

*Reddit
Hot Take:*

Unsung Origins

How prequels and side-quals are answering our emotional need to figure out how exactly we got here.



NOW: WHAT'S HAPPENING

UNSUNG ORIGINS

TREND SUMMARY: *Today's narratives are less "where are we going?" and more "how did we get here?"*

Nostalgia has never *not* been a fruitful area for entertainment to mine. But now, those looks back feel a bit different. From *The Dropout* to *Inventing Anna*, or *Kenobi* to *The Book of Boba Fett*, there's less comfort in the familiar and more critical reassessment of the stories we already know. Sure, there's confidence in knowing it all works out in the end, but what's interesting is how we arrived here in the first place.

Importantly, we're turning to sidelined characters to answer this question. What was Obi Wan up to all those years? Could Anna's friends shed light on an inscrutable mind?

For the first time, the side quest is the main quest, as we search for answers to our present in alternate perspectives of the past.

SOURCE:

1. Reddit Internal Data, Apr 2021–Mar 2022 vs Apr 2020–Mar 2021
2. Reddit Internal Data, Jan 2019 - Jan 2022

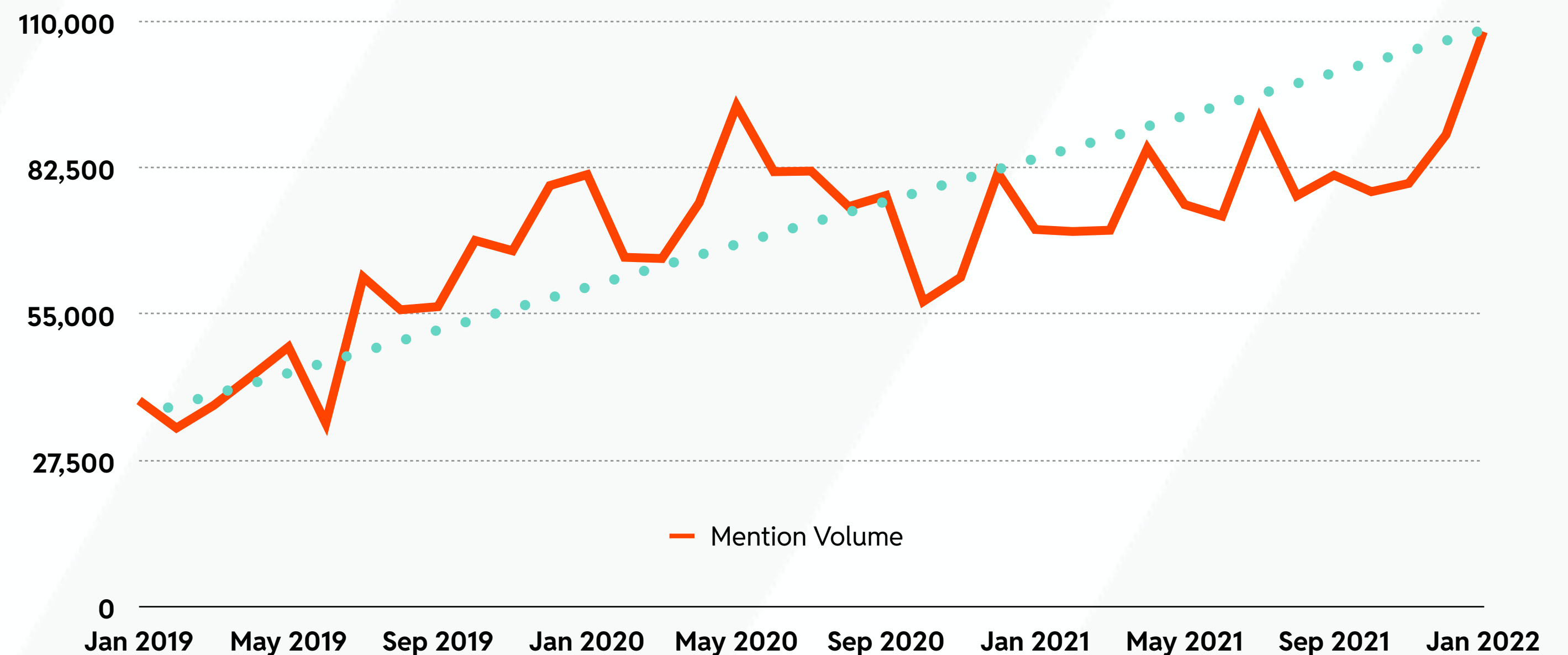
6x

The average weekly page views for subreddits for **prequels vs sequels**¹

+179%

Increase in posts about **origin stories** on Reddit from 2019 to 2022²

Origin Stories have been gaining momentum



Created by the Reddit Partner Insights Team

UNSUNG ORIGINS EXTENDS TO GAMING

4,210 Upvotes

Top 20 this month in r/WoW

“Maybe WoW should take a break from having a "Story", and instead just focus more on world-building with smaller, zone-specific stories?”

— Redditor in [r/WoW](#)



THE ORIGIN: WHERE IT CAME FROM

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Let's face it: the future has never been as scary as it seems right now. Global pandemic. Massive inflation. Catastrophic climate change. Possible WWII. It's no wonder we're less interested in stories about our immediate future than about interrogating our past.

Even stories about the future are looking to time travel or multiverses to change the present—like if we just could identify the wrong choice we made in the past, we could fix it all in the future.

But there are new themes emerging as well. BLM, Asian hate crimes, and trans rights have all opened our eyes to the fact that the mainstream narrative of how the world works may not be the full story.

Could it be that these sidelined voices, these alternate perspectives could in fact offer a better path forward?

From: Comfort Viewing To: Alternate Perspectives

SOURCE:

1. GlobalWebIndex, US data, (Q4 vs Q3 2021)

2. Reddit Internal Data

3. [Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism](#)

+343%

Increase in **Asian Hate Crime**
in 2021 vs. 2020³



Michelle Go vigil the top upvoted post
in r/AsianAmericans

**Anxiety Breeds
Reflection**

+77%

QoQ increase in preference to think
about the **past rather than future**¹

+309%

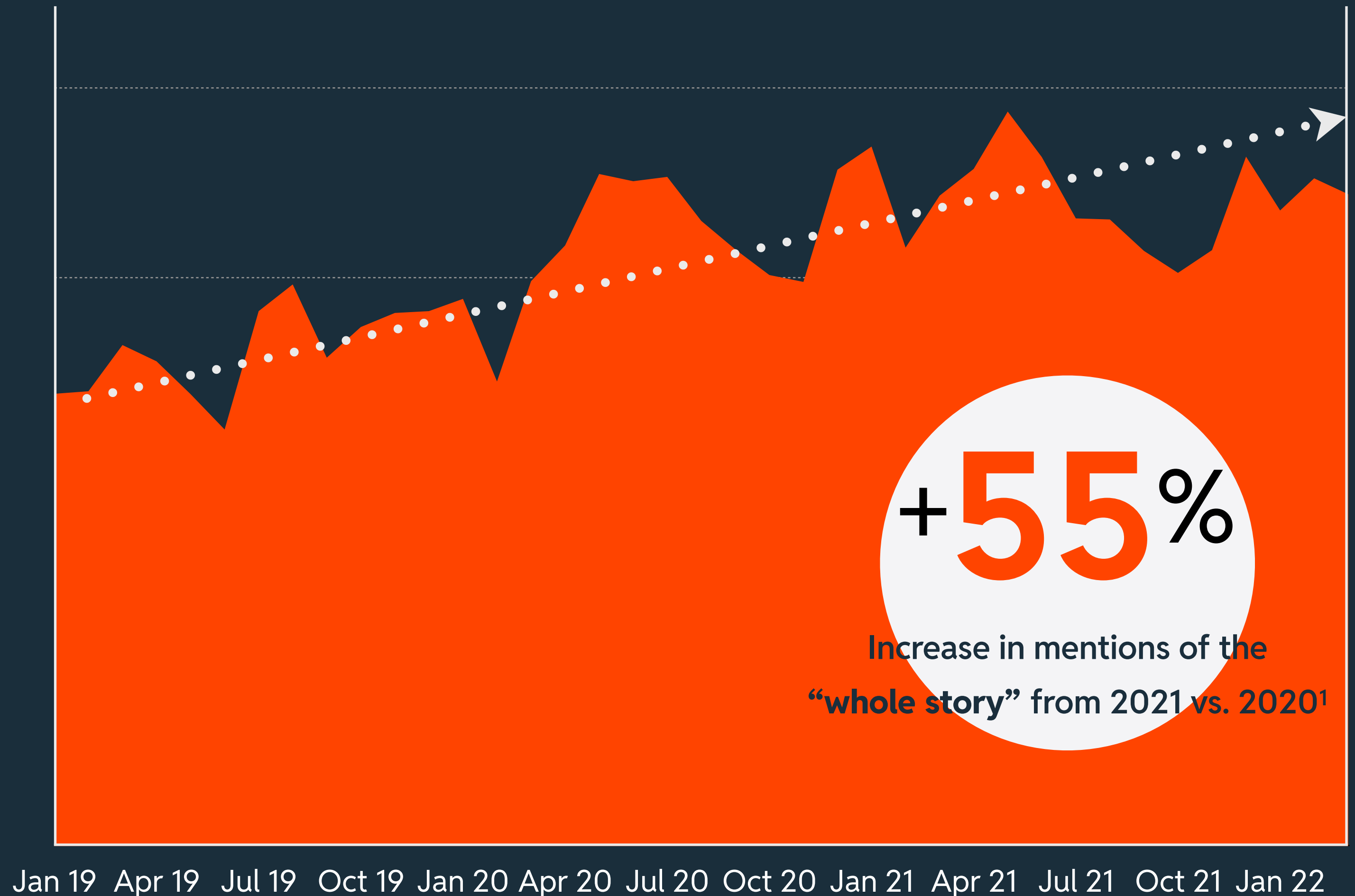
increase in mentions of "**WWII**,"
Mar vs Jan 2022²



Created by the Reddit Partner Insights Team

THE WHOLE STORY

Searches for “**the whole story**” have gradually risen year over year as people realize that there’s more than meets the eye to what they’re seeing or hearing. Increasingly, it’s alternate perspectives that provide the missing details that lead to a widely accepted truth.



NEXT: HOW IT'S EVOLVING

ANTI-HERO COMPLEX

The visionary. The iconoclast. The superhero. Our stories are littered with (mostly white male) protagonists that change the world through their sheer force of will. They have unwavering self-belief that they know best, and we watch as they surmount “the haters” who believe in data, consensus or cooperation.

This hero is dying.

We’ve seen this movie in real life—where self-mythologizing has real consequences—and we’re tired of it. We’re looking for a new story, where heroism is shared and protagonists actually listen.

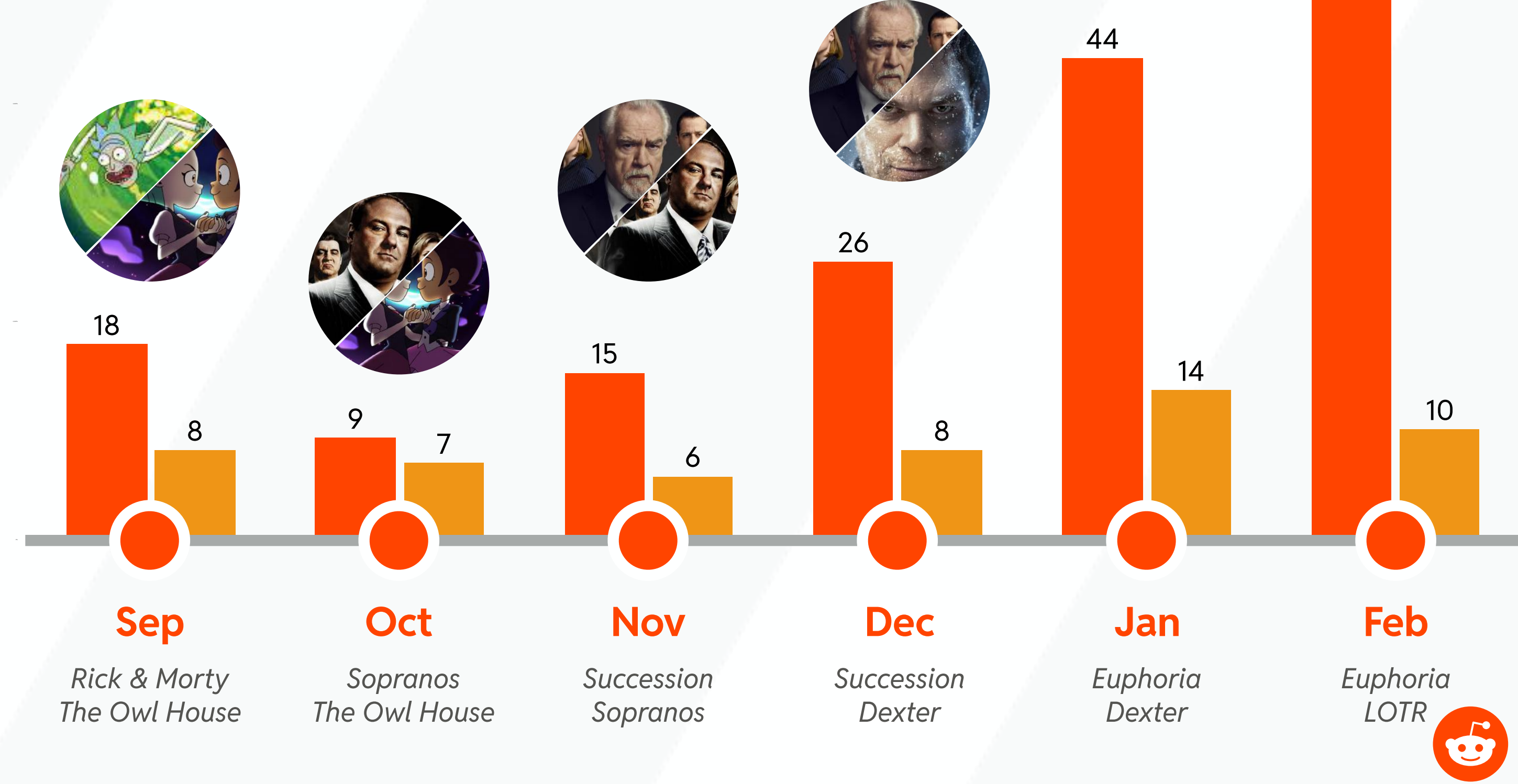
Call it the *Ted Lasso* effect, where our heroes can be vulnerable. Where they can admit they might not have all the answers and be open to changing their minds.

Imagine that: a hero without a savior complex.

SOURCE:
Reddit Internal Data Sep 2021 - Feb 2022

#1

For the last 6 mos. the **top two subreddits** for scripted TV have all featured a **takedown or redefinition of the traditional hero archetype**.



A NEW KIND OF HERO

2,238 Upvotes

Top 25 All Time in r/TedLasso

*“Ted wasn’t just nice, he was kind. **He was sure of himself without being cocky.** He respected people in a way that made them feel seen. He genuinely cares about the emotional well-being of everyone around him, and his empathy is **almost totally devoid of self-interest.** And to top it all off, he’s a real, three-dimensional person with struggles and demons and imperfections.”*

— Redditor in [r/TedLasso](#)



FUTURE: WHERE IT'S HEADED

A PRISM OF NARRATIVES

We wouldn't define a tree by just its trunk. It has roots and branches and leaves. Similarly, we're realizing that characters have a backstory (roots) and they're surrounded by others that give them life, shelter, and comfort (leaves).

Our protagonist may be the sturdy center, holding this world together, but our most powerful stories need to incorporate the side characters to complete the picture. Call it world building 2.0, where in lieu of a massive superhero team up, there's shared growth and change for leaves, roots and trunk alike.

This isn't a "lower-decks" episode of Star Trek, where the conceit is the gimmick of side characters taking center stage, it's about realizing that the true story can never be told with only one perspective. In essence, our camera lens is turning into a prism, sharing alternate angles on our traditional view.

From: **A Lens** To: **A Prism**

SOURCE:

1. Reddit Internal Data Mar 2021 vs Mar 2022
2. Brandwatch 2019 - 2022

+92%

More growth in **mentions of side characters** over leads since 2019²

If redditors don't see the stories they want, they'll create their own.

Side is the New Center

-32%

YoY **decline of My Hero Academia** subreddit views ¹

+687%

YoY **increase in My Hero Academia** fanfic subreddit views¹



Created by the Reddit Partner Insights Team

#3 Post in r/FanFic

1,599 upvotes

*“I was **worried my dad judged me for writing fanfic**. I was so wrong. In an effort to embrace my hobby and stop hiding it, I decided to tell my dad a couple of days ago. He is a pretty gruff man's man and not a real typically creative type... **Today, he told me he thought of a fic idea for The Office** (his favorite show), and he wanted to tell me about it!”*

— Redditor in [r/FanFic](#)



TL;DR

Now more than ever, **the side quest is the real story.**

People want an **alternative view of the past** in the hopes of finding clues on how to save our future.



Marketer Implications:

As we interrogate our pasts, we open up interesting possibilities for entertainment companies and any brand that tells rich stories.

- 01. Provenance:** *Marketing comfort is now passé—it's about the knowledge gained from years of experience. People can see through the illusion that "yesterday was better," but want to look back to move forward stronger.*
- 02. Prismatic:** *Whenever possible, change the point of view from the main character to the side characters. Be alert for and support fan fiction that explores narrative paths that aren't part of your story.*
- 03. Cooperation:** *The adage is that either you or the brand are the heroes of every campaign, but try extending the you to we. How does your brand amplify the performance of other brands? (Think skincare routines over miracle products.)*



Thanks!

Want to Learn More?

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