

# Read of Die OVA

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## Basic Premise

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An unknown evil is cloning and corrupting the great men of history and giving them superpowers. When ancient Japanese pharmacologist Hiraga Gennai blows up the White House, there is only one organization in the world that can put an end to the madness: the British Library.

No, seriously. The British Library.

Into the fray jumps a timid girl named Yomiko Readman -- the bookworm to end all bookworms. Without her ability to manipulate the primal essence of paper, the world is certainly doomed. But will she and the forces of the British Library uncover the plot in time to overcome treachery and save humanity?

Similar Anime: Ghost in the Shell, Puni Puni Poemi (yes, both of them)

### *Main Characters*

Yomiko Readman: Loves books so much she has magical paper powers. Codenamed "The Paper." Our protagonist.

Nancy Makuhari: Yomiko's partner, she's able to pass through solid objects. Hard to hit with a sword.

Drake Anderson: Burly American commando with the power to... oh, wait, it's not in the OVA.

Joker: Chief of operations of the British Library's elite fighting force.

Mr. Gentleman: The scary guy pulling the strings at the British Library.

### Pimpage

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Read or Die is the best kind of wacky. It's almost like a really good American comic book -- specifically, a really good League of Extraordinary Gentlemen -- in its farfetched premise and the dramatic excellence of its execution, only it has a pulse-pumping (and occasionally pulse-stopping) musical score and is frequently much shinier than a comic book. (Even the American president's pee sparkles when he wets himself.) For me, the epitome of Read or Die is Yomiko's use of her paper powers. Conceptually, stopping bullets with a deck of cards is so silly, but you watch it and you're all like "holy shit Yomiko is awesome!" And she is. So clueless, yet occasionally so terrifying, Yomiko is surprisingly compelling -- so much so that when you watch R.O.D. -THE TV-, the anime that follows the OVA, you have some trouble getting into it because you don't see Yomiko until like episode nine. (It's still a solid show, though.)

More important than any one character, though, are the James Bondish escapades of the cast. Played creatively, world-bending superpowers always make for dramatic encounters, and Read or Die's superpowers are emphatically played creatively. I'd give examples, but I don't want to spoil; suffice it to say that great moments of Indiana Jones get much more epic when you combine them with the ability to pass through solid objects. Also, one character apparently has the superpower to make the pronunciation of any English word hilarious, which is not combat-enhancing or even an intentional part of the show, but certainly holds your attention.

Among anime free of actual themes, Read or Die ranks among my favorites. You should go see it. Appropriately enough, we keep it in the library.

## In UCJAS

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Noteworthy in relation to Read or Die is UCJAS's adoption of Yomiko into the 2005 ACen skit "Shoujo Gone Wild." UCJAS constructed an astonishingly astonishing collapsible paper sword and an even more collapsible paper-looking shield which, when they worked right, made you feel like you were living Read or Die. Unfortunately, they didn't work quite right on the night of the ACen Masquerade, which was the sole reason the cast went home prizeless. (It in no way had to do with Brian's flubbing of his role as Mikage.)