I felt very much alone in seventh grade. I was at a new school with not only new students, but also a new dynamic that was very different from the competitively academic one that I had been used to in my life until then. In what seemed to me a very unusual situation I turned to an even more unusual ally: Sailor Moon. Sailor Moon is certainly not the idol that I would prescribe to all young children, but for me --someone whose whole life seemed to revolve around academics-- she was just the kind of radical opposite that was needed. Though a seemingly unlikely side-kick in the classic American coming of age story, Sailor Moon was perfect for me since she effortlessly displayed true confidence.

Sailor Moon, the bubbly teenage super-hero, was first introduced to me by my mom in the dark ages when television sets were the size of a dishwasher, and cassettes still lined the walls of video stores. In the early years, I met the Sailor Moon of late 90’s American television, a much-edited version of the original *manga* series by Naoko Takeuchi. In seventh grade I used the allowance that I had saved to buy the complete original series from eBay. The Sailor Moon I found in this series was no longer a trouble-making middle-schooler. Instead, she was a young woman who understood her responsibilities and who was deeply loved and appreciated by her friends.   
 The concept of confidence was not new to me, though it was a helpful thing to be reminded of in a social environment that was so challenging to me. The security and comfort Serena (Sailor Moon’s real name) had being herself, despite her grades that were always at least 30% lower than many of her friends, and despite the way people teased her for being overly enthusiastic or for having the odd meat-ball-shaped buns atop her head, inspired me. Like her, I was teased for my appearance since I have dark hair and light skin, but did not pluck my eyebrows or upper lip. Like her I learnt to find people who appreciated me for my inner rather than outer features and learnt to stand up to bullies. In the end, I had a very valuable experience my seventh grade year since I not only learnt how to succeed socially in an unfamiliar system, but I also learnt how to assert myself in a way that isn’t overbearing.

Rather than simply enjoying Sailor Moon for the action and comedy, I began to understand it more deeply as a show about relationships and inner strength. I am now finishing high school and I still re-watch an episode now and then. Though I have officially graduated to higher levels of film, I am still wise enough to realize that her triumphs against fear, loss, and bullies are as precious and touching as anything that an expertly filmed and acted classic may offer.