‘Best of the Best’ Star Maitreyi Ramakrishnan Wears the Same Sweater to Every Audition

The “Never Have I Ever” actress talks "Attack on Titan," Hot Topic, good luck charms, tattoos, and more on Books That Changed My Life.

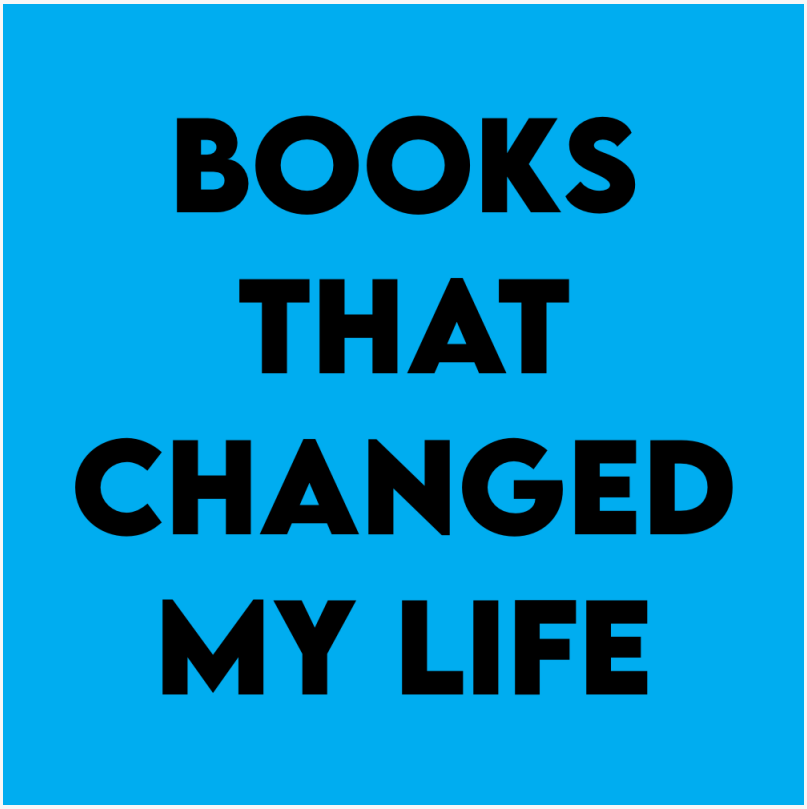

Maitreyi Ramakrishnan.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 17, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Maitreyi Ramakrishnan wants to be clear about one thing. "Attack on Titan," Hajime Isayama's decade-spanning manga about a walled city, hungry giants, and vicious cycles of human violence, is not her favorite anime. It is not her favorite manga. It is—above every book, painting, film, and TV show—her favorite work of art. "This is the one," she tells host Chris Collins on the latest episode of Books That Changed My Life. "If I could erase my brain and delete all the information I have about this series and find it again for the first time, this would be it."

Ramakrishnan wears her fandom on her sleeve. She recounts her first-ever clothing purchase: an "Attack on Titan" sweater from Hot Topic. She still wears it. In fact, it’s become a good luck totem. She wears it to every audition and takes it with her when she travels, which means, presumably, that she was repping Isayama’s iconic series for her "Best of the Best" audition. Evidently, the sweater works: Ramakrishnan secured the lead role in the upcoming Netflix dance movie. The star also sports "Attack on Titan" tattoos; "It's my fave," she says, matter-of-factly.

As she’s grown into the sweater, Isayama's story has grown with her. Ramakrishnan found the series in middle school during its now-infamous anime hiatus, meaning she genuinely aged into it, following the characters in real time as they, and she, figured out that the world was more complicated than they'd been told. "When I was 13, the meaning of this series was to get revenge for what you have lost," she says. "Now, as a 24-year-old adult who made it to the end, the meaning for me is realizing there's no easy good or bad, no black and white. It's much, much

more complicated than that." The daughter of Sri Lankan refugees who brought her to her first protest at the age of five, she's clear-eyed that "Attack on Titan" is a story about cycles of oppression, and impatient with fans who want to pretend it isn't. "People could look at it and say, 'Oh, this is just an action story, it's not woke, don't put politics onto it,'" she says. "But it's 100% what it is about."



Books That Changed My Life.

The through-line, whether she's talking about the manga's politics or its plot twists or the reason she keeps a middle-school sweater in her audition bag, is her taste in stories: she wants to be tricked. "I love to find stories that make me feel stupid," she says. "I don't want to feel smarter. I don't want to feel like I can predict it. I want the rug pulled out from under me. I trusted it, and it flipped."

Watch the full conversation HERE.

ABOUT BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE:

“Books That Changed My Life,” hosted by bestselling author Chris Collins, is a YouTube show exploring how great books transform us in profound and unexpected ways. Each episode features a special guest sharing a book that shaped or inspired them, sparking deep conversations and unearthing unfiltered personal stories.

Recent guests include actor and comedian Patton Oswalt, soap opera legend Susan Lucci, former covert CIA officer Andrew Bustamante, actress and reality star Lisa Rinna, Dancing With the Stars pro Jenna Johnson, Good Morning America icon Joan Lunden, and television legend Kelsey Grammer.

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