

Extensive breakdown of Attack on Titan's ending:

**Too many narrative flaws to be
unintentional**

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Introduction:

By now, the issues with the ending of this series have been talked about endlessly. Most of the issues I'll talk about have been beaten to death already, but I just wanted to give my perspective as someone who got into writing partly thanks to AoT (though it's admittedly not that big of a part) and a long time fan who's been with this series for 8 years and analyzing the manga for nearly 2 years. I like to look at this series and try to think about what would be the best and worst decisions someone can make when writing a story and try to keep it separate from my own preferences. This ending broke my heart, not because things didn't go my way, but because Isayama did so many things that ruin stories and anyone, even amateurs who haven't written a story yet, know better than to make even half the mistakes Isayama made with this ending. It's to the point where it's impossible to make all the mistakes Isayama made in the end without it being intentional.

Please understand that this isn't about making people feel bad for liking the ending. If you're someone who saw nothing wrong with this ending, that's perfectly fine. You're free to like what you like. This is simply an analysis of everything done wrong from a writing standpoint.

While interpreting art is obviously subjective, there are still some objective errors you can make when writing, mainly inconsistencies in the story. This ending is full of them. There were also a lot of things in this final chapter that, while not technical errors, still contribute to harming the narrative and writers generally want to avoid making these mistakes to keep the story coherent. Most of these were avoidable and weren't necessary for the type of ending we got, which tells me Isayama wrote this ending as badly as possible on purpose. I'll try to be as objective as I can be, though obviously my opinions and some conjecture will be mixed in as well. This is an analysis of how, my own personal preferences aside, this ending fails from a writing standpoint.

Failure in concluding the mysteries:

It's no secret that Isayama always put a lot of attention to detail in the mysteries of this series. His writing style follows basic storytelling rules and makes sure that almost everything happens for a reason consistent with the worldbuilding, characterization, and plot. He loves to set up clues for mysteries years in advance and the answers always made sense until now. The identities of the Female, Armored, and Colossal Titans constantly had clues shown in the background where hardly anyone was paying attention. Grisha's whereabouts were unknown for a long time but we slowly got clues that he was eaten by Eren. The audience was led to believe humanity went extinct outside of the walls until it eventually became clear that there was a faction of outsiders more advanced than them and eventually we got the reveal that their enemy was the whole world. Eren's actions since the timeskip puzzled everyone, making even his own close friends think he was being controlled by Zeke while the audience was treated to hints of Eren's true intentions leading up to the Rumbling.

This is how Isayama typically writes mysteries. Hints can be as subtle as a supposedly minor character saying a seemingly innocent line out of context to another supposedly minor character like Annie and Reiner speaking in Trost. He gives the audience a false premise, either by having clueless characters state incorrect beliefs or by making the audience believe something damning done by a character is normal, and that false premise slowly falls apart. In the last stretch of the series, Isayama turned Eren, Historia, and later Ymir into mystery boxes that were saved until the end. However, the way he handled all 3 in this chapter is so unlike any mystery he's written before. They all require the audience to ignore a significant amount of chapters across the whole series and lack any coherent storytelling.

In a series like this where almost every detail is written with a specific goal in mind, diverting from that plan could easily make the story feel like it has an identity crisis as the clues to the mysteries were intended for a different story than the one we got. That's exactly what we see in chapter 139.

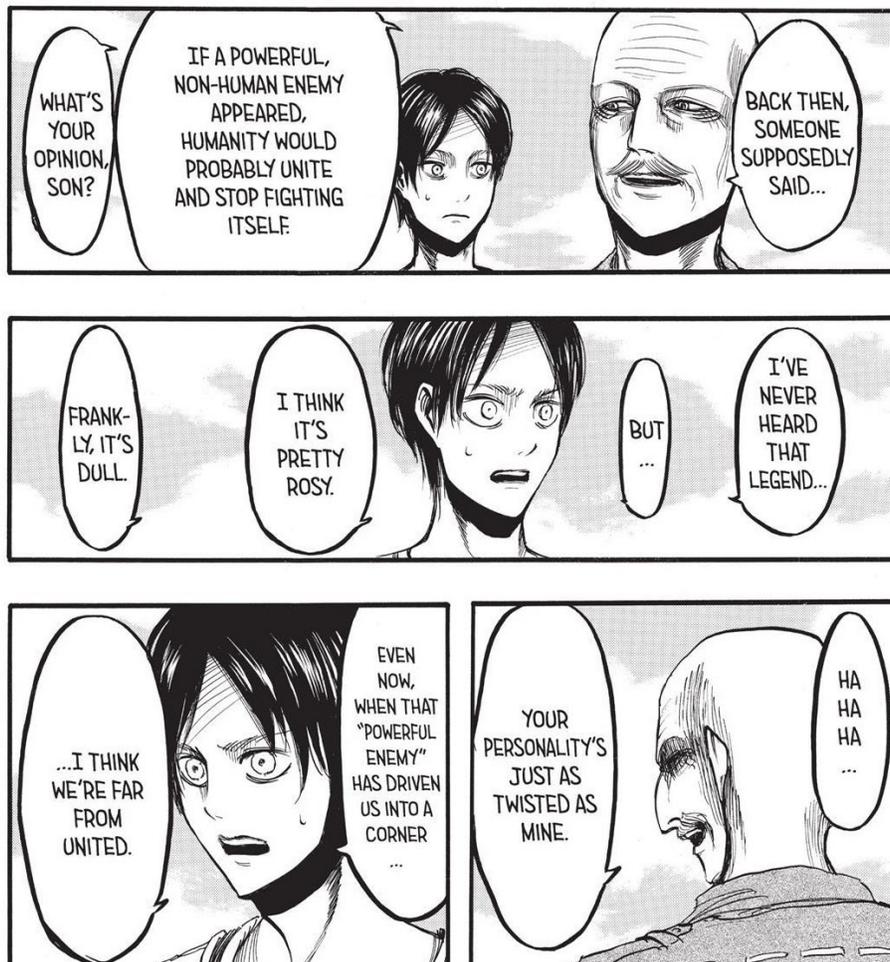
Eren's intentions:

Eren's actions after the timeskip have caused most of the audience to speculate about his intentions. He became the largest enigma in the series, though the signs of his intentions were always there. By the time Eren announced the Rumbling to the world in 123, there was no more question what his plan was. His decision matched his prior lines about killing all of the enemies with the Rumbling. Doing something like this was consistent with his personality and the lengths he goes to succeed. He laid out some of his goals clearly in his speech. Chapters 130 and 131 provided further confirmation by showing us Eren planning this out and also showing us Eren's thoughts. He was completely serious about a full Rumbling and there was no question about it. The only questions remaining about Eren were of his intentions after the Rumbling, the true nature of his relationship with Historia, and how much he's seen in his future memories.

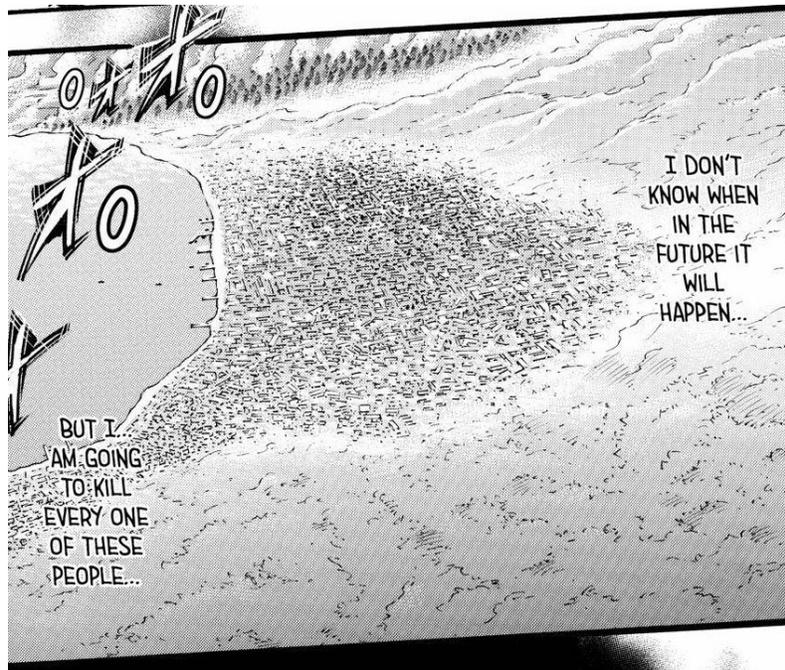
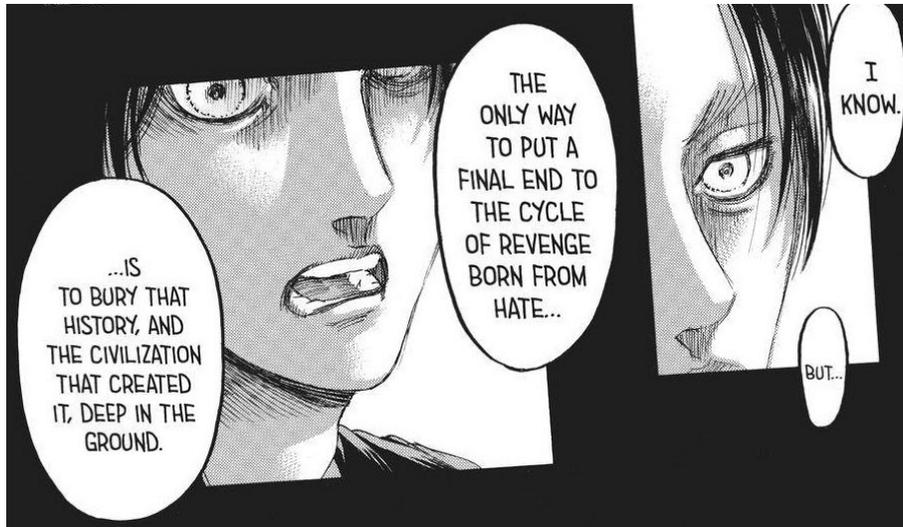
Once the final battle started, a lot more questions were raised. Why is Ymir doing all the fighting when Eren said just two chapters prior that he'd fight the Alliance? Why did Ymir allow Zeke and Armin to meet and past shifters to fight for them while she was still putting up a resistance? Why did the Rumbling stop with Zeke's death when royal blood isn't needed anymore to use the Founding Titan? Why did Eren not continue the Rumbling when he proved he still possessed the power of the Founding Titan in 138? Why did Eren let himself get killed? Eren, whose actions were previously understandable, became a huge mystery once again. There were a number of ways Isayama could've resolved this while keeping Eren in character, but the answer he gave us in 139 failed to do that.

Eren's plan in 139 was revealed to be nothing better than what Karl Fritz and the Tyburs attempted: make himself the enemy of the world and make an Eldian the hero who stops him. This revelation creates four big issues. The first is that Eren himself dismissed the belief that this could work as early as his talk with Pixis near the start of the series. We've never seen anything to suggest Eren has changed his mind. If anything, we've only seen the opposite: that Eren still held onto all his core beliefs throughout his life. The second issue is that this solves nothing. The situation with the Tyburs had already failed. Only the Tyburs were treated as heroes while all other Eldians were still despised. Why would Eren believe it would be different now, especially after he just gave all the survivors more reason to hate Eldians by

committing the worst crime in history? Third, Eren was clearly shown to be worried about Historia becoming a Titan and lashed out whenever that topic came up. Why would he be so desperate and volatile if he knew all along that the curse would be over by the end?



The biggest error in this revelation is that it directly contradicts countless lines from Eren throughout the series about his goals and motivations. Eren was trying to guarantee that the cycle of hatred ends and Paradis is safe. This plan throws that all away and leaves everyone's future up to chance. But what makes this the worst is that it even goes against his own dialogue and inner monologue about his plan to Rumble the world in 130 and 131. This should be impossible. You can not write a character to lie to themselves in their own thoughts. The closest you can get to that is either a character narrating a story with the goal of lying to the audience or something in the story is preventing the character from remembering their real thoughts like amnesia or some other form of mental illness. Neither of these can be applied to Eren at the time that these chapters took place.



When asked why he wanted to destroy the world, Eren's answer was that he didn't know, even though he knew before. Making a character answer an important question about their intentions with "I don't know" is the laziest way to respond. That's something you would do when you've written yourself into a corner and really don't know the answer to it yourself despite being the one who wrote this situation. It's even worse when that non-answer is used multiple times in the same chapter. Though in this case, I think it's less that Isayama didn't know the answer himself and more that he didn't know how to make that answer fit this changed ending since Eren's real motivations from previous chapters are incompatible with the direction Eren's character was taken in this chapter.

Another major hole in this is Grisha's involvement. The last we saw of Grisha chronologically when he was alive, he gave Eren his powers knowing what Eren would do in the future. Prior to that, he was begging Zeke to stop Eren. Eren teased something that happened in between that made Grisha change his mind and want to give Eren his powers. We never found out what happened. Grisha saw memories that convinced him everything would go Eren's way in the future and Eren saw those same memories. What we got instead was Eren getting himself killed for a plan he was never in favor of and not knowing if he even succeeds. To make matters more confusing, Grisha's ghost came back to help kill Eren after being the one to help put Eren on this path and this is never explained.

Overall, everything about Eren's plan to get killed after killing only 80% of the world is a mess and fails as a mystery. I think Isayama was trying to convey how idiotic this was by comparing Armin to the Tyburs knowing that this has already failed when they did it before. It's the exact same situation even right down to how Armin and the Tyburs are both false heroes who betrayed Eldia and get to take credit for defeating the devil. Isayama could've chosen not to bring the Tyburs up, but he did. To me, that shows some self-awareness.

Ymir's motivation:

Ymir Fritz has been one of the most mysterious characters in the series. When we first heard of her, we wanted to know more of her backstory. When we got her backstory, we wanted to know her current motivations. She appeared in front of Ramzi as he got crushed in 131, raising the question of why she was there watching. We next saw her in 133 together with child Eren and it seemed her appearance coincided with Eren's friends being pushed back when they tried running towards him. After that, she appeared to be the one fighting the Alliance by sending past Titan shifters to attack them. But what makes her actions most confusing was her bringing Armin to PATHS and supposedly letting him and Zeke bring a few other shifters with them to help stop Eren. Did Ymir switch sides? If so, why was she still controlling an army of shifters to fight the Alliance even after that? Was Ymir an actual character with agency or nothing more than a mere plot device designed to instigate conflict and later resolve conflict?

Before we get into what 139 did to Ymir, let's examine how she's been characterized, both within the story and outside of it.

We've seen Ymir before when she reconstructed Zeke's body, but our first proper introduction to her was in 120 when Eren met her in PATHS. Right away, Eren looked like he sympathized with her. She was this dirty-looking little girl who looked miserable. She was a slave. Her backstory in 122 showed just how much she had to suffer. She was punished when she was accused of freeing pigs and King Fritz mockingly told her she was free before hunting her down for sport. She nearly died had she not gotten Titan powers. After obtaining power, she continued to be a slave under King Fritz and was exploited by him for the rest of her life. She was raped and forced to bear his children. She eventually took a hit for him and lost the will to live. Rather than being free from her torment, she awoke in another world where she continued to serve the royal blood for 2000 years in the real world and an eternity in her world as time moves much slower there.

Ymir desired something and what she desired, only Eren could understand, as Zeke said in 137. Eren was the person she waited for. He was the only person to ever offer her freedom. When presented with the choice between continuing to serve royal blood forever and helping the person who showed her kindness, she chose the latter. Eren's speech to her about how she's not a slave or a goddess and how she had the power to make her own choices was a turning point for her. For the first time ever, she tasted freedom. But her wish didn't end there. She still wanted something more and it became part of the mystery around her.



In 135, we got confirmation that Ymir really did set the pigs free. Was she just being a nice girl like Frieda's book portrayed her as or was there something more to it? I saw this scene as a subtle insight into her desires. Ymir is portrayed as a girl yearning for freedom. It would make sense to me if she pitied the pigs trapped in a cage and wanted to set them free.

Something to keep in mind is that despite acting of her own free will now, Ymir was still in PATHS. Her presence there is synonymous with the curse of the Titans continuing. As long as Ymir's cage exists, Titans exist or vice versa. We don't really know exactly how it works. But her connection to PATHS leaves no doubts about her end goal. Ymir wanted to truly be free from that world. The preview for the final volume focused exactly on this. It showed the scene of Ymir with the pigs and read "A girl dreams of a world free from curses and fate."



Volume 34 preview

Another piece of media I'd like to show is the song [Kimi ga Fusawashii to Omou Daimei](#) by Linked Horizon. It was a bonus track of the album *Shinjitsu e no Shingeki* made for the anime and released in June 2019, just a few months before the events that occurred in 120-122. The song is sung to an unborn baby asking them what they wish for: to end their existence or to be reborn. And it ends by asking them if they're free after thousands of years and we hear a newborn baby crying. The song was clearly written for Ymir as she's the only person in the whole story who would be in such a position.

At this point, her wish seems clear enough. Ymir wanted freedom. When we include the song, the pro-birth theme this series strongly promoted, and the significance of someone close to Eren about to give birth soon (I'll talk about those last two parts soon), I think we have enough information to see where this is going. We're just missing one piece of the puzzle to really understand her actions in the final battle. But did we get that piece?

Ymir's wish had always been tied to freedom based on everything we've seen, but 139 seems to have changed her wish as well as her views on King Fritz. King Fritz is no longer this madman she was frightened of and wanted to be free from. Now Ymir is in love with him and had been obeying him out of that love, not because she was a slave. Eren's words to her in 121 no longer have any meaning. What was the point of showing Ymir miserable every time she's seen with King Fritz if she secretly loved him? What was the point of Ymir leading Eren to her if he wasn't the person she wanted to free her? What was the point of Ymir snapping out of the servitude of royal blood and siding with Eren instead of Zeke if she was never a slave in the first place? What was the point of Eren reminding her that she's a human and not a slave? Nothing in 121 matters anymore.

For some reason, Mikasa was the person Ymir was waiting for all this time. If seeing affection was all she wanted, why hadn't she done anything about the curse in the past when seeing displays of affection? She's had 2000 years of watching people. Why wait specifically for Mikasa? Who knows? Isayama sure doesn't. Eren had no idea why Ymir wanted Mikasa and he's the one giving us this exposition! We had so much build-up to Ymir's wish, only for it to come out of left field in the final chapter and make her in love with her abuser. That revelation doesn't even look like it's meant to be taken seriously as we're shown Ymir looking depressed as Eren says she's in love.

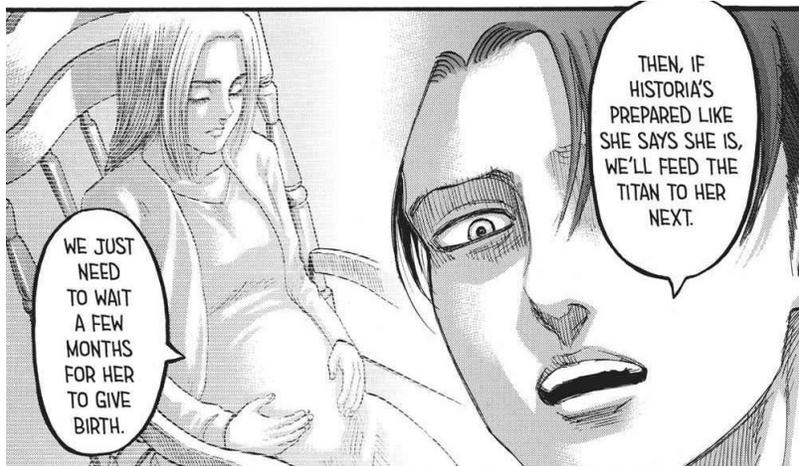
I understand this chapter's revelation about Ymir's feelings is controversial for several reasons. Let me make one thing clear. There is nothing inherently wrong with a writer portraying a character to have Stockholm syndrome. Just like with anything else in writing, what's important is the execution... which is exactly the issue here.

Historia's pregnancy:

This might be the most controversial section of this analysis, so let me just preface this by saying this has absolutely nothing to do with who I ship. I'd be completely fine with this ship not becoming canon if Isayama hadn't spent so much time setting up for a different ending than the one we got. Before anyone accuses me of being biased, everything I'm about to say about Historia, I'd be saying about Mikasa if she was the one in her position and Isayama gave her this subplot instead, even though I don't ship Mikasa with Eren. The conclusion I've arrived at regarding this is based purely on the information Isayama presented to us within the story and a basic comprehension of mystery writing. This won't even include outside material such as interviews or music that support this conclusion.

If you're someone that hates this ship with a passion and don't want to hear me talk about any of the evidence and how Isayama wrote this relationship, you might as well keep scrolling to the next section on page 19.

From the moment Historia was revealed to be pregnant in 107, fans wondered who the father could be. 108 gave us a story that many fans blindly accepted, but those who tried digging deeper typically found more questions than answers. It was said that Historia was impregnated by a childhood bully who tried making it up to her by working at her orphanage without trying to draw attention. Historia never looks happy around this guy, but we're expected to believe she either "played around" with a stranger off-screen or she got pregnant to save herself and Zeke after Yelena came up with this after warning Historia about the military's plan to make her eat Zeke once he arrives, despite how out of character both those options would be for something like Historia who loves children and wouldn't act like some whore like her mother. We're shown an image of a hooded figure approaching Historia. The MPs brought up that they ran a background check on the man to make sure he wasn't anyone's pawn and they also added that Historia never married this guy. But the most suspicious thing about this scene is that the information about the pregnancy didn't come from anyone involved with it, but told through unreliable third-party narrators who were blissfully drinking Zeke's spinal fluid, showing how ignorant they were. Right away, that's 6 or 7 red flags that anyone familiar with mysteries would likely catch. But this subject was pushed to the background until much later.



The only new piece of information we got for a while was that Historia was expected to give birth in a few months. Once 130 came, almost everything the MPs said fell apart. We learned that Yelena had nothing to do with warning Historia about the plan to feed Zeke to her

and the pregnancy was never her idea. Eren was the hooded figure who met with her and he also knew about the wine plan beforehand, meaning getting pregnant to delay the military's plan was redundant since the Yeagerists could've taken over whenever they wanted as soon as Zeke set foot on the island. Eren gave Historia the options to fight the MPs with him or run. She wouldn't get pregnant without reason. Someone of her size would be at greater risk of complications during childbirth, which was even brought up within the story when the MPs speculated on her pregnancy. Taking a risk just for an unneeded plan doesn't make sense.

After Eren tells her about his plan to Rumble the world and tells her about how much he trusts her because she saved him, the flashback is cut and we jump to a different flashback with Zeke. Eren was trying to figure out why Mikasa cared so much about him and Zeke answered him saying it was love, which prompted Eren to remember the time Historia asked him about having a child. Eren's response to Zeke about not responding to Mikasa's feelings because he's going to die soon is juxtaposed with Historia asking about a baby, which we never see Eren's answer to. Though the fact that Isayama chose to juxtapose the two scenes should make it obvious what Eren's answer was since it would be meaningless to put those two scenes together like that if it's not to tell us that the results were the opposite (Isayama does this a lot with paneling, which I'll show a glimpse of later).

Isayama had been very careful to conceal the full timeline after the timeskip. The characters always mention events but rarely give the exact timeframe, such as when exactly did the Scouts go to Marley, how long did they stay there, when did Historia get pregnant, etc. This is something that's slowly revealed over time and every time they reveal more, the timeline gets

closer to showing when Eren and Historia got busy. We know from Hange's dialogue that the Scouts were in Marley for a few months before the raid in Liberio. The current events took place 1 month after returning to Paradis. Floch was told Eren's plan 10 months prior to this at the railroad ceremony. Eren also met with Historia around that time, and that number is important because that's how long pregnancies are counted in Japan (it's the same number of weeks, just counted differently). Historia gave birth during the Rumbling, meaning Levi's statement about Historia's due date was off by a few months and her real conception was when Eren was still on the island 10 months ago when they met.

I think by now it should be easy to understand why everything pointed to Eren and not the farmer. If it was the farmer, there would be no need for Historia to lie to the military about her due date. That's something someone would only do to hide the father's identity. Furthermore, there was no reason to make Historia avoid marrying the farmer before only to make her marry him in 139. There was nothing stopping her from marrying him before if he really was the father. Adding details like these serves no purpose in the narrative and only leads to contradictions that the ending failed to address. Also, there's the fact that Eren and Historia's conversation in 130 ended in a cliffhanger by cutting away from his answer to her question about having a baby. That's an easy way to tell the audience that this is going to be something important. That scene was set up to be revisited.

If Eren was confirmed to be the father, it would've explained all his erratic behaviors whenever Historia was on his mind. It would've also explained why his treatment of her differed from how he treated his other friends, who he kept in ignorance the whole time while Historia was filled in on his pre-retconned plan when there was no need to tell her anything. He even offered her the choice to erase her memories to spare her from the guilt but made no offer to his friends. Another interesting thing about this is that Isayama always made an effort to exclude Historia from Eren's thoughts of his friends and keep Historia separate, leading to Historia being the individual Eren had thought of the most since the basement (which makes his outburst about how he only thinks of Mikasa even more jarring) as everyone else was usually included in group shots like the railroad scene and that panel of everyone sitting at a table in 130. That's not even an exaggeration. It's true that there's not a single panel throughout the last 50 chapters or so where Eren groups Historia together with the rest of his friends while he has a lot of scenes specifically thinking about Historia.

Additionally, Eren's thought of protecting Historia in 89 transitioned to Kruger talking about starting a family and loving someone to avoid history repeating. There's no mistaking that this line was intended for Eren as it directly followed his thoughts on Historia and Isayama pointed out through Grisha and Kruger's dialogue that Grisha would forget this and this line was intended for a future inheritor who would see these memories, which obviously leaves only Eren since he's the last Attack Titan. Most fans overlook this since it's cleverly hidden by being placed next to a line that overshadows it: Kruger mentioning Mikasa and Armin. Looking back on this scene, there was no reason to include Kruger mentioning that his line about starting a family was for a future inheritor if Isayama never planned on making Eren go that route. An unusual detail like that is worthless for a writer to include if it has no effect on the story. Imagine if in Death Note, L finds a clue to Kira's identity, but the writer never brings it up in the story again, and L instead never catches onto Light.



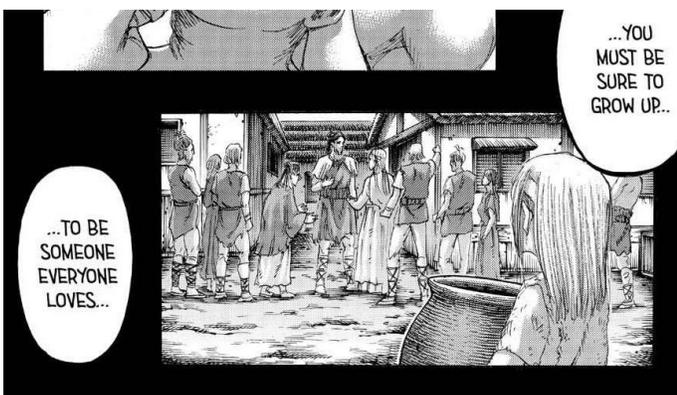
Back to the pregnancy drama itself, Isayama wrote a mystery where the only 2 candidates for the father were the farmer and Eren and gave information that questioned the legitimacy of the farmer on several occasions. The only logical reason any writer would have for doing this would be to build up to a reveal that it's Eren. If Isayama wanted it to be the farmer, he wouldn't have given us information that contradicts that story with no explanation. If he wanted it to be another character, he would've presented another character as a potential candidate. Furthermore, Historia was essentially written out of the story for the sake of this subplot that makes her act out of character with the result we got and ended up adding nothing to the story.

Some people would say that clues pointing to Eren being the father were all red herrings. That's wrong. That is not how you write a mystery. The fake King Fritz in the Uprising arc is a red herring. Rod's version of the story of how Grisha massacred his family in cold blood is a red herring. Clues that are only seen by a small portion of the audience who spend extensive time analyzing the series are not red herrings. That's just not how it works. Red herrings are used to fool the majority of the audience into believing something that is actually incorrect. The "official" story about Historia's pregnancy was the one the MPs gave us. The audience believed them for the most part. Any contradictions in their story are supposed to lead us to the truth, not reaffirm the beliefs the characters already had and leave the contradictions unexplained.

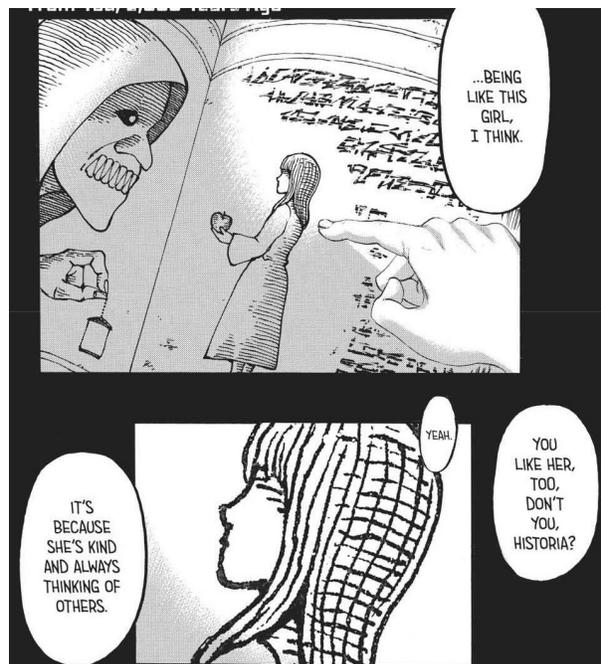
The idea that Isayama wrote a fake mystery to trick only a few people who actively search for clues and he did it by using cheap shipping bait that leaves holes in the story is ridiculous. No writer would do such a thing, no matter how much of a troll Isayama can be sometimes. That's a waste of time and panels that could be spent on something that actually benefits the story, like moving the plot forward, character development, setting up a real mystery, etc. He spent nearly 3 years writing this mystery. That is far too much dedication just to tell us in the end that the drunk MPs who got everything else wrong were somehow right about the most important part of their discussion and that the answer to the mystery was irrelevant to the story. Also, there would be no need to drag the mystery out to the very end and make Historia give birth during the Rumbling if it wasn't going to be relevant.

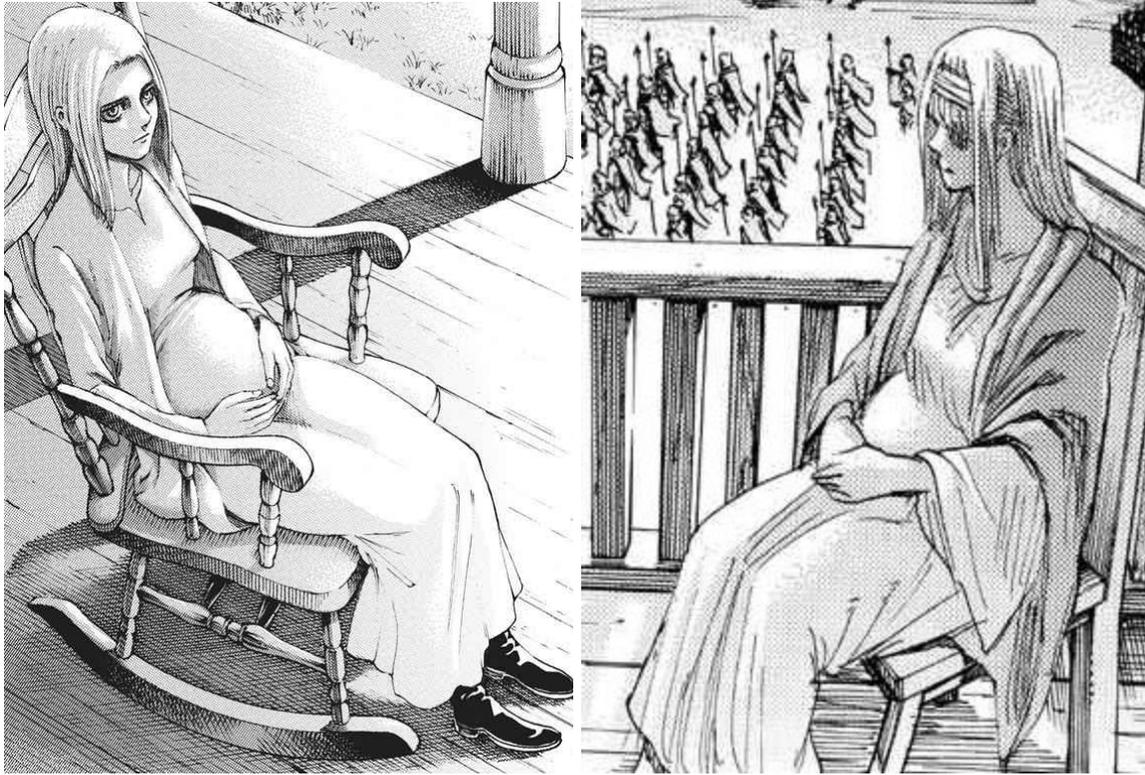
One last thing I wish to talk about regarding Historia's pregnancy was Isayama's decision to make this relationship the antithesis of dysfunctional relationships shown in the series. Most

notably is Ymir Fritz's relationship with King Fritz. Historia's whole character has been paralleled with Ymir's since long before Ymir was even introduced. Historia's Krista persona originated from a character based on Ymir Fritz in her book.



122 even opened up with a scene of Historia being told to act like Ymir and it transitioned to Ymir's backstory where we saw Ymir's childhood filled with suffering, lack of love, lack of freedom, and featured Ymir in the exact same situation Eren was trying to save Historia from. Ymir was used for her Titan powers and her children were forced to eat her to continue the reign of Titans. King Fritz sarcastically told Ymir she was free and later turned her into a baby-making machine to fuel his own thirst for power. The dichotomy between Eren and King Fritz was intentional and there was nothing ambiguous about it. But in the end, Isayama dropped all of Historia's parallels to Ymir and turned Mikasa into the Ymir stand-in out of nowhere.





There were some parallels to Grisha and Dina as well. A Yeager man and a blonde woman who is the last person of royal blood on their side of the walls having a child at the age of 19. Zeke noted how Eren had begun to resemble their father. Grisha stood up for Dina and brought her to tears. The next thing we knew, they were married and had a child. Eren stood up for Historia and brought her to tears. At the end of that same chapter, Historia was pregnant with what was certainly Eren's child at the time if we just ignore shipping for a moment and look at only the evidence. Similar to the King Fritz and Ymir parallels, this relationship was already on track to end differently as neither Eren nor Historia would be the type of people to use their child as a tool the way Grisha and Dina did to Zeke.

This wasn't a ship that only existed in people's heads. Isayama himself used all sorts of narrative tools to build on it in a way that would naturally lead to the endgame, and that's what fascinated me the most about this ship. I've never seen any writer put this much effort into making a ship this important to the plot in a story that wasn't a romance. Isayama did a masterful job weaving it into the narrative so seamlessly. Just one small scene confirming it would've been all it took to connect dozens of chapters of build-up and explain many things that needed to be explained for the plot to make sense.

Of course, the downside of this was that Isayama put all his eggs in one basket. If he ever chose a different ending like he did now, there was nothing he could've done to substitute the things he did with Eren and Historia. Historia ended up getting sidelined for a mystery that was dropped and the "official" reason within the story stayed as her having a child with some random man just to use that child to save herself, something that never made sense for her character and wasn't even necessary for her to do. All those chapters, character actions, motivations, and details added to turn this into a mystery are now wasted.

Conflict resolutions (and lack thereof):

One of the most important things to keep in mind when writing a conflict is how you plan to resolve it. If you write a conflict designed to be overcome by the characters, you need to have a plan or at least not make it too challenging to the point where you're unable to think of a solution when it comes time for it. Some writers are able to wing it. Hirohiko Araki does it in Jojo's Bizarre Adventure all the time when writing battles and setting up the main antagonist of the arc. But the chaos of JJBA is part of Araki's writing style.

Resolutions to conflicts in AoT are usually grounded in reality. Answers don't normally come out of nowhere. They're sometimes unpredictable but are achievable through the known abilities and knowledge of the characters, such as Armin coming up with a plan to defeat Bertholdt using the Colossal Titan's known weakness. Let's review how this ending handled all of the conflicts it had going into it, as well as how it chose not to handle some of them.

The end of the Titan curse:

The existence of Titans had been a major issue since the start of the series. Back when they were these enigmatic creatures mindlessly eating people, our protagonist stepped up as someone willing to kill them all. Eren was driven to wipe out all Titans throughout his life. Once he learned the truth about Titans being people, he became more sympathetic towards them, wondering if all Titans are just victims trapped in an endless nightmare like Freckled Ymir said about her own experience. Grisha's books and memories confirmed that it's people of their own race who were turned into Titans against their wills.

Eldians were only valued for their ability to turn into Titans. Once technology began to catch up to their power, they would become obsolete. That was Marley's reason for attempting to take control of the Founding Titan and plunder Paradis for natural resources. This issue was brought to the forefront in the Marley arc after Reiner was brought down by modern weaponry. The nature of the conflict has changed drastically over the course of the series, but Titans remained an issue that needed to be resolved.

The most fitting way to end this conflict would've been to have Eren be involved in it. He was built up from the very beginning as someone who would eliminate Titans from the world. It was his drive for almost the whole series. Even after his views on Titans changed, his priorities changed from killing them to ending the curse. He was the only character in the series who was actively fighting against making people inherit the power of the Titans. He refused to let his friends inherit his Titan and he fiercely fought back against Historia being forced to become a Titan to be eaten by her child on multiple occasions. He was contrasted with King Fritz, who ended the flashback in 122 by talking about how Titans will rule the world forever. Eren said immediately after that that it would end now. Eren also fought for Ymir's freedom after meeting her as a slave in PATHS stuck building these Titans. And Ymir was on Eren's side.

So just looking at what we had, we had a major conflict that lasted for the whole series and a protagonist who was heavily invested in solving that conflict. It should be common sense that Eren would do it once he had the means to resolve it, right? Sadly, 139 resolved it in the worst way any author could: by making a character with no investment in this conflict indirectly resolve it.

Mikasa's love for Eren was somehow the key to ending the power of the Titans. This was never foreshadowed at all. Not only does it go against Ymir's prior characterization, as I mentioned above, but it also trivializes the entire conflict. Ymir could apparently lift the curse whenever she wanted, but she waited to see Mikasa kill and kiss Eren before doing it, even though it's apparently something she already knew would happen and was waiting for it. Why wait so long to lift the curse? Why does it have to be Mikasa of all people? We didn't even get an answer because "only Ymir knows." All those scenes showing Eren's determination to resolve this conflict amounted to nothing as he had no involvement with its resolution. Additionally, Paradis has now lost their main weapon to defend themselves with and Eldians have lost the only value they had to Marleyans. But that doesn't matter in this ending since no one cares anymore.

Saving the Eldians at the fort:

For the first time since the battle started, the Alliance faced actual consequences in 138 as the Hallucigenia gassed everyone there, turning all Eldians into Titans. It was a tragic separation as Jean and Connie went out with no regrets and the Warriors lost their families. But just one chapter later, none of this mattered anymore. Ending the Titan curse made all of them revert to human again. Isayama set up a conflict in the previous chapter that fizzled out exactly one panel later when it's first brought up in this chapter.

The way Jean and Connie were given a proper send-off in the previous chapter only makes the outcome of this chapter even worse. That's something you would usually do if the characters really are dead. Bringing them back immediately after that is a very cheap tactic that leaves the audience feeling like they've been emotionally manipulated if it's not executed well. Killing off characters just to bring them back in the very next chapter without having any impact on the story serves no purpose in the narrative. It only shocks the audience for the sake of shocking the audience. The only time Isayama has ever brought a character back after giving them a convincing death is Armin in RtS arc, and that served an actual purpose. Armin's revival came at the cost of Erwin's life, which had severe consequences in the story. Paradis was left without strong leadership, causing much of the island to turn to Eren for guidance. The Eldians at the fort being gassed on the other hand? Meaningless.

Now that all the Eldians are normal again, how did the Marleyans react? In the previous chapter, Muller looked at these newly turned Titans with a terrified expression. It's understandable that he was frightened of them in 139 and pointed guns at them. But how does the chapter resolve this? Simply by Armin saying a few unconvincing lines. Armin's infamous ideology that everything can be solved with talking somehow worked here. Something as tense as that standoff lost all tension instantly and without any effort.

Fans, both advocates for and against this perceived aspect of Armin, have always talked about Armin's ability to do this, but it's actually never been true before. Every time Armin tried talking things out, he either failed or had to do more work than that. But that stereotype became reality in 139. Armin offered no proof for his claims in front of people acting out of fear. His words boiled down to a "just trust me" and we're expected to believe that Muller took

his word right away. This scene is even paralleled with another scene where such a tactic failed: Armin trying to convince a scared Garrison captain that Eren isn't an enemy back in Trost. Muller asks the same question that the Garrison captain asked Eren ("are you human or Titan?") and Armin is drawn doing the exact same thing he did before as he drops his gear and charges towards the people pointing guns at them. The main difference is that in Trost, Armin kept trying for a long time until Pixis eventually intervened. His attempt to convince the scared captain was futile.



The same situation and actions in chapters 11 and 139 but different results.

Another complaint I have about this resolution is that Armin walks away as a hero who "saved the world" from Eren Yeager and gets to be an ambassador for peace and has a love interest. He didn't even work for anything. He's only in this position because Eren was the one who did everything for him. Armin is delivered a happy ending on a silver platter. He spent most of the story post-timeskip being indecisive and failing to understand everything going on around him, but this ending rewards him for doing nothing. And he's not called out for this within the story. Everyone just accepts this, including him.

The Hallucigenia and Colossal Titans disappearing:

One question on a lot of people's minds is what happened to the giant worm Reiner and the others were fighting? It was separated from Eren in the explosion at the end of 137 and put up a fight against the Alliance in 138. This was a battle that didn't need to happen, but Isayama decided to write it anyway. That's what makes the decision to ignore it in 139 even more confusing. It wasn't shown even once and none of the characters ever acknowledged its existence in this chapter. Introducing a new conflict in the last few chapters only to ignore it rather than resolve it doesn't make any sense. Likewise, we never learned what happened to the army of Colossal Titans when the power of the Titans ended. Did millions of Colossal Titans around the world turn back into humans? Were they never human to begin with and they just disintegrated? We may never know. This chapter treats them as if they never existed.

Even if we were to assume the Hallucigenia disappeared when the Titan powers disappeared, why would that happen? We've seen it act on its own both before attaching itself to Ymir and after getting separated from Eren. This thing is independent from what we can see. Whatever Ymir did to end the curse shouldn't have affected it like this.

With the Hallucigenia being forgotten and the consequences of the previous chapter being reversed after some of the characters had believable "deaths," I get the impression that 138 was written with a different ending in mind. If that's true, it would mean Isayama scrapped his original plan for 139 within a month of release.

Anticlimactic final battle:

This had to be the worst way to write a battle I've ever seen and it's made even worse because it's the final battle of the whole series. Everything was leading up to this climax. But Eren slept through most of it only to get killed off twice. Nobody died aside from him even though the Alliance and the people at the fort were in danger. The plot armor got really out of hand. There were never any real stakes and the protagonist of the series died without putting up much of a fight. Even the giant worm put up a better fight than Eren.

The most logical assumption would be that Eren's death was a fakeout and he would do something to flip the situation around. That's simply how storytelling works. You need to make things even on both sides or give the losing side the opportunity to make a comeback. You can look to any other battle in this series and see that this is also how Isayama has always written battles. But what we got for this battle instead was that the last 3 chapters were spent making this battle go the Alliance's way with no credible opposition to them. Then it's revealed that Eren basically let them win for an awful plan. Everything about the way this fight was written was a disaster.

The cycle of hatred between Paradis and the world:

Paradis and the world had been at war since the start of the series, long before Paradis even knew the identity of their enemy. The cycle of hatred between both sides is constantly brought up and everyone is trying to resolve it in their own ways. Armin represented optimism. He had no plan for how to achieve a lasting peace, but he was optimistic that it would work itself out at some point. Although if you ask me, I think this conflict had gotten too dire for such idealism to work. Eventually, it becomes clear that this cycle won't end until one side has been eliminated. That brings us to two viable plans presented in the story that would do just that.

The first was Zeke's euthanasia plan. He wanted this conflict to end by driving his own race to extinction. In his eyes, this would be the most humane way to go about it and no more Eldians would be born into a world that wishes to make them suffer. On the other end of the spectrum, we had Eren's plan to wipe out everyone except Paradis. With the world gone, Paradis would have no more enemies to try to commit genocide against them. Yes, smaller conflict would still exist within the island, but that's not the main conflict the story was trying to solve. The main conflict was Paradis vs. the world. Eren wanted to do everything he could to prevent the extinction of his people. Both brothers took extreme paths and they both resorted to genocide against opposing targets. Even so, these were options for ending the cycle of hatred.

Just to be clear, this isn't about the solution that *I wanted*. This is strictly about the solutions Isayama chose to present within the story and the fact that he ended up not resolving this conflict despite giving the protagonist a way to do it and making it one of his main goals before 139 removed that from his goals. If Isayama found a way to resolve this other than

genocide, that'd be fine too as long as it's consistent with the characters and can be realistically achieved through known methods.

To summarize what happened, we have a story where the author wrote the protagonist to be the only person fighting to resolve all the major conflicts of the series from start to finish. He's always had to drive to do it. He had plenty of motivations for doing it. By the end, he was one of the few characters who offered a solution and actually had the means of achieving his goals that were constantly reaffirmed throughout the series. But the writer decided to make the protagonist not interested in resolving one of the two major conflicts and turned him into a plot device with no agency in the finale while the other conflict was resolved only because a character who had nothing to do with that conflict existed and didn't actually do anything about it themselves. The explanation we get for that is the protagonist literally saying he doesn't know why that had to happen that way. This is really baffling to me. This would be like making Kirito not care about defeating Kayaba to free everyone from Sword Art Online, so Klein does it instead and he does it without even being aware of the fact that he did it and Kirito doesn't know why Klein was able to do it.

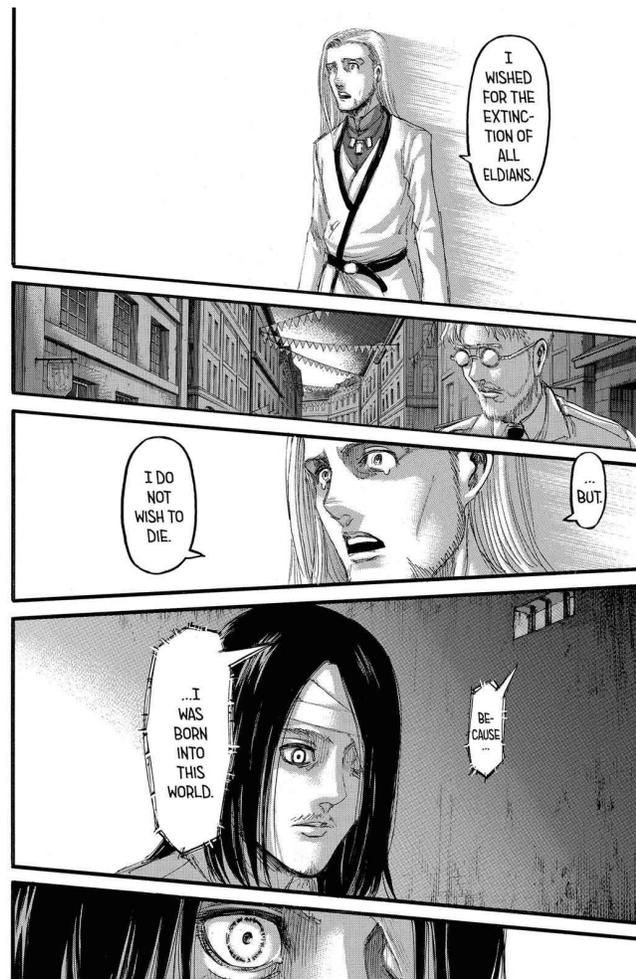
Destruction of the story's themes:

The way a story handles its themes leaves much up to interpretation. Oftentimes, it's the audience's job to try to decipher the themes of the series. Though sometimes a story makes its themes abundantly clear. AoT is a case of the latter where many of its themes are often reiterated by the characters and sometimes Isayama himself tells the audience about certain themes. A lot of the themes of this series became very prominent, especially in the last 1/3 of the series. However, despite being built up so much, they ended up going nowhere and the ending even went against some of them. This isn't to say that all themes need to be equally important, but some of the ones that were given significant attention were dropped and crushed by this ending.

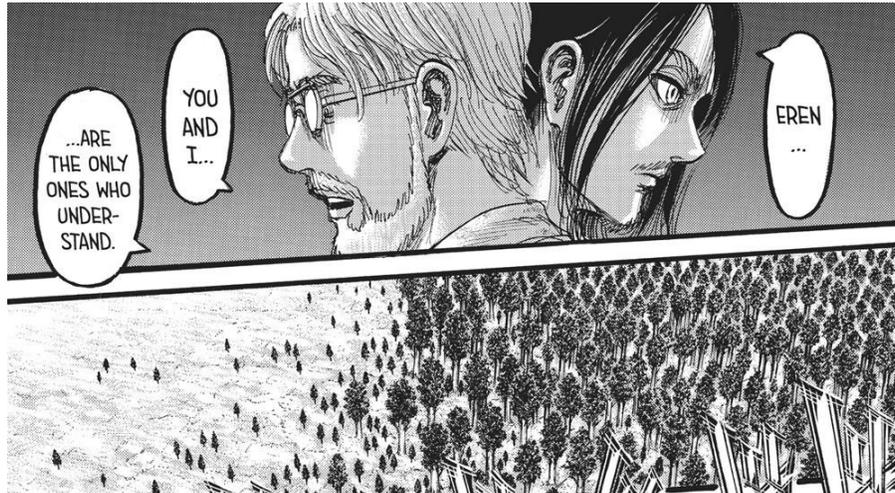
Natalism:

This series has frequently endorsed natalism through its characters, but mainly through Eren. Eren was the embodiment of that ideology. He believed in life. He believed everyone was special just for being born, a belief he inherited from his mother. His greatest desire was to be able to live with the freedom he deserved from birth. If someone tried to kill him, he saw it as an attempt to take away his freedom and fought back with everything he had.

After the timeskip, Eren was given Zeke as his rival with opposing ideology. Zeke was an anti-natalist who saw no joy in being born and wished Eldians were never born. The clash between natalism



and anti-natalism was shown several times. First by having Eren and Zeke react to the parts of Willy's speech that resonated with their ideologies and then later with imagery of Eren and Zeke on opposing sides of a forest with life on Eren's side and no life on Zeke's side. Their rivalry ended with Eren's victory over him in PATHS and Zeke later acknowledged the good things in life and thought about being born again after his talk with Armin.



So what happened to that Eren in the final chapter? The Eren we see in 139 gives up on life thinking no one would forgive him and he even planned to die without solving anything. Eren came up with the most elaborate suicide for no reason. His will to fight for his life and the lives of others inexplicably disappeared. A story that promoted natalism through its protagonist ended with the protagonist giving up his ideology without reason.

Surpassing the father:

質問5 「親から子への呪いがよく描かれていてすごいなと思ってんですが、心理学などの勉強はされたりしたことがあるんですか? ヒストリアと父親、エレンと父親みたいな...」

Question 5: Its amazing how (often) the curse from parent to children is portrayed, did you study psychology? (For things like) Historia with her father, or Eren with his father...

諫 「心理学ってわけじゃないですが、物語は"父親殺し"...っていうのがあって、実は全部そういうテーマなんじゃないかっていうのがあって。なんとなくそれを意識したのかもしれないですね。」

It's not psychology, but "killing the father" exists within the story... and in truth, everything might revolve around this theme. Maybe that's what I had in mind. (изменено)

Isayama answering questions at the event for the Eren, Mikasa, and Armin statue set up in his hometown in November, 2020.

This series has no shortage of parents doing horrible things and their children facing the consequences. Eren wanted to die in the Uprising arc for what he believed were the unforgivable sins his father committed. Historia was made to suffer by her parents before breaking free from them. Grisha pushed his mission onto his two sons, even when he didn't want to in the case of his latter son. Reiner and Annie's parents used them as tools and came to regret it. This is no coincidence as Isayama himself has remarked on parent-child relationships, specifically Eren and Historia killing their fathers, and he was heard saying something about someone surpassing their father when the final panel was first shown.

We don't know exactly who Isayama was referring to or even if he was talking about the final panel, but given the context of that statement, the timing of it being said in conjunction with the final panel being shown, and the fact that there was no one in the story thus far who that line could've applied to, I think there's little room for doubt over whether or not he was talking about the ending. Besides, there aren't really a lot of characters in this story with known fathers, and there are even fewer who are in a role where they can do something better than their parents. As a matter of fact, Eren and Historia are really the only two characters in the whole story who were tied to a plotline where making them parents would result in them doing something better than what their parents did to them. One of Eren's goals was already to protect Historia and her child. It would make sense for Eren to be the person Isayama said would surpass their father.

Not only did this series end without confirming Eren as the father, but it ended without anyone surpassing their father. This theme is now nowhere to be found in the entire series despite how relevant it was supposed to be to the ending.

Not passing the burdens onto future generations:

Children inheriting the burdens of their parents had been a huge focal point in this series and it only became more prominent as the series went on. Eldians in the present were treated harshly for the sins of their ancestors. Hange reluctantly agreed to continue the cycle of royal children eating their parents to maintain Titan powers, which only Eren spoke up against in that meeting. Sasha's father forgave Gabi for killing Sasha because children shouldn't be held accountable for what this war forces onto everyone, saying that children need to be brought

out of this forest. Onyankopon disagreed with Zeke's plan to sterilize the whole race, saying that he fought for the island's future and that children are that future. Eren once again demonstrated his refusal to sacrifice Historia and her children for the island, citing it as one of his many motivations for doing the Rumbling.



Unfortunately, this theme was completely dropped in the end, despite how important it was to many characters. Children like Gabi and Falco were brought back onto the battlefield for the final battle. Dropping the mystery surrounding Historia's pregnancy resulted in the default answer being true,

which was that Historia broke character to use her child as a tool to save herself. But most

importantly, Eren abandoned his goal of ending this conflict once and for all. Future generations will now inherit the problems of their parents even though the direction the story was taking was on the path of preventing that. This isn't even being presented as a tragedy since all of the characters have stopped caring about this and everyone is even satisfied with the way things turned out.

It seemed obvious to me that these themes were supposed to lead to Eren being confirmed to be the father of Historia's child and successfully resolving the main conflicts of the series with the Rumbling, thus avoiding making their child suffer for their actions. The child would've avoided being used as a tool and would've been special, not for its royal blood but simply because it was born into this world. An ending like that would've resonated perfectly with the themes Isayama chose to convey throughout the rest of the story.

Given all the evidence of Eren being the father, the contrast between him and King Fritz in 122, all the parallels between Historia and Ymir Fritz throughout the whole series, and how well this all fits Eren's known motivations, there is far too much to be a coincidence. If not a successful Rumbling, then perhaps some other surprise method that Isayama had been planning. Either way, there's no mistaking that Eren was positioned in the right place to do something about all of this. But all it took was a single chapter to drop all of those themes and plot points.

Eren's free will:

This series has toyed with the idea of free will vs. determinism. Is Eren really free if he's doing everything according to the future he saw? 131 gave us the answer. Eren wasn't doing things because the future was set in stone. The future was set in stone because it was what he wanted. Everything that happened was his choice. He could've just done nothing and let Paradis be destroyed, but that goes against his nature. He chose the Rumbling. He chose to go down this path knowing that it would hurt him. The argument that he was a slave to fate was definitively shut down. As he said to Falco, he knowingly pushed himself into hell by his own will.

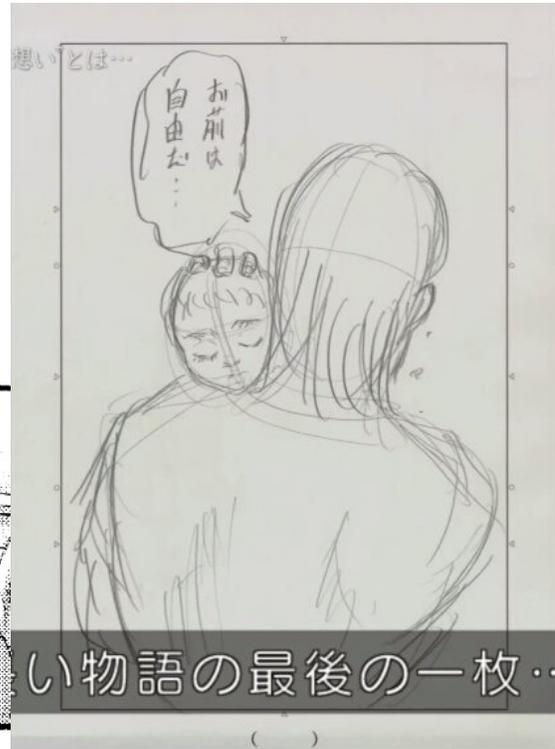
Then came 139 and the result of this theme was flipped on its head. Now, Eren doesn't know what he wants or why he did anything. He did it just because he was destined to and for no other reason. This "twist" completely removes Eren's free will after over a decade of characterization showing us that everything Eren has ever done was driven by his own desires. No one could control Eren because Eren always did whatever he wanted. His views on the world were shaped by his own experiences and his personality. Now we're being told that what Eren has done didn't come from him, but from either Ymir or some invisible string of fate controlling him.

The Eren we see in 139 is a completely different Eren than the one we saw in 131 who took responsibility for his own actions. Eren never blamed the Rumbling on things outside of his control before. The Rumbling, by Eren's own admission, was his will and no one else's. Eren could only be called a slave to fate if wanted the Rumbling to stop but couldn't control himself. That is not consistent with what we know of Eren. He's always had the will to go to extremes to protect the few people he loves. The Rumbling was the natural progression of his character, not something he was forced to do against his will. This ending is telling us to disregard Eren's established personality so that we could believe this wasn't what he genuinely chose to do.

This also destroys what was originally supposed to be the final panel that featured a man holding a baby and telling them that they're free. By making it Grisha holding Eren, that line becomes a lie. Eren was never free. Eren grew up trapped behind walls in a world that wanted him dead. He always had to fight for survival and in the end, he threw away his ideals and chose to die. Grisha knew all of this. Him telling baby Eren that he's free is a joke. It is 100% false and doesn't even make sense in the context that it was shown in. And since this chapter took away Eren's free will, that makes the line even worse.

Speaking of that panel, the way it was cut down from a full page at the very end of the chapter to a tiny panel in the background near the start of the chapter with the man's physique changed to be less muscular with slightly different hair and a completely different baby drawn just screams of retcon. Even the speech bubble was changed from dialogue within the panel to a voice outside of the panel to make it a flashback and added another bubble for Eren's name. The only thing the two versions have in common is the man holding the baby in similar positions. When you look at the way the story had progressed until now and look at the draft

and final product side by side, it's so obvious that it was never supposed to be Grisha holding Eren. Isayama most likely just threw that panel in there randomly since there was nowhere he could've placed it after the ending drastically changed from what he envisioned when he revealed the panel.



The message of the ending:

Many people who wanted the Rumbling to be stopped believed a successful Rumbling would've been an endorsement of genocide. I disagree. Such an ending could've easily been portrayed as a tragedy that acted as a cautionary tale for when hatred is allowed to grow too much. It wouldn't have said genocide was the answer, but a consequence. But that's getting into hypotheticals. The reason I bring it up is because the ending we did get does validate Eren's belief (before it got retconned) that this conflict won't end until one side has eliminated the other. We can see that stopping the Rumbling did not put an end to the conflict. It only delayed the next fight. Even with Titan powers gone, Paradis and the world are in conflict with each other due to their history.

Unlike a full Rumbling ending which would've left it up to the audience to decide whether or not it was necessary or a rushed peace ending that makes Eren look like he was in the wrong, the ending we got instead tells us that Eren's biggest mistake was not going far enough.

Dialogue and comedic tone:

When writing a story, you need to be conscious of how the characters sound. The way they speak should fit their character and the story's tone. Isayama does sometimes write comedic scenes and they usually blend in normally with the story. It seems that lately, he's been using comedy to make the Alliance chapters more lighthearted. I can forgive the infamous pie scene in 126 since that chapter felt like it was meant to give the audience a break from how serious the situation had become. My main concern with that chapter was how rushed it was, but that's not the point. The scene in 136 where they argue over an okapi in the middle of a battle where Armin got kidnapped was an example of a bad way to write dialogue since it was distracting. But that's just one scene. The scenes in 139 were filled with dialogue like that. So much of the dialogue in this chapter didn't flow naturally. It turned a grim situation into a comedy show.

The dialogue was quite effective at making the audience not take the characters seriously. After thinking about it, I realized exactly why that is. A lot of the characters have become satirical caricatures of themselves and/or how the audience saw them.

Talking about Mikasa:

The final chapter opens up with Eren and Armin finally getting to have a real heart-to-heart talk for the first time in ages. Part of it was spent explaining Eren's plan to Armin, but much of it revolved around Mikasa to an abnormal degree. Armin is upset with how Eren treated Mikasa. Ymir wanted Mikasa to be the one to end the curse for a reason Eren doesn't know. Eren only thinks about Mikasa now and cries about his love life. Everything in their conversation somehow leads back to Mikasa. I'm not even trying to hate on her. This is just really strange. This story has suddenly become Mikasa's story and no one else's. It's almost like this chapter was written by someone who unironically believes Mikasa is the protagonist and not Eren and this is her love story.

I actually feel a little bad for Mikasa with the way she was utilized in this chapter. First she's compared to a girl who suddenly developed 2000 years of Stockholm syndrome. Then she

keeps being used to turn serious moments into jokes. Then in the end she's unable to move on from Eren and starts flirting with a bird.

Back to Armin. His reaction to everything in his scenes with Eren seems to be written to be humorous. Eren just committed a near-total genocide. Armin gave a very brief shocked reaction to Eren's plan before the topic was abruptly dropped. Later on, Eren brings up that he was responsible for his mother's death and once again, this subject is dropped after we briefly see Armin in shock. Armin is more interested in Eren's feelings for Mikasa than he is in the war crime Eren committed or how messed up Eren's head is. A story about the horrors of war, racism, and oppression deteriorated into a cheesy high school drama in just a single chapter. It was such a drastic shift in tone, mainly because of the dialogue. And to top it all off, Armin thanked Eren for committing genocide for their sake after Armin took such a harsh stance against the Rumbling for the past 16 chapters while knowing that Eren was doing it for them and for all of Paradis. It was so surreal.

Eren's breakdown:

Of all the jarring scenes in this chapter, this one is no doubt the most controversial. Much of the audience can't take Eren seriously after an outburst like the one he had in this chapter. This comes down to two major issues: the content of his rant and the presentation.

After the reveal of what Eren did with Dina, Armin casually starts talking about Mikasa moving on from Eren, changing the subject from something as tragic as Carla's death to Eren and Mikasa's feelings for each other. Armin punches Eren in a panel drawn in a humorous way and goes on a rant that ends in him mentioning Mikasa finding another man while having this awkward grin. This prompted Eren to throw the weirdest tantrum about how much he hates the idea of Mikasa finding another man. He cares about nothing else in the world except Mikasa being with him. It's unlike anything we've ever seen in the story. Eren is on the ground crying over something he's never cared about in his life. It's so childish.

Prior to this chapter, Eren had never been shown to see Mikasa as a love interest. The story reminds us time and time again that Eren was never interested in her like that. For over 1/3 of the story, Eren was constantly annoyed with Mikasa's obsession with him. He hated how

Mikasa kept babying him and always tried pushing her away out of frustration. His attitude towards her had mellowed out over time, but he still found himself bothered by Mikasa's affection. Eventually, he started thinking that Mikasa only follows him around due to supernatural reasons outside of her control. He thought saving her when they were kids triggered a mysterious Ackerman instinct that compelled Mikasa to protect Eren. He questioned Mikasa about this, asking her if she cared about him because he saved her or if it's because he's family. Still not satisfied, he went to Zeke who was sure to have more knowledge on this. Zeke's answer was that Mikasa simply loves Eren, which curiously made Eren think back to Historia asking him about having a child. Eren even tried getting rid of Mikasa's scarf, the symbol of her attachment to him, twice. First when he told Louise to throw it away for him and again when he told Mikasa just 1 chapter ago.

Does any of this sound like the same Eren Yeager who in 139 threw a tantrum over just the idea of Mikasa being with another man? Eren's newfound romantic love for Mikasa is a horrible writing move. There was no foreshadowing for it. It was forced into a chapter that was supposed to go over the aftermath of a genocide, contributing to the tone losing all seriousness. It goes against everything the story has shown us about Eren's thoughts on Mikasa. But worst of all, it's done through dialogue that makes Eren speak in a way he never would. This does nothing to humanize Eren. It only makes him look like a pathetic, whiny child for no reason other than to have Mikasa "win" a pointless shipping war. Eren's real feelings were rewritten to make him completely obsessed with a girl he was never interested in. This chapter turned AoT into a romantic comedy with Mikasa as the protagonist and Eren as the trophy.

For comparison, let's look at Eren's other breakdowns throughout the series and see how different everything was, from the tone to the topics. Eren's first major breakdown in the series was when Hannes died. The situation had never been so dire before and a man Eren cared about died right before his eyes, eaten by the same Titan who killed his mother, all while Eren can't fight. He laughed at himself to cope with how powerless he felt to save Hannes. He called himself useless and thought nothing had changed from 5 years ago when his mother died. This was a concern he had always had and was the main reason he joined the military in the first place.

Next, we have his scene in the Reiss cave. Eren learned about what his father did to give him his power and lost the will to live. He thought all the people who died for him died protecting a mistake that never should've happened. He begged Historia to eat him to set things right. This was the lowest point Eren had been in thus far. The belief that he was special for his power came crashing down and gave him a reality check. Similar to the above situation, Eren's complaints were about his own worth and the words that came out of his mouth matched his age. He didn't sound like some elementary school kid complaining.

Finally, there's his scene with Ramzi. From the very beginning, the chapter was building up to Eren being crushed by the weight of his future actions. His guilt was the main topic of the chapter, but what made Eren feel the worst was his realization that the Rumbling was the future he wished for. He had dreams to achieve and the only way to make those dreams come true was by destroying the entire world. It was useless saving Ramzi when he knew he would one day make the decision to kill this boy. He vented about his wish and his guilt in front of Ramzi. It was something that had been haunting him for 4 years since he got his future memories and made worse when he learned the enemy was just like him and here he was able to let out all his raw emotions. It was in-character for Eren and portrayed as something serious in the chapter, not comedic like his scene in 139.



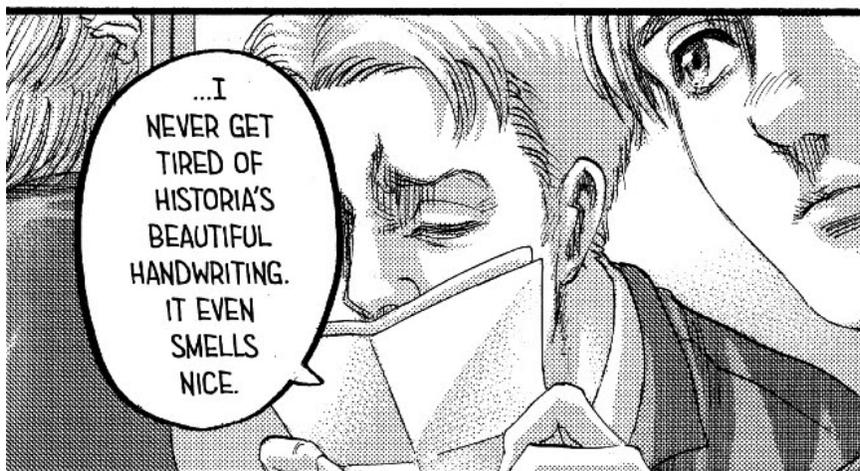
Detitanization scene and aftermath:

It's implied that Eren spoke with all his old friends off-screen and returned their memories of this when the curse of the Titans ended. This leads us to a scene where they're all so happy and see Eren in a much better light... even though he was the guy they were all trying so hard to kill a moment ago. Eren killed 80% of the world, but he spared 20% so all is forgiven. Everyone just takes a turn saying a line about how wonderful everything is and how Eren was such a great pal. Even Pieck gets a moment where she wishes she spoke with Eren. It's as if a whole battle to save the world from Eren never happened.

This brings us back to the scene where Muller and all the other Marleyans at Fort Salta are pointing guns at the Eldians who just turned back to normal. They're understandably fearful after what they just witnessed and demand proof that the Eldians are truly powerless. Here comes Armin rushing in like a superhero and quickly talks his way out of this mess. What does he say? That the Eldians allowing the Marleyans to point guns at them is all the proof they need that the power of the Titans is gone. And it appears to have worked somehow. Well that was easy enough. Such a stressful predicament was defused in the blink of an eye just by Armin using some childish logic that irrational and scared adults are somehow supposed to agree to.

Jean and Reiner's banter:

The last we see of the Alliance members, aside from Mikasa, is when they're on their way to have peace talks with an island that has become more militarized and wary of outsiders 3 years after the Rumbling. The world is in a sorry state thanks to Eren and tension is higher than ever, but the characters are treating this like a field trip. The cartoonish way Reiner sniffs Historia's letter and comments on how much he adores the smell and her handwriting leads to some banter with Jean. We learn that Jean is trying to look handsome for history books and Reiner goes ahead and makes a horse joke. Jean caring about only his self-image and then being called a horse could be seen as a fun callback to his early days if this wasn't such an out-of-place discussion.



Isayama has said before that Reiner was his favorite character. We don't know if that still holds up since I don't believe he's commented on this for a while, but surely he must still care about Reiner a lot. His love for Reiner makes Reiner's final scene surprising. Reiner always

had a funny bone. He could crack jokes to lighten the mood. He was also someone who admired Historia back when she went by her Krista persona. This ending took those two aspects of Reiner and exaggerated them. His final scene was of him sniffing the letter of the woman he had a crush on over 80 chapters ago, a woman who is apparently now married. This scene is so over the top. It's one thing to have Reiner making jokes again to show him in a better state of mind after everything he's been through. It's another to make him the butt of the joke by turning him into a creep. Ymir's joke about Reiner being a creep for watching her write her letter to Historia sure aged well, didn't it?

Eren becomes a bird (literally):

Do I even need to go in-depth to explain how absurd it is that this chapter ended with Mikasa thanking a bird for wrapping her scarf around her and that the implication is that the bird was Eren? Sure, symbolism is nice and all, but it has to make sense. This may be a fictional story where people have the power to turn into man-eating giants, but it's still realistic aside from that. People don't just turn into animals. Even if that was just a random bird in that scene and Mikasa mistook it for Eren wrapping the scarf around her, the timing of the bird appearing right when Mikasa spoke about Eren and her reaction to its appearance is too funny. That scene, whether it was Eren in it or not, was more comedic than anything. Our last impression of Mikasa and probably Eren is a scene where Eren is represented by a literal bird with perfect timing.

Eren turning into a bird was a recent meme in the western community from like 2 months ago. How did something like that end up in this chapter? Maybe it's a coincidence, but there's so much about this chapter that suggests to me that Isayama rewrote it after 138 was released. The final line of the entire series is about something so ridiculous that it was a meme. If that doesn't tell you Isayama is trolling...

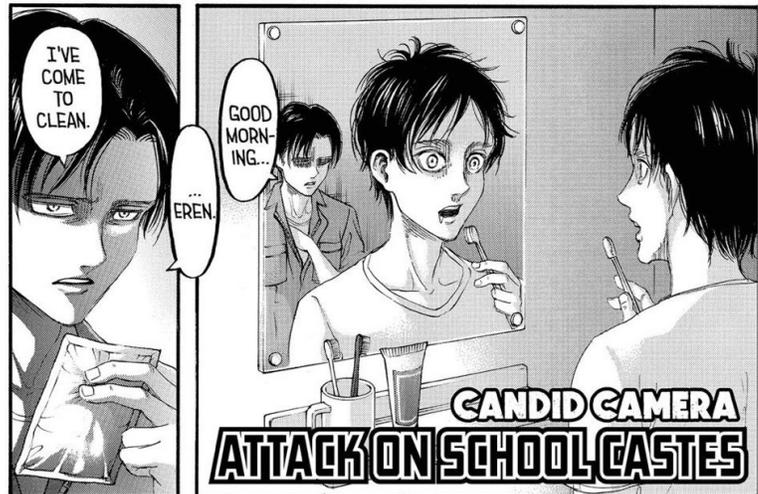
Fake previews and School Castes AU:

If you were to show this chapter in isolation to someone who had never heard of AoT before, I would bet they'd think this series is a comedy. So many lines are said to elicit laughter or some sense of foolishness. Many of the characters aren't behaving like themselves and instead reflect the exaggerated traits that either were a lot more toned down before or never existed at all except in the minds of the audience. Their overreactions to trivial things and silly situations are contrasted with their lack of care for serious topics. At one point, I realized that this chapter strongly resembles how Isayama writes his fake previews at the end of each volume.

For those who aren't aware, in addition to the real preview, each volume ends with 2 pages of a fake preview for the next volume. That's where Isayama normally inserts this type of humor. Eventually, the fake previews were turned into their own story that takes place in modern day high school and is called School Castes.



This ending looks like Isayama just took a bunch of ideas for his fake previews and put them all into one chapter. Just look at how well these scenes from 139 and the ones I showed above of Eren's breakdown and Reiner's sniffing blend in with scenes from the fake previews.



Other issues with Eren:

Eren was by far the character that suffered the most from this ending's writing. He gets an entire section of his own since there are still a few more things I need to say about him to show just far Isayama went to butcher him in addition to all the things I said about him in earlier sections.

After roughly 138 chapters of consistent characterization (debatable since it could be argued his fall started a few chapters prior with his recent actions that had no consistent explanation in the end), 139 did a complete 180 on everything about him. All of the beliefs that many fans had about Eren that were never consistent with his character became validated in this chapter. Fans wanted Eren to make himself the enemy of the world to unite everyone against him despite him knowing it wouldn't work and always being against that idea? They got it. Fans believed Eren was a slave to fate despite it being established beforehand that the future Eren saw happened because of his own free will? They got it. Fans thought Eren was a crazy mass murderer killing people for no reason despite having a lot of clear reasons? They got it. Fans believed Eren had always loved Mikasa romantically and wanted nothing more than to be with her despite him always being bothered by Mikasa's affection? They got it.

Manipulating people's memories:

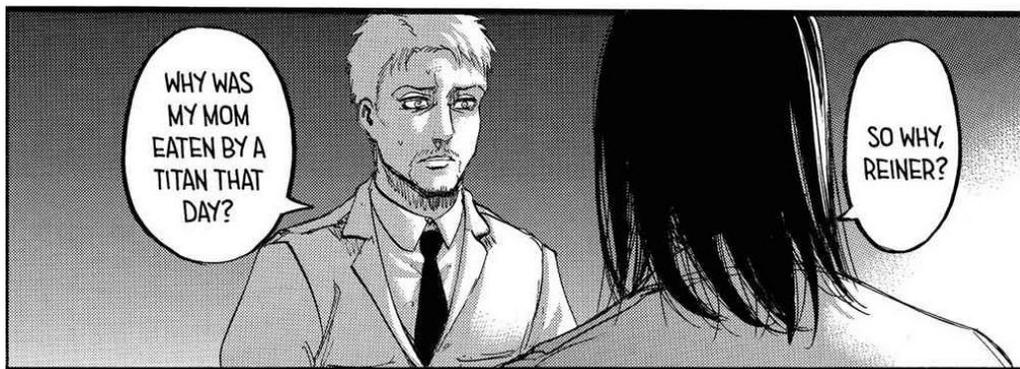
Eren once said that the furthest thing removed from freedom is ignorance. He wouldn't want to take his friends' freedom away, yet he used the power of the Founding Titan to manipulate everyone's memories and make them forget what he told them about his intentions. Even if it was only temporary, this was unnecessary. Why bother talking to them about these things just to return their memories later? Using his power to alter people's minds for fun isn't like him.

Judging by Mikasa's dialogue, the dream she had in 138 appears to have happened in the past and Eren erased her memory and returned it just now. In addition to it being out of character for Eren, this point creates a plot hole. The whole reason Ackermans were persecuted was because they disobeyed the king and the Founding Titan's power couldn't manipulate them.

His mother's death:

Just like many other scenes throughout the series, the scene in chapter 100 where Eren talks to Reiner about his mother's death loses its meaning thanks to 139. Carla's death was a turning point in Eren's life that cemented his hatred towards Titans and later the Warriors. He swore he would make them all pay. He carried this grudge for 9 years until he infiltrated his enemies to do the same thing Reiner did to his home. By that point, Eren had stopped caring about revenge and did what he felt he had to do, much like Reiner did when he broke the wall. Reiner broke down accepting that it was his fault Eren's mother died that day.

Turns out that it wasn't Reiner's fault after all. Eren was the one who led Dina to Carla and had her be eaten. This poorly constructed twist serves no purpose in the story other than making Eren look needlessly cruel to Reiner by gaslighting him when he knew Reiner wasn't at fault. This was 4 years after Eren saw the future. His words to Reiner became a sick joke with this reveal. This isn't even comparable to when he manipulated Grisha. That scene actually did have a purpose in moving the plot forward and explaining things about Eren that were built up for a long time. There was already an in-universe reason for Dina ignoring Bertholdt and heading to Eren's home. She was an abnormal Titan focused on finding Grisha. What does Eren killing his own mother accomplish? Does it move the plot forward? No. Does it explain anything that was necessary? No. Does it even fit his character? No. This twist only exists to shock the audience at the cost of Eren's character.



Just look at the amount of times Eren's mother was brought up in the final arc alone. Jean defended Eren in 127 by bringing up that none of this would be happening if Marley never got Eren's mother killed. Historia mentioned in 130 that the people killed by the Rumbling would be helpless innocent victims like Eren's mother, which Eren understood well but he saw it as

the only way to end this conflict. At the end of that same chapter, we see Eren remembering the anger he felt when his mother died as he's destroying the world in the present. In 131, he saw a pregnant woman and started thinking of his mother, wondering what she would think of him. That line is now a joke. Why does Eren even care what his mother thinks if he clearly doesn't even care about her anymore? He killed her for no reason and had the audacity to blame Reiner for it.

Eren had such a huge change in priorities this chapter. Sasha was an acceptable sacrifice. Hange was an acceptable sacrifice. Carla, the woman who Eren looked up to the most and whose death caused him the most grief in his entire life, was somehow an acceptable sacrifice. Historia, the person he was shown to be the most adamant about protecting, got dealt the short end of the stick since she's the head of a nation still at war that Eren no longer cares about ending. Armin, Mikasa, Jean, and Connie are safe for now. Eren sacrificed so much for their sake only. Let's add Reiner and Annie too since Eren made sure to have a telepathic moment with them as well. Are we really supposed to believe that out of all his friends, Eren cared about Connie more than his own mother who he adored?

Mikasa's fantasy Eren:

One important part of the dynamic between Eren and Mikasa was that they never understood each other, and this was expressed much clearer on Mikasa's side. She was always portrayed as someone who fantasized about an idealized version of Eren. She believed Eren was the kind of guy who would save her because he's a good person who could do no wrong. When Eren killed civilians in Liberio, Mikasa immediately bought the story that Eren was being controlled because his actions didn't fit her false image of him.

Mikasa had always struggled to understand Eren's feelings. Whenever Eren was depressed, she ignored it like she did when Eren thought of himself as worthless in the Uprising arc or when Eren couldn't enjoy the ocean or ice cream because everything he saw only confirmed his father's memories. Eren's passion to be free was something Mikasa used to see as a hindrance. She wanted to stay with Eren forever and was terrified of him venturing outside the walls. It was Eren's personality and willpower that made him strive for freedom at any cost while Mikasa's wishes for her future with Eren were at odds with the real him. Meanwhile, the

only thing Eren ever wanted for Mikasa was for her to move on from him and be free instead of being shackled by their bond.

Possibly the most blatant example of Mikasa inserting her own fantasies onto Eren was during their training days at the start of the series. Eren was excited that he passed the ODM test and could stand on his own without Mikasa taking care of him. Mikasa mistook his happiness as him being happy he wouldn't be separated from her, leading to some startled looks from Armin, Reiner, and Bertholdt. Eren's inner monologue and Mikasa's projection were the exact opposite.



We're shown repeatedly throughout the story that the Eren in her head was never real. Her refusal to see the real Eren all this time was acknowledged in 123 when she admitted to it. But now, all of Mikasa's delusions about Eren

have been validated. Eren's only wish is to never be separated from Mikasa and he killed all these people because he wasn't in control of himself. Eren's passion for freedom has been replaced with love for Mikasa. His goal of total extermination changed to him pretending to be the villain for his friends. We've spent 138 chapters watching Mikasa come up with fantasies about Eren and Eren desperately trying to make Mikasa leave him, only for the final chapter to tell us Mikasa's warped perception of Eren was right all along.

Bonus trivia:

There's one last thing I'd like to point out about this chapter that did such a thorough job cutting Eren's whole character into pieces and crushing them. This chapter wasn't finished around the same time Isayama normally finishes chapters. It was completed a few days later than usual on March 30th... Eren's birthday... Interpret that how you will, but I see that as further proof that Isayama knew exactly what he was doing. It says a lot when the final chapter of the entire series is largely dedicated to destroying the protagonist who the series is named after, leaving no aspect of his character untouched.

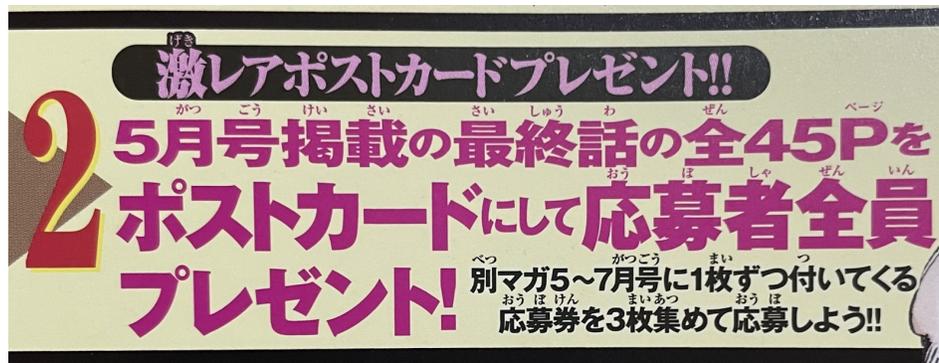
Why Isayama might've done this:

Now that we've gone over all of that, I'd like to end this with some of my speculation about why Isayama deliberately wrote something that is so horrible. I think the most likely scenario is that he was forced to change the ending at the last minute, either to avoid the controversy of the protagonist successfully committing genocide or to boost sales since most Japanese fans want the Alliance to survive and for Eren to end up with Mikasa. Either way, this ending is designed to be more marketable and sacrifices quality to appeal to those who only want their fanservice.

With how intertwined the story was with the planned ending, just changing one of the two major components of it would've drastically altered the outcome. Turning Eren into some mindless robot that only thinks of Mikasa all his life the way she thinks of him would've made the reveal that he was the father of Historia's child fail, which would've also made his reason for wiping out the entire world for his family and to spare future generations of this conflict fail. Likewise, making the Alliance win against Eren and keep the cycle of hatred going didn't fit Eren's motivations either. This new ending needed to retcon Eren's plans for a full Rumbling so that he could lose. By that point, it's impossible to salvage the ending since the outcome doesn't match what the rest of the story was written for. Isayama probably figured he might as well just burn the entire story while he's at it and added a lot of things that weren't needed for this changed ending like Eren killing his mother or the comedic tone of the whole chapter. This might've been his way of expressing his frustration with not being able to end the story naturally and he probably turned this new ending into a comedy to make fun of it.

There were a lot of signs of last-minute changes even outside of the things I mentioned about the writing of this chapter. Isayama spoke to Eren's VA in private recently and suggested that [he was going to voice another "tatakae" scene in the final chapter](#), but there was no such scene in the chapter for him to voice. Weirdly enough, the number of pages in the final chapter changed after 138's release. Bessatsu Shōnen Magazine announced that it would have 45 pages a month prior. Then Isayama was told to make a chapter with 52 pages. Then Isayama couldn't stretch it for more than 51 so the editor took the blank page to write an afterword himself. The final chapter should've been planned out at least a few months in

advance. Changing the number of pages after 138's release indicates something in the storyboards changed very late into the process since Isayama normally has the storyboards for the current chapter done by the time the previous chapter is released (at least according to his known schedule). Then there was the final panel that was completely changed in almost every way. There was an exhibition in the middle of 2019 that contained audio of what was supposed to be the final chapter and it sounds like the Rumbling was originally going to continue until the end, but the audio was instead used for chapter 134, 5 chapters before the end. Lastly, MAPPA mentioned not knowing the ending as recently as a few months ago, which is odd because Isayama had told WIT director Araki about his planned ending years ago.



The magazine announces during 138's release that the final chapter will have 45 pages.

As for the writing itself, the final arc is so bipolar and suffers from tonal whiplash. We went from Eren starting a genocide, to an Avengers-style team-up, back to Eren's genocide in two chapters that give us the strongest proof that this is Eren's end goal, and to a final battle that only results in the Alliance winning and everything that happened in the story prior to it is no longer canon anymore. The dark and tragic tone of Eren's chapters is contrasted with the light and comedic tone of the Alliance chapters. It looks to me that during the final arc, Isayama was no longer sure if he'd get his intended ending and probably kept going back and forth between the direction he wanted for the story and the direction someone else wanted. It would explain why he couldn't even tell MAPPA how it was going to end.

The thing I find most strange about all of this is Isayama's silence. He hasn't spoken about the ending since it ended while his editor has been doing all the talking. His editor has been very vocal and is happy with the way this story ended. He was also the one who had the last word about the series on the last page of the final chapter rather than the actual author himself.

After everything else that I've gone over about the story's writing and its changes, I'd say it's almost certain that this ending was the result of meddling from Isayama's editorial team.

I highly doubt Isayama actually wanted this ending considering all the interviews he's given over the years about how he was always focused on the ending, how much the story's themes mean to him (he often talks about parents in this series and his own experience with his parents), and how much he hated the idea of childhood friends getting together, always talking about how Eren doesn't love Mikasa that way and how Mikasa is supposed to separate from Eren. This ending contradicts so many of the things Isayama has said in the past and I don't think it's fair to accuse him of lying to his audience for almost a decade. That's too long for him to keep up the act and you can tell that the story did in fact line up with what he's said before this ending ruined all of it. With how tight-lipped authors can be due to contracts, we'll likely never know for sure what drove Isayama to write an ending like this.

Conclusion:

I hope I made this clear enough to understand why I say this ending was so flawed that it couldn't happen by accident. There are just too many mistakes. A lot of these mistakes are done in a way that shows intent and shows Isayama understands his story well enough to know exactly how to tear it apart. There's no doubt this is a systematic destruction of a nearly 12-year story.

This whole ending is satire. I don't say that to insult the ending or Isayama's writing, but because that's really what it is. It truly turned the story and characters into caricatures of themselves and did the exact opposite of every step a writer should take when concluding a series. Everything that could've gone wrong with this ending did go wrong. Everything Isayama was supposed to do as a writer, he did the reverse. This is easily the most tone-deaf ending I've ever seen to any work of fiction. The final chapter is a completely different story from AoT. There's really no possible way to write an ending that does all the things outlined in this post without making an effort to do so. This is really the ultimate lesson on how *not* to end a story. I'm legitimately impressed.

I'd like to thank everyone who made it to the end of this monstrous essay and thank Isayama for writing this series. Even if things went south in the end and I can't go back to enjoy earlier moments again now that I know they won't have a satisfying payoff, the 8 years I spent enjoying this series won't go away.