compare children to those of other families, and force them into activities that may or not conform to a child’s actual interests. During the school anniversary arc of the story, Akutsu lectures the students on this sentiment\(^ {42}\). In Kanda’s situation, despite her vehement statements against applying for private schools, she is still forced to go to juku for the extra academic edge. Public school systems are designed so that extra education is unnecessary, but parents want to have trophy children.

\(^{41}\) Episode 09 (19:05-20:32)
\(^{42}\) Episode 03 (5:45-6:08)
Some students are aware of their status in the family as a trophy, whether it is true or not. They take steps to either defy their parents, like Kanda does, or hide any imperfections as they do not want to trouble their parents by causing worry. As such, parents are surprised when they do find out that their child has been bullied in school. Kanda accidentally reveals that she has been bullied in class in her conference with Akutsu and her mother, but it was quickly glossed over by the adults’ conversation about private schools. Even though Kanda did not intend to reveal what was going on in the classroom, part of her regrets that her mother did not take more notice about her well-being. Kanda’s mother reacts with a moment of surprise before completely ignoring that anything was actually said about *ijime*. When Akutsu visits Satonaka’s home when he refused to come to school, his mother makes a face of surprise when the teacher mentions Satonaka’s bullying. Rather than discussing the issue further, Satonaka’s mother asks Akutsu to leave in attempts to ignore Satonaka’s situation. In Sato’s situation after she attempted to burn down the classroom, her mother rationalizes that the reason why she does not want to go to school because of the “weird kids.” Parents are quick to believe that their children’s lives are perfectly fine in their eyes, and unless the students purposefully mention otherwise, the lack of communication will only perpetuate any problems like *ijime*.

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43 Special 02 (38:38-41:15)
44 Episode 07 (39:08-39:54)
INTERLUDE 03: THE MISGUIDED MOTHER

*The Queen’s Classroom* displays the troubled relationship of several mothers and their respective children. Some parallels exist between the different families; especially regarding the mother’s narrowed focus on what she believes to be beneficial to her child. While the primary focus of the drama, the exaggerated devil teacher and her teaching ideologies, can become absurd at times, the depiction of family life is kept fairly normal in most of the families of the students.

Within Kanda’s family, her parents argue, reminisce about their pasts, and disagree about parenting skills. Kanda’s father provides the lenient voice opposite that of the nagging mother who outwardly claims that she’s the one who knows the most about her daughter.\(^{45}\) Her mother argues that due to the father’s primary focus on his work, he does not actually understand the amount of effort it takes to be a mother and homemaker, which is the basis of much of their tension throughout the series. As a homemaker, mothers have limited options in expressing herself, especially Kanda’s mother, who does not have any hobbies or a social circle, which is evident in the mother’s struggling attempts to hold conversations the other members of PTA at times. As a result, Kanda is pushed by her mother to become a successful child like her older sister, who attends a private school, much to her chagrin.

Throughout the majority of the series, Kanda paints a negative image of her mother to her friends because of the constant harassment to focus on her schoolwork instead of playing. However when she overhears a conversation between her mother and Shindo’s mother, she is able to get a glimpse of her mother’s genuine love for her daughter.\(^{46}\) In an attempt to reach the audience

\(^{45}\) Episode 09 (6:50-7:40)
\(^{46}\) Episode 09 (22:38-23:46)
watching this drama, the creators wanted to ensure that even with the most innocent of intentions, a parent can sometimes harm their children in some fashion.

THE SOURCE OF *IJIME*

What some parents do not realize is the reason why their children are bullied in school is can be attributed to their actions and inactions. These range from neglect, familial problems, and even direct abuse (Uchida, 1998)^47^. Reiko Uchida’s research deals primarily with how the parents are at fault for creating children conditioned to be meek and prone to *ijime* by their classmates. Baba is a prime example of a timid child who seeks approval from others as a method to cope with her shortcomings. While she is good at drawing, her mother constantly disapproves of the hobby and reinforces it by insulting her lack of proficiencies in anything, and nags her to study more before leaving abruptly^48^. This combination of insults, lack of positive reinforcement, and neglect molds Baba into a socially insecure child who worries about the stability of her friendships^49^.

On the other hand, parents who spoil their children to the point of sheltering them from reality can also hinder the development of their children’s social skills. On both ends of the *ijime* social play, the students have a lack of certain social skills that lead them to either act out or be acted upon. Miyauchi’s home life is revealed after Akutsu is forced to resign for attacking him. His mother attempts to take him out of school because he fell into a depression following the incident. When Akutsu confronts his mother, she finds out that because the Miyauchi family lost Miyauchi’s brother, he is spoiled under the rationalization of protection, and developed a complex from his

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^47^ While I generally agree with Uchida’s work on familial education, which seems to be regarded among the educational circle in Japan according to the stamp that says “Recommended by The National Congress of Parents and Teachers Association of Japan”, I cannot help but feel that her accusations against the parents of bullied children to be a bit over the top. Yes, a parent’s actions can have a dramatic effect on a child, but Uchida makes it seem as if they are the sole reason why bullied children exist, which is a narrow line of thought. Her research would probably fit better if it were categorized as a parental self-help book.

^48^ Episode 09 (11:50-12:06)

^49^ Episode 07 (4:35-5:05)
deceased smart, athletic, and well-liked brother. All of his beliefs stem from a lack of genuine connection with his parents at home, which led him to bully kids due to his own twisted ideals.

The spoiling of children also carries another hidden meaning. Akutsu reveals that the reason why parents spoil their children is that they want to control them for as long as possible. In order for their children to listen to their demands about schooling, behavior, and such, they need some method of control. This is why when parents force their children, verbally, physically, or emotionally, to bend to their demands, particularly schooling, the children do not see it as *ijime*. While I have agreed on much of Uchida research, she makes the connection that *ijime* in schools is connected to the *ijime* at home (Uchida, 1998: 6). I have previously made the distinction that there is a difference between *ijime* and bullying, which is why I disagree with how she frames the parents’ position as it suggests malicious intent.

Oftentimes, parents just have their children’s best interests at heart, even if the abuse is apparent. For example, when Akutsu had a family, she wanted her young son Sho to go to *juku*, claiming that she wants to prepare him for a private elementary school out of love, but in actuality, she does not realize how much she is hurting him until her husband confronts her about it, especially after Sho develops stress-induced twitching. Above, I established that parents could be blind to their children’s situations at schools, and I believe that the same can be said about the home life as well. It took the death of her child for Akutsu to realize the harm that she has been causing him; that what she did was not love, but abuse. Other families are fortunate to have their

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50 Special 02 (1:13:21-1:20:09)
51 Episode 09 (10:08-11:44)
52 Episode 09 (08:00-09:45) Various parents’ reactions to the PT conference
53 Discuss abuse vs. *ijime*
54 Special 01 (51:22-53:00)
55 Special 01 (58:42- 1:00:00) Akutsu’s husband confronting her on her forceful actions on Sho.
parent-child relationships repaired due to the mediation of Akutsu’s manipulations throughout the series, which allows the students to finally realize what kind of teacher Akutsu is. The Queen’s Classroom’s displays an extraordinary teacher who teaches entire families to grow, and the lessons that the drama can certainly provide families in Japan better methods to deal with *ijime*, among other issues, in both home and school.

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56 Episode 09 (29:43-37:40)
No matter how many times I watch *The Queen’s Classroom*, I always learn something new while remembering how deeply emotionally touching many of the scenes are. NTV, the producing station, strategically aired the drama during a time when families were most likely to be home together and watch the drama together. As the drama is aimed towards Japanese families, I was curious, and researched what kind of impact that this drama has had after it aired. Among the various blog posts that give a basic synopsis review, I found a post written by a former junior high school teacher, Nik Frengle, in Japan that gave me several valuable pieces of information to work with.

School dramas provide a vehicle in which the writers can do as much social commentary as they would like. What I did not realize at first is that the social commentary on the current state of educational affairs in Japan of this drama was controversial during its airing season. Concrete evidence of this critique is the diminishing number of sponsors that stay with the show as it progresses despite the high ratings that the series enjoyed. Episode 01 starts with five national and international-sized company sponsors, and in my review of the series, I even found some episodes that lacked sponsors entirely. I thought that the series dealt with major issues in a manner typical of television dramas, the sponsors’ reactions surprised me.

This kind of reaction by major companies reminds me of my initial feelings for writing a thesis based on a television drama. At first, I was worried that a drama would not provide a stable platform to do academic research on, but as I became more comfortable with seeing this drama through a researcher’s lens, and learned how serious the series was taken in Japan, I reevaluated my opinion. We have been taught to analyse books, works of art, and just about anything related to
a culture in order to better understand it. There is no reason why popular media cannot be include
in that list, and from what I have found in this drama, I am sure that there are plenty of other shows
that dive deep into various issues that we may make use of to supplement our studies.

During my preliminary research, I approached this analysis of a creative work as an
educational researcher, and throughout the writing of this thesis, I found myself utilizing two styles
of research: using scenes from the drama to illustrate the findings of the researchers, and using
their research to analyse fragments of the drama. In the former method, I run into the problem of
selection bias, as the drama contains multiple data that could represent a particular topic. In some
instances, I simply chose the most detailed, but I have to admit that some of my arguments could
have been deflated if I had used other equally valid examples. The latter research method seems to
be more applicable to this project as it only involves a minor tweak to analyzing a source by
viewing it through a lens. Unfortunately, I heavily relied on using the drama as a source of
examples, which steered my overall thesis into the social science side of research. As this is a
synthesis of two disciplines, further research may proceed in either direction: deeper studies of the
drama itself or its influence on its viewers and society, or exploration of the issues found in the
series by delegating the drama to a supplemental position. In either case, there is much more to be
studied of *The Queen's Classroom* than I have been able to manage so far.
REFERENCES

Primary Source:

Secondary Sources:
Other Sources for further study:
**APPENDIX I**

*Jyoushu no Kyoushitsu* Primary Cast:*
- Amami Yuki as Akutsu Maya (37)
- Homeroom Teacher (*Tannin*)
- Shida Mirai as Kanda Kazumi (12)
- Main Character
- Fukuda Mayuko as Shindo Hikaru
- Kanda’s Friend
- Matsukawa Naruki as Manabe Yusuke
- Kanda’s Friend
- Nagai Anzu as Baba Hisako
- Kanda’s Friend
- Kajiwara Hikari as Sato Erika
- Kanda’s Friend
- Hada Michiko as Kanda Shoko (37)
- Kanda’s Mother
- Omi Toshinori as Kanda Takeshi (39)
- Kanda’s Father
- Sasaki Hikari as Kariya Takako
- Kanda’s Sister
- Hara Sachie as Tendou Shiori (25)
- 6th Grade Homeroom Teacher
- Naitou Takashi as Namiki Heizaburo (44)
- 6th Grade Homeroom Teacher
- Hankai Kazuaki as Vice Principal Ueno (45)
- Izumiya Shigeru as Principal Kondo (55)

_Hanzaki Elementary School, 6th Grade, 3rd Class (other students)_
- Harii Shotaro as Nakamura Ichiro
- Ito Junpei as Ishibashi Tetsuya
- Itoh Sairi as Tanaka Momo
- Kamata Atsushi as Mitamura Makoto
- Maeda Itsuki as Hoshi Hitomi
- Morimoto Sarasa as Ando Sakura
- Nakamura Mizuki as Miyauchi Rie
- Nishihara Nobuhiro as Yamashita Kenta
- Nomura Eriya as Fuwa Shota
- Oshikawa Daisuke as Futoda Toru
- Sakai Shotaro as Nishikawa Koichi
- Kaneda Akio as Vice Principal Kiritani (50) (ep1)
- Suwa Taro as Principal Matsudaira (56) (ep1)
- Shimizu Shogo as Vice Principal Hirano (50) (ep2)
- Ito Hiroto as Satonaka Tsubasa (12) (ep2)
- Morita Naoyuki as Miyauchi Eiji (13) (ep2)
- Nishida Naomi as Miyauchi Noriko (35) (ep2)
- Yajima Kenichi as Miyauchi Masaomi (40) (ep2)

Other
- Kuroda Fukumi as Sato Yoshi (40)
- Okunuki Kaoru as Shindo Reiko (35)
- Sasai Eisuke as Manabe Yasushi (54)
- Sakai Wakana Manabe Mayumi (29) (ep11)
- Negishi Toshie as Saigo Yuriko

Specials
- Ishihara Yoshizumi as Ueda (40)
- Hiraizumi Sei as Tendo Kiichi (54)
- Namase Katsuhisa as Tomizuka Yasuhiko (30) (ep1)
- Takei Akashi as Tomizuka Sho (5) (ep1)
- Nishio Tokuma as Akutsu Shinichi (58) (ep1)
- Enami Kyoko as Akutsu Miyako (53) (ep1)
- Goto Kaho as Ikeuchi Ai (12) (ep1)
- Toda Erika as Ikeuchi Ai (17) (ep1)
- Miura Rieko as Ikeuchi Mieko (35) (ep1)
- Kaneda Akio as Vice Principal Kiritani (50) (ep1)
- Shimizu Shogo as Vice Principal Hirano (50) (ep2)
- Morita Naoyuki as Miyauchi Eiji (13) (ep2)
- Nishida Naomi as Miyauchi Noriko (35) (ep2)
- Yajima Kenichi as Miyauchi Masaomi (40) (ep2)

Episode List:\(^{59}\):

- **Ep. 01**: A sixth grade class' one-year battle with a wicked demonic teacher!
- **Ep. 02**: Tears in the wicked teacher's eyes?! A child's hidden past and a sad confession of friendship!
- **Ep. 03**: Friendship, betrayal, tears. The last memories of grade school... Teacher, please let me dance!
- **Ep. 04**: After they all called me a thief, the collapse of the class and the search for the culprit. Teacher, give me my friends back!!
- **Ep. 05**: Even my friends have vanished... Forget about school! Teacher, why are you picking on me?
- **Ep. 06**: There's no summer vacation! The tragedies and miracles brought about by cornered children!
- **Ep. 07**: As the school burns in flames one night, the wicked teacher sheds tears of blood... Teacher, please help my friends!
- **Ep. 08**: There's no graduation ceremony! Are you a demon or an angel? The painful past of the wicked teacher the students know
- **Ep. 09**: The wicked teacher's assassin
- **Ep. 10**: It's the final class for Maya
- **Ep. 11**: A graduation ceremony without Maya
- **SP (Part 1)**: Fallen angel
- **SP (Part 2)**: The demon descends

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