

It's Not Summer Without TSITP



Summer doesn't feel complete without *The Summer I Turned Pretty* (TSITP). Whether through rewatches or the release of new episodes, the show has become a seasonal staple (and not just because of its on-screen drama). Much of its success lies in the way it has been embraced and amplified by online culture, especially on social media platforms.

At the heart of the series lies Isabel “Belly” Conklin, a teenage girl whose summers are shaped by her time at Cousins Beach with her mom’s best friend and her two sons. The story revolves around her complicated relationships with two brothers: Conrad, the reserved older sibling, and Jeremiah, the more outgoing and carefree younger one. This love triangle—combined with the challenges of family, friendship, and growing up—forms the drama that fuels both the show and its fan debates.

One of the driving forces behind TSITP’s popularity is the “TikTok hype machine.” Fan edits, trending audio clips, and memes have made the series nearly unavoidable on the platform. The show’s official accounts joined this trend, creating content that fueled debates between “Team Conrad” and “Team Jeremiah.” Music has also played a major role. With a soundtrack featuring artists like Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo, and Sabrina Carpenter, the series found a way to capture fans’ attention with familiar music and spark viral trends. As 11th grader **Fadzi Motsi** explained, “The perfect love triangle and the fact that the two brothers are so different makes it easy to pit people against each other. And the soundtrack, including artists like Taylor Swift, just adds to the hype.”

The show's resonance with its audience also stems from how its themes mirror the experiences of teens today. TSITP combines nostalgia and the intensity of teen love with a modern sensibility. Its focus on transitions (from girlhood to adulthood, and from friendship to romance) offers a kind of relatability that keeps viewers invested. 12th grader **Mariam Hussain** observed, "TSITP is really popular because it helps us relate in a coming-of-age way. We look forward to the growth of the characters, and the cliffhangers and changes from the books keep us on our toes."

Beyond romance, the series has also gained attention for spotlighting real-world issues that affect young people. For example, Jeremiah secures an impressive internship at his father's company without effort, meanwhile Taylor is forced to give up a competitive internship in New York due to financial struggles at home. The contrast emphasizes how privilege and nepotism can shape teens' opportunities for the future, leaving some characters with padded résumés while others lose access to valuable experiences they have worked hard to earn.

Branding and marketing strategies have also played a huge part in the show's success. From partnerships with youth-focused retailers like American Eagle to the show's coastal fashion, TSITP has tapped into a style and aesthetic that feels authentic to its audience. This combined with the steady buzz on social media has made the series more than just a TV show—it has become a cultural moment that defines summer.

Even for those who haven't watched a single episode, it's hard to avoid the phenomenon. As **Fei Zheng**, an 11th Grader at IA, put it, "You can't escape it. I'll be scrolling on TikTok and see dozens of edits or hear the soundtrack songs over and over." For many, TSITP feels like a show that is almost bigger on social media than it is on TV.

Ultimately, *The Summer I Turned Pretty* has become more than just a coming-of-age drama. Its success highlights how a series can thrive by aligning itself with Gen Z trends and cultural values while reflecting broader social realities. For many teens, the story now extends far beyond the screen into social media feeds, playlists, and even summer traditions. And that's why, for this generation, it's simply not summer without *The Summer I Turned Pretty*.