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«The influence of pop culture on coming-of-age novels»

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Course Paper
«The influence of pop culture on coming-of-age novels»

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INTRODUCTION

Pop culture is an integral part of modern society, influencing various aspects of life, including literature. Coming-of-age novels are an important genre that explores the transition from childhood to adulthood. The influence of pop culture on such novels can have a significant effect on their content, structure, and readership.

The growing popularity of pop culture and coming-of-age novels in today's society opens up ample opportunities for studying their interaction and influence. Understanding this relationship can contribute to both literary research and the development of cultural knowledge.

Mass culture or pop culture, mass culture, the culture of the majority — the culture of everyday life, entertainment and information, prevailing in modern society. It includes phenomena such as mass media (including the Internet, television, radio), sports, cinematography, music, mass literature, visual arts, etc.

The content of mass culture is determined by daily events, aspirations and needs that make up the life of the majority of the population (that is, the mainstream).

The term “mass culture” arose in the 40s of the XX century in the texts of Max Horkheimer and Dwight McDonald, devoted to the criticism of television, and was widely spread thanks to the works of representatives of the Frankfurt Sociological School.

According to Dictionary.com, popular culture, or low culture as it is sometimes called, consists of “cultural activities or commercial products that reflect, suit, or appeal to the tastes of the general masses”. In other words, popular culture is accessible to the masses and has enormous appeal. Traditionally, the term was associated with the lower classes who were poorly educated, but after World War II, innovations in radio and television broadcasting or mass media led to significant cultural and social changes. Popular culture almost always relies on the mass consumption of mass media by masses of people on the planet. Popular culture is constantly evolving and is unique to the time and place in which it occurs. Social influences and institutions converge and diverge to appeal to a wide range of people in a culture. Some sociologists theorize that popular culture is a tool that elites use to control those below them in society, but others emphasize that popular culture can also be used as a means of rebellion against the dominant culture. For our purposes, characteristics of popular culture serve social functions within cultures and can be found everywhere.

The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of pop culture on coming-of-age novels and to reveal the specifics of this interaction for a better understanding of literary and cultural processes.

The object of the study is about growing up.

The subject of the study is the influence of pop culture on adult novels.

Objectives of the study:

1. consider the concepts and main characteristics of pop culture;
2. to study genre features and development of coming-of-age novels;
3. identify the relationship between pop culture and coming-of-age novels;
4. identify the influence of pop culture on the plots, characters and themes of coming-of-age novels;
5. explore the role of mass media and the Internet in shaping perceptions of growing up;
6. analyze coming-of-age novels from previous eras and modern times under the influence of pop culture.

Research material. Coming-of-age novels are considered, such as: *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott etc.

Research methods. The following research methods were used: analysis, generalization, synthesis of data, etc.

Structure of work. The coursework consists of an introduction, six chapters, conclusions and a list of references (24 titles).

1. CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF POP CULTURE

1.1. Pop culture: concepts and main characteristics

The formation and spread of mass culture is considered a phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century. “In the literal sense, it is a culture that finds demand in the main mass of the population, regardless of belonging to one or another nation, state” [23, p. 325]. Mass culture is generalized and relatively constant regardless of region or nationality.

The development of civilization and the transition from the industrial social system to the post-industrial era after the Second World War contributed to the active spread of mass culture. The possibilities and influence of mass media have increased, the quality and access to communications have improved, information technologies have developed rapidly, and the education of the population has increased. In this way, the opportunities for the spread of culture became greater, both as a whole and for each individual to become familiar with it.

“Mass culture” is one part of the global concept of “mass society”. For some time there was a division of culture into folk (traditional) and professional. Traditional culture mainly existed in villages, but the processes of urbanization and industrialization led to a significant decrease in its distribution and importance.

The beginning of the 20th century is a turbulent time of changes and transformations. This is a time of reconsideration or rejection of previously established norms and rules, a nihilistic attitude towards all human values. Liberation from restrictions on economic activity also led to the disappearance of restrictions on the self-development of culture.

The destroyed framework of restraining norms and spiritual and moral traditions not only gave a person the opportunity to feel freer, but also moved into the realm of politics, and the desire to immediately change the previously familiar conditions of existence ultimately led to two of the largest wars in history and terrible crimes against humanity. “Spiritual, moral and political protests, spilling into a historical protest, lead to the elimination of freedom and the establishment of bloody dictatorships”.

Tyrannical regimes were characterized by leveling the individuality of the people and turning them into a “mass”, a “crowd”, which simplified their management and the spread of ideologically beneficial propaganda, which was also decided to be done through the communicative capabilities of mass culture.

Some scientists believe that mass culture in its developed form first appeared in the United States. Thanks to the development in the United States of such means of mass communication as: newspapers, magazines, cinema, radio. This democratized culture and made it as accessible as possible on the one hand, and led to its commercialization, becoming one of the spheres of business on the other.

Mass culture in the USA and Europe developed differently. In the Old World, mass culture was in confrontation with official culture controlled by the state and the church. In the New World, mass culture initially propagated the ideas and stereotypes of official culture, for which advertising became the main regulator. Mass culture in the USA is an element of the national idea.

Some scientists believe that the phenomenon of mass culture has always been part of human civilization. Gladiator fights are considered one of its manifestations in ancient times. At that time, you could often hear that the people wanted: "Bread and spectacle".

Popular culture undoubtedly influences all culture in general. Mass culture advocates the homogeneity of cultural phenomena. Elite culture is primarily aimed at the "aristocracy", the upper world, popular culture is aimed at the average consumer. An important content characteristic of mass culture is the desire to make all elements similar and homogeneous. Popular culture places the main bet on spectacle, on stereotypes and standard stamps that do not require high mental activity, emotions, feelings, will, energy, in turn, all this is required by "serious art".

The use of various genres in popular culture (from detectives and westerns to fantasy and science fiction) makes it possible to create mythological heroes (such as: Superman, Batman, Iron Man, Spider-Man, Catwoman, vampire, sorcerer, "chosen one", etc. .), a new reality that can become accessible to everyone. Mass coverage is based on a formal quantitative measure. "Mass is not nationality, but a quantitative method of production and consumption".

Escapism is also defined as a phenomenon that characterizes popular culture. With all its fantastic, illusory, pseudo-reality, with a lot of myths and fictions, mass culture is well suited for escaping into the world of dreams and fantasies. At the same time, it performs a rather important therapeutic function of catharsis. It is considered the most important function performed by art.

There is a certain internal affinity between mass and counterculture. Counterculture arises out of the human need for confrontation. It is believed that the counterculture carries the idea of protest. Its origins are quite diverse - from philosophical currents and utopian thoughts to religion and artistic trends [16].

The counterculture is also democratic and mass. It focuses more on the existential confrontation than on the political one. Rock culture is also one of the variants of counterculture. "Rock is the sublimation of looseness and simplicity" [24, p. 76].

The essence of counterculture is protest against the dominant structures of society. In this case, the main thing is the struggle itself and the antagonism. Often, over time, counterculture becomes mainstream and begins to be considered a classic.

Mascult is very commercialized at the moment. Mass culture products are usually designed for the widest possible audience for a good commercial success of the project. With commerce, politics penetrated mass culture and began to influence it [23].

One of the features of mass culture is that it does not have certain traditions, ideals or norms, they constantly change according to fashion trends. "Mass culture appeals to a wide audience, appeals to simplified tastes, claims to be folk art" [25, p. 103].

Television is considered the most effective means of spreading mass culture. Mass culture is a part of the mass consciousness, it is oriented to the tastes and instincts of consumers, is connected with mass media and is manipulative.

"Through market-oriented consumer goods, we learn about the typical forms of behavior, attitudes, conventional wisdom, superstitions and expectations of a large number of people. One of the important functions of modern mass culture consists in mythologizing social consciousness. The products of mass culture, as well as myths, are based on not distinguishing between the real and the ideal. They become a subject not of knowledge, but of faith. Mass culture, which focuses on instincts and the subconscious, widely uses some icons. Only not religious, but pop culture icons".

The economic prosperity of the United States at the beginning of the last century created cultural industries. The term culture industry was coined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to refer to the creation, production and distribution of goods and services that are cultural in nature and are usually protected by intellectual property rights. The globalizing forces of commerce and international trade, mass media and communication technology, plus the arts and languages are behind the rise of American pop culture. In the 1920s, American mass media were exported to increase sales of American products. Major sponsors of such programming included Procter & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive and Lever Brothers, all American manufacturers of soaps and detergents, thus the term soap opera emerged for daytime dramas, which also became popular exports in their own right.

The growing influence of American television also affected the international film industry. In 1987, American films captured 56% of the European film market. Less than ten years later, this statistic had increased to 90%. Recently, the market share in Western Europe has ranged from 60-75%. In such a one-sided import/export market, fears often arise. "Foreign countries not

only worry about their own domestic entertainment industries from an economic perspective, but also worry about the impact on their culture”.

For many countries, the abundance of American media is not just another commodity, but rather cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism can be defined in various ways, but for our purposes we will think of it as dominance through cultural products. Imperialism is “the creation and maintenance of unequal power relations between civilizations that favor a more powerful civilization”. Other related terms include media imperialism or domination or control through mass media, and electronic colonialism or dominance or exploitation through technological forms.

When culture becomes a commodity, the fear of cultural homogenization rises. People from different parts of the world can learn to dress, eat, consume and communicate in the same way. Localized cultural diversity may become endangered as a dominant, globalized culture becomes the norm. As Martin and Nakayama point out, “There is no easy way to measure the influence of popular culture, but we must be sensitive to its influence on intercultural communication because for many of us the world exists through popular culture”. The global circulation of popular culture allows foreign companies to distribute material from the cultural industries. Not all popular culture originates in the United States. Manga, anime, K-pop, bairro dancing, and British rock bands are prime examples of wildly popular cultural influences originating outside the United States.

It is interesting to note that some forms of popular culture may be restricted to certain cultures, such as slang words, while other forms, such as music, may be universally popular. Globalization also allows foreign companies to make money by selling US cultural products and making them more available around the world, as well. CNN now reaches more than 200 million households in more than 212 countries and territories. Such exposure can only be possible thanks to the cooperation of international distributors. British culture and communications researcher Mark Banks believes that power is always at the heart of the pop culture debate. His work focuses on how pop culture, economics, and politics collide through the use, social critique, and exploitation of cultural work.

People negotiate their attitudes toward pop culture in interesting and complex ways. To maintain or change our identity, we both resist popular culture and actively consume it. If a social group participates in certain forms of pop culture, people often feel that they should participate as well. On the other hand, if a social group has concerns about pop culture, people often refuse to engage in that particular form as well.

Using Facebook is a great example of this. According to Statista.com (retired 7/25/19), seventy-nine percent of 18-49 year olds in the United States used Facebook in February 2019, while only forty percent of the 65 and older

group did. According to the Pew Research Center (as of 07/25/19), those in the 18-24 range span multiple platforms (YouTube 94%, Snapchat 78%, Instagram 71% and Twitter 45%), visiting them multiple times (71%) for a day. Interestingly, popular culture does not have to win over the majority of the people to be considered “popular”. With less than a quarter of the world's population using it, Facebook can be considered the ultimate media imperialist.

1.2. Novels about growing up: genre features and development

A coming-of-age story is a literary, stage, and cinematic genre that focuses on the life and coming of age of a protagonist or his transition. Coming-of-age stories tend to emphasize dialogue or internal monologue rather than action, and are often set in the past. The heroes of coming-of-age stories are usually teenagers.

The plot points of coming-of-age stories are usually emotional changes in that character(s).

In literary criticism, coming-of-age novels and parenting novels are sometimes used interchangeably, but the former is generally the broader genre. The novel of upbringing (from the German words “bildung”, “education” and “roman”, “novel”) is also characterized by a number of formal, topical and thematic features. It focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood, in to whom a change of character is important.

The genre evolved from folktales about young children exploring the world to find their fortune. Although the novel of upbringing originated in Germany, it had a great influence first in Europe, and later throughout the world. Thomas Carlyle translated Goethe's novel into English, and after its publication in 1824, many British authors wrote novels inspired by it.

There are many variations of the novel of upbringing, such as the *Künstlerroman* (art novel), which focuses on the artist's self-development [26].

In cinema, the coming-of-age story is a genre of teenage films. Coming-of-age stories focus on the protagonist's psychological and moral growth or transition from youth to adulthood. The 2020s option is a “delayed coming-of-age movie, a kind of story that acknowledges the delayed nature of 21st-century adulthood”, in which young people can still explore short-term relationships, living situations, and work even in their late 20s and in his early 30s.

Personal growth and change is an important characteristic of the genre, which relies on dialogue and emotional reactions rather than action. The story is sometimes told in the form of memories. Historically, coming-of-age stories have typically focused on young boys, although coming-of-age stories focusing on girls have become more common in the early 21st century.

Growing up is the transition of a young person from childhood to adulthood. The specific age at which this transition occurs varies among societies, as does the nature of the change. It can be a simple legal convention or part of a ritual or spiritual event.

In the past and in some societies today, such changes were often associated with the age of puberty (puberty), especially menarche and spermarche. In others, it is associated with the age of religious responsibility.

In particular, in Western societies, modern legal conventions foresee moments in late adolescence and early adulthood (most often 18 years, although they range from 16 to 21 years) when adolescents are generally no longer considered minors and are granted full rights and responsibilities an adult.

Many cultures retain coming-of-age ceremonies, and coming-of-age stories are an established subgenre in literature, film, and other forms of media.

Documenting the evolution of teens and media from the 1950s to 2010, this book examines the movies, books, television shows, and musicians that have influenced American culture and shaped each generation's "coming of age" experience.

Adolescence is full of drama and emotional ups and downs that coincide with surprising new social situations and sexual tension. For these reasons, pop culture and mass media have repeatedly produced entertainment that depicted, celebrated, or mocked the coming-of-age experience, from sitcoms like *The Wonder Years* to 1980s bro movies to today's teen-oriented television series.

Coming of Age in Popular Culture: Teens, Adolescence, and the Art of Growing Up covers a wide range of media representations of the transition from childhood to adulthood from the 1950s to 2010. It examines how adolescence is characterized in pop culture based on these representations, shows how powerful media and entertainment are in setting societal norms, and examines how American society views and values adolescence. Topics covered include race relations, gender roles, religion, and sexual identity. Young adult readers will gain a heightened sense of media literacy as they explore a topic of intrinsic interest to them.

The coming-of-age genre includes stories, both movies and books, that are "defined by the loss of childhood innocence" [17]. This occurs when the protagonist explores a formal and complex experience, usually for the first time as a rite of passage. Although the main character is usually a young person in high school on the verge of adulthood (or 17 years old), this is not always the case, as growing up is not limited to a specific point in life and a specific process.

The beauty of the aforementioned rite is that it can be frivolous or controversial, universal or individual. Be it first love, awareness of sexuality, death or the world, establishing a relationship or personal growth. It provides versatility by combining traditional genres such as comedy, drama, action and

horror with a huge variety of authentic “transition from innocence to experience”.

This diversity comes from the non-static, ever-evolving nature of our sense of self as humans. This gives the genre the potential to achieve “deeper spiritual meaning or insight into the protagonist's journey” through a more nuanced commentary on humanity, relationships, self-perception, and society.

Like anything else, the genre has evolved to become all-encompassing in its characters and focus. This contributed to the “universality of coming of age”, whereas before, depictions of teenagers on screen were rare.

At first, literature was the only way to tell coming-of-age stories, and early films were often adaptations of that literature, such as *Little Women*. They tended to be fairly one-dimensional, focusing on the struggles of the audience at the time, but always had socially “successful” results. Its later coming of age as an independent genre in the 1970s and 1980s allowed it to present more diverse stories and denouements. In addition, the period created many tropes that influence modern coming-of-age films, many of which remain classics.

These '70s films usually focused on protagonists coming to a greater awareness of the difficulties of mature relationships and the decline of their hometowns, such as George Lucas' *American Graffiti*. The 1980s paved the way for John Hughes' critical and commercial hits, including *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, which exemplify the rise of teen films. This increased popularity also allowed for continued exploration of “heavy themes with comedic flair and authenticity” [1], such as in *Stand by Me* and *Dead Poet's Society*, where death is a central theme.

However, while there are some gems, the humor used in some of the older “coming-of-age movies about consent, sexual assault, and homophobia would not be appropriate in today's time... [using] minority characters as an accent, rather than portraying them as three-dimensional people”. As a result, recent coming-of-age movies and books are becoming more comprehensive and diverse, despite the decline in blockbuster success. For example, further explorations of race, mental health, and sexuality occurred in films such as *Moonlight* and *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Overall, there is progress in inclusiveness, but growing up remains grounded, as seen, for example, in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. And it gave him the potential to continue to evolve toward an authentic and inclusive representation of an experience shared by all of humanity: growing up.

Finally, my thoughts on the importance of genre. Graduation is here (again), and while it creates happiness and hope, it also symbolizes the larger constants of growing up and moving on (willingly or not). At this time in our lives, when emotions are “heightened with the intensity of the 'bloom of youth”, it's nice to know that there is a way for me to look back on the difficult and confusing years of growing up with a warm familiarity.

Because no matter what challenges life brings, past, present, or future, I believe that growing up is a powerful demonstration that the journey is more important than the results. And while I haven't found a single perfect book or movie that captures the essence of my youth, it doesn't matter. That's because the little pieces of me and others that were portrayed in coming-of-age books and on television captured my heart, too. And I have no doubt that these stories will continue to enable those who hear, read or watch them to stay forever young.

Ultimately, that's because it doesn't matter whether the experience I'm witnessing is mine or someone else's. Growing up can blur the lines between universality and individuality, whether through teenage disillusionment, or the empowerment of high school, or any number of things. It allows me to come home to my inner child, teenager and adult, and allow them to reconcile through the reality of the challenges and joys of what it is to be human.

So, we can summarize the books:

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak: My favorite book of all time (if anyone mentions the movie before me, just know you've been warned), this is a heartfelt insight into both the cultural context and the personal journey of an adopted child in WWII Germany. Character development over many years is facilitated by the passage of time in a complex environment rather than a concentrated event. It creates a very authentic story despite the extreme circumstances, creating more connections between the characters and the reader than I've ever experienced while reading literature.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee: This timeless classic, while lacking the comedy and romance that often occurs in adulthood, is similar to *The Book Thief* in exploring defining moments in a young person's life. Following the childhood of the protagonist Scout, this book contains what was, at the time of publication, groundbreaking social commentary on racism in the American South. This was provided along with a heartbreaking journey in which the main character gradually comes to understand the complex world she was born into.

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton: A thought-provoking novel that captures the bitterness behind "teenage angst" written by a 17-year-old girl herself. Following a young "tanner" and his friends through their lives on the wrong side of the tracks as he battles the authorities, the law and wealthy "socialites", we meet Ponyboy as he struggles to come to terms with his childhood innocence. he feels that there is no space left in his life.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon: Whether or not Christopher, the main character, is autistic (it's up for debate, but we love any neurodivergent notion), the book presents a fairly underused view of the world, providing refreshing depth in personal development. All in all, an interesting and enjoyable read, apart from the murder mystery plot, which is fascinating in itself.

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott : An obvious innovator in the coming-of-age genre as it focuses on women (go figure!), particularly the touching female relationships and the lives of four sisters.

My Brilliant Friend by Elena Ferrante: Essentially the same female lead as Little Women, except with more gritty and complicated relationships, character development, storylines, and basically everything, also very Italian. Anyway, my jaw dropped at the end of the first book - the drama is INSANE.

Blueback by Tim Winton: Imagine the story of a lifetime, now imagine a beautiful mother-son relationship, now imagine incredible images of the Australian ocean and wildlife conservation. I present to you: Blueback is probably Tim Winton's best work (nobody thinks but me, many thanks Cloudstreet) - a simple, soothing presentation of homecoming and relationships, human or not, that last a lifetime.

Rabbit Hedge by Jill Barklem: This heartwarming book (also an incredible movie—both based on true stories) tells the story of three indigenous girls who struggle to return home after being kidnapped from their families. Their incredible defiance in the face of the effects of a cruel world is nothing short of inspiring, and you can't help but root for them throughout.

The Auschwitz Librarian: My personal favorite film about a young Auschwitz Jewish inmate, Dita, as she grows into herself while surviving the trials of concentration camp life. A testament to the power of hope and beauty in the darkest of places, something I think the world should appreciate more.

Bridge to Terabithia / Via Winn Dixie by Katherine Paterson: While I know this is pretty irrational, in my mind it's essentially the same book. I read them around the same time, and they're both small-town America, pre-pubescent protagonists, heartbreaking but enjoyable, simple reads. Also, AnnaSophia Robb played the main character in both adaptations, so I guess I can be forgiven for the confusion.

Movies:

Be By My Side: This semi-adventure story about 4 guys who go looking for a dead body (don't worry, no graphics) is my favorite movie of all time. It's a timeless classic with such heart that brilliantly showcases the connection between the characters and their experiences as a collective and as individuals. I really like this movie for its modesty in not trying to be anything more than it is, while still tackling the complex issues of death, bullying, and socioeconomic discrimination. And although it does not end with the solution of all things, it sets off on a journey that will change both you and the characters forever.

Now and Then: This is basically a female version of the movie mentioned above, but takes place over the course of a summer instead of a single road trip. Dealing with similar themes, it offers an alternative perspective on finding one's place among friends and within oneself.

Booksmart: A brilliant example of a broad connection that stems from a very specific social situation where two studious best friends decide to break the rules and throw a prom party. Although it was only released in 2019, it is considered by many to be a modern classic due to its connection to two girls' experiences and shared memories of high school, as well as its hilarious self-awareness as the plot moves into a certain madness.

Any Hayao Miyazaki film like *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Ponyo*: do they need an introduction? In my opinion, everything about Miyazaki is coming-of-age gold, with their young characters often struggling with complex dilemmas or family dynamics. In any case, they are complex, beautiful and worth a good look.

The perks of being a cartoon: Following the story of shy and slightly awkward Charlie through his first year of high school, this film offers a sensitive look at mental health, trauma and bullying in his and his friends' lives. And while this may not be the case for everyone, I found that the openness of the characters' journeys made the hope present all the more palatable, yet heartbreaking at the same time [2].

Kick Like Beckham: I loved this movie for its thoughtful portrayal of a teenager fighting for her passion, soccer, while dealing with the conflicts it creates in her family. Romance aside, definitely a fun watch.

How to Train Your Dragon: The fact that I even have to explain this seems absurd to me, but why not? Brief description of the three films: "The Boy With His Dragon". But that doesn't do the movies justice, because they really are perfect (as is their soundtrack)! The first is about finding yourself, the second is about growing up, and the third is about letting go in general, incredible movies should be a standard item on the list [3].

CHAPTER 2. VALUE POP CULTURE ON COMING-OF-AGE NOVELS

2.1. The relationship between pop culture and coming-of-age novels

Young people, especially students of color, enter classrooms every day where they do not matter. Through policies and practices that center whiteness, schools continue to enact violence on a personal and systemic level [4].

Bettina Love argued that contemporary schools function as the “educational survival complex,” where learning for survival is the purpose of education for students of color. In this sense, young people are not expected to thrive in classrooms—in fact, the system anticipates their failures as explanations for historical and modern economic, social, and political issues.

One way to create opportunities for young people to not only matter in schools, but to thrive, is through revisioning the role of popular culture in the curriculum. As a teacher, my high school students were often current on various popular culture texts, even recommending texts to one another as our classroom community developed. As I transitioned into my doctoral program, I wondered about additional affordances of popular culture in the classroom beyond serving as a “window, mirror, or sliding glass door” to lived experiences for my students.

Popular culture (also referred to as mass culture or pop culture) is generally recognized as a collection of ideas, cultural practices, and objects that are representative of a certain time in society. In this sense, popular culture captures the experiences relevant to a certain group of people much in the same way young adult (YA) literature contains stories representative of adolescence. Because both popular culture and YA literature have proven valuable separately as a means toward critical reflection in the classroom, the intersection of these two areas should be considered for new possibilities in the classroom.

Below, I describe three potential benefits of highlighting popular culture references in YA literature using Angie Thomas’s *The Hate U Give*, which is a coming-of-age story about navigating struggle and empowerment. Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, Thomas’s novel integrates contemporary socio-political issues, popular culture, and critical conversations about social justice.

Popular culture references in YA literature can help teachers to better understand their own adolescent students.

“As usual it matches my J’s, the blue-and-black Elevens like Jordan wore in Space Jam. . . . I hate dressing like everybody else, but *The Fresh Prince* taught me something.” [5]

Knowing more about students than their academic ability in your content area is an essential part of teaching. Understanding popular culture that resonates with young people is one way toward fully recognizing your students. The above example from *The Hate U Give* contains numerous takeaways for a teacher

considering protagonist Starr as a representation of their own students: appreciation of sneaker culture (e.g., J's, blue and black Air Jordan Elevens), the movie *Space Jam*, professional basketball player Michael Jordan, and the show *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Reading the text while prioritizing popular culture references, either alone or with students, can serve as a reminder of the powerful and persuasive potential of popular culture in your own students' lives.

By analyzing popular culture references in YA literature, students can better understand and relate to fictional characters.

“. . . Drake raps from the speakers. I nod to the beat and rap along under my breath. Everybody on the dance floor yells out the ‘started from the bottom, now we’re here’ part. Some days, we are at the bottom in Garden Heights, but we still share the feeling that damn, it could be worse.”

Although Starr's reflection of her life in Garden Heights is supported by the lyrics to Drake's popular song, “Started from the Bottom,” the experience of feeling conflicted about their circumstances resonates with many students. Still, some students will have trouble relating to these experiences. The above reference to popular culture can help students to identify with fictional characters through a shared popular culture reference, even if their experiences are different.

A focus on popular culture references in YA literature provides a generative space for considering, critiquing, and revisioning sociopolitical issues.

“A Tupac song on the radio makes up for our silence. He raps about how we gotta start making changes. Khalil was right. ‘Pac still relevant.”

While *The Hate U Give* contains numerous poignant moments appropriate for discussions around police brutality, the book also has potential for conversations around race and class that are supported through popular culture references. The above example alludes to “Changes” by Tupac—a song critiquing the war on drugs and poverty.

In *The Hate U Give*, Starr reflects “I can't change where I come from or what I've been through, so why should I be ashamed of what makes me, me?”. For students of color, mattering in school should be the minimum; existing as fully seen, included, empowered, and loved the goal. Centering popular culture references while reading YA literature can be one approach for making sure that students, especially those who don't feel seen through the traditional school curriculum, know that they matter in school.

2.2. The influence of pop culture on the plots, characters and themes of coming-of-age novels

Mass culture is associated with the mass spread of technologies for copying cultural texts, and according to the “theory of two cultures”, which

became widespread in the 60s of the 20th century, it is a culture of a low artistic level, which is based on stereotypes, mythologies of perception, associated with advertising business, commerce, etc. That is why she is often accused of intellectual and spiritual inferiority, formulaicity and vulgarity, and aesthetic scarcity. Ortega-y-Gaset, Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, and other philosophers gave thorough criticism of mass culture, which manipulates people's consciousness. Among domestic researchers, let's name L. Berezov, who believes that “creativity and creativity are least of all needed from mass culture figures, it is enough to be professional interpreters, translators of stereotypical images, sellers of dreams. Talent is no less important here than in professional culture. These are specialists in sightseeing tours of life”.

Such a position in relation to mass culture, in our opinion, is unfair, due to the fact that since the 60s of the 20th century, a significant value transformation of mass culture has taken place. This gives grounds for highlighting certain levels in its structure. In modern cultural studies, as a rule, three main levels of mass culture are distinguished: kitsch culture (that is, low-quality, even vulgar culture associated with commercial goals); mid-culture (“middle hand” culture); art culture (mass culture with a certain high artistic content and aesthetic expression).

It should be noted that over time the attitude towards mass culture has changed. If Karl Jaspers called mass art “the decline of the essence of art” [27], and Jean Baudrillard said that all spheres of modern art “enter the trance aesthetic sphere of simulation”, then these concepts were revised in the mid-70s and 80s of the XX century within the framework of the Postmodern situation, which removed the understanding of mass and elite culture in the regime of rigid opposition.

Today, we should focus not on the aesthetic or moral evaluation of mass culture, but on its definition as a technology for the production of a cultural product. That is, as noted by O.E. Drobysheva, “Mass culture is not a substrate, but a form of functioning of social consciousness, adequate to the basic parameters of the age” [28].

Worldview and value changes of the late 1970s and 1990s led to the refutation of the established distinction between two cultures and the formation of a popular culture phenomenon that takes into account modern realities based on a new understanding of culture. Works of popular culture express essential trends in human worldview and at the same time they themselves form culture and value orientations. Reflecting on popular culture, we note that a new type of culture pays attention to principles and means that were ignored by the previous cultural tradition. Among them, we can name entertainment as a space for rethinking meanings and experiences, esotericism as an expression of a new type of worldview, remake as a reconstruction of common human meanings, etc. By applying the techniques of interactive practices, visualization, entertainment,

absurdity, etc., a modern person is able to understand existence and is free in his own expression of thoughts. And an important, in our opinion, position of popular culture is that it allows all of the above without using established schemes, stereotypical models, samples, etc., it is open to new concepts.

We already have a clear idea of mass culture, so let's try to define pop culture. Awareness of the features of popular culture, in our opinion, will help with today's problem in distinguishing the concepts of "mass culture" and "popular culture".

Popular culture is a culture that developed at the end of the 20th century and in which new value and outlook paradigms embodied their specific language, form of expression under the influence of the latest information technologies, visualization.

We agree with O. Zakharov, who suggests considering mass culture as a "technology of cultural production" that corresponds to the development of the economy, social relations, communications, education, and mentality [6]. This concept allows us to get rid of the traditional view of mass culture as a negative phenomenon and allows us to change the focus of consideration of cultural products from aesthetic and moral evaluation to a method of replicating meanings and values.

At the end of the 20th century, the development of mass communication facilitated the involvement of an even larger part of the audience than it was before. The advent of personal computers and obtaining the necessary information from the worldwide Internet changed the possibilities of access to works of art and cultural heritage. If earlier the only opportunity to see Leonardo da Vinci's "Joconda" was a visit to the Louvre, today you just need to enter the name of this painting in the Internet search engine. If previously these images were in special encyclopedias, today they can be placed on your own desktop in a computer. So, at the end of the last century, it was thanks to mass culture that something unimaginable happened before. Accessibility has become both a strength and a weakness of the processes taking place. Therefore, mass culture is a tool that became possible thanks to technical progress, the Postmodern situation, and a change in the way of thinking of mankind. A phenomenon is emerging that is characterized by dynamism and exists at a high professional level and is called "popular culture". It is this culture, in our opinion, that is the new culture that A. Flier talks about. The scientist suggests that mass culture can be an embryonic precursor of some new culture that is just being born, reflecting life experience already at the industrial and post-industrial stages of development.

An interesting article is by P. Kirichka, who writes that spiritual culture and mass information are in such a close relationship that they sometimes resemble Siamese twins. In our opinion, the popular culture of the turn of the 20th-21st centuries includes exactly these two components. And although the Russian researcher says that they contribute to the emergence of media culture,

we would emphasize the following: the sum of culture and information is popular culture (at the same time, it is a broader concept than media culture). Information as one of the main values today and culture (musculature) as a tool. “Spiritual culture demands and adsorbs mass information. Mass information expands and deepens the field of spiritual culture. Spiritual culture induces and “axiologizes” mass information. Mass information dynamizes and verifies spiritual culture”, writes P. Kirichyok.

The phenomenon of popular culture, in our opinion, has not received the attention it deserves and the problems it solves, as well as posing new challenges to us. Among them are the use of previously ignored techniques and terminological traps. In the domestic discourse, as already noted, there is still confusion with the concepts of mass culture and popular culture, while in the American discourse there are already author's interpretations of popular culture.

John Storey in the book “Theory of Culture and Mass Culture” examines various definitions and approaches to pop culture [7]. A qualitative definition deals with the same problems as “high culture”. Also, pop culture is distinguished when we define what “high culture” is. However, many works border between these two phenomena, for example, W. Shakespeare and C. Dickens. E. Burgess also writes about this problem. In the article “For whom Hamlet was written”, he gives examples of the names of great people from the world of culture who cannot be assigned to any specific pole in this paradigm: U. Shakespeare, L. Tolstoy, M. de Cervantes, E. Piaf, “The Beatles”. John Storey, on the other hand, will focus on those forces and relations that confirm this difference, such as the educational system.

Another definition equates popular culture with mass culture. It is seen as a commercial culture, mass produced for mass consumption. An alternative is to define popular culture as authentic human culture, but this is problematic because there are many definitions of “human”. Storiza refutes the political dimension of popular culture, which is widespread thanks to the critical theory of the study of international relations and global political economy, which examines the interface of ideas, institutions and material possibilities and their influence on the specific contours of state formation. And the last definition refers to Postmodernism and the lack of distinction between elite and mass culture.

Popular culture is a dynamic and unique phenomenon. It affects a person and his way of thinking through accessibility and information, the meaning it carries. The works of popular culture are in demand by a wide circle of society and today it acquires an increasingly independent color and the influence on human consciousness is very great. Among the different opinions, the prevailing opinion is that fascination with works of popular culture (modern computer games, television and other popular entertainment) takes up more and more of a person's free time and it is not known what consequences it may lead to. For

example, psychologist Craig Anderson assures that murders in American schools are related to video games that impose a model of behavior on the player, including in conflict situations. Although we note that not all scientists agree with Anderson - most studies do not show any connection between killing in games and aggression in life.

At the same time, psycho- and sociolinguist James Paul Gee claims that games motivate players to think of strategies to achieve their goals and confidently achieve them - to collect, analyze, combine data, keep a large number of factors in mind, maintain a balance between short-term and long-term tasks. With this, the researcher criticizes the opinion of the majority that modern culture can lead to the worst line of human development, which refers to the dulling and degradation of society under the influence of popular culture. In addition, he even advises educational institutions to take a closer look at the game industry in order to better design the learning process. American popularizer of “new technologies of life” Steven Johnson speaks about the same properties of games.

Stephen Johnson, in the book *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Really Makes Us Smarter*, argues that modern culture - both television and computer games - does not, contrary to popular opinion, dull the viewer, but on the contrary, sharpen our minds. Johnson reminds that behind the banal plots of computer games there are complex problematic tasks, for the successful implementation of which it is necessary to monitor dozens of different parameters and control them; and in order to understand what is happening in television series, you need to keep in mind the same dozens of plot lines, connections between characters, their history, etc.

Johnson's theory consists in the assertion that popular culture has become more intellectual over the past thirty years, its level has become higher, so it improves society by producing new trends and ideas. He opposes the perception of popular culture as morally corrupting society and a factor in its degradation. He disputes this prescription, although he is in no hurry to conclude that it has become superior to traditional culture [8, p. 132].

CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS POP CULTURE ON COMING-OF-AGE NOVELS

3.1. The role of the media and the Internet in shaping ideas about growing up

Growing evidence suggests that social media may be associated with “Facebook depression” [22]. A recent Serbian study showed a statistically significant correlation between Beck Depression Inventory-II scores and time spent social networking (Pantic et al., 2012). As mentioned previously,

cyberbullying contributes to depression [19]. Youth reporting depressive symptoms were more likely to talk to strangers online, use the Internet frequently to email others, and have a high intensity of Internet use [19].

Online photographs, Facebook friend tallies, and status updates can present a skewed view of teens' social world. A recent survey was conducted of 425 undergraduate students at State University of Utah who were long-term users of social media about perceptions of others' lives. Data analysis demonstrated that compared to their peers, long-term users of social media perceived that other people were happier and had better lives than themselves [18].

A variety of resources designed to intervene in mental health crises are available through social media sites, especially in the area of suicide prevention. For example Facebook teamed up with the UK mental health association Samaritans to institute a suicide alert page. Facebook users may be able to send alerts about individuals who they believe are expressing suicidal thoughts or intent. However, this form is difficult to locate on the site [21]. There is also a button through which users can report bullying and objectionable content. Organizations such as the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also have Facebook pages (<http://www.facebook.com/AFSPnational>; <http://www.facebook.com/800273TALK>), although users must specifically search for these pages in order to use them. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also uses YouTube to share protective videos. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIKdsCUSBt4&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

Facebook and Myspace have online forms through which users can report inappropriate content including hate speech and personal attacks (<http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=204546626249212>; <http://www.myspace.com/help/report-abuse>). In the UK, Facebook has collaborated with the UK Child exploitation and online protection center to create the ClickCEOP application (<http://www.facebook.com/clickceop>) which links users to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).

Social media itself may help address cyberbullying. For example, Cyberbully411 was developed by Internet Solutions for Kids (2012) and is a site where adolescents can share stories and join in discussion forums about bullying. It also contains information and resources on cyberbullying.

Focus groups found that students were not very aware of ways to report cruel behavior online and respond as helpful bystanders. Solutions that teens were familiar with were ignoring or blocking the sender of aggressive messages [23]. Given these potential protective resources online, social media managers should focus on how to increase the user-friendliness of

resources. Easier to find alerts and flagging systems as well as active and involved moderators on these platforms would greatly increase the safety of these sites.

Adolescents are open to obtaining mental health information through social media. One in four adolescents and young adults has searched for information about depression online, with a similar percentage searching for information about violence, drugs, and alcohol [12].

Social networking profiles may be a useful venue to identify students at risk for substance abuse, depression, and suicide. References to stress (thirty-seven percent), alcohol (seventy-three percent), depressive symptoms (twenty-four percent), and weight concerns (six percent) were found to be prevalent on Facebook profiles of college freshmen. Additionally a positive association between Facebook profiles referencing stress and depressive symptoms was found [21].

Moreno et al. found a high frequency of status updates revealing depressive symptomatology which could be useful to screen for and develop awareness for treatment. References to violence, substance use, and sexual behaviors were also prevalent in MySpace profiles [2].

3.2. Comparative analysis of coming-of-age novels of previous eras and modern ones under the influence of pop culture

The theme of growing up in the novel “Crank” is considered through two main phases that the main character Georgia went through in her transition to adulthood. The first phase, called “immature”, shows how Georgia was faced with the problems of adolescence, when she did not yet have the opportunity to effectively solve them. The second phase, “mature”, reflects the period when Georgia learned to make important decisions for her future, helping herself to resolve conflicts. In the first phase, Georgia is characterized by a lack of confidence and trust, which is reflected in her behavior. In the second phase, she demonstrates a change in her attitude to problems, showing emotional maturity and responsibility. This process of growing up shows how the main character went from childhood to adulthood, acquiring new skills and understanding. The ending of the novel reflects how events move forward in time to the point of maturity, indicating an important stage in the life of the heroine. The study of this topic may be interesting for further research that examines other aspects of the novel in more detail or compares it to other literary works [13].

High Fidelity opens with a close-up of a very melancholic Rob Gordon asking the question, “What came first, the music or the misery? [...] Did I listen to pop music because I was unhappy? Or was I unhappy because I listened to pop music?” A similar question could easily be asked of English scholars. Since I started teaching, I have been asked several times each year, “Why do we read

such sad stories? Everything we read is so depressing!” In these situations, I struggled to come up with a satisfying answer: “the most interesting stories often have the most at stake” or “the defining moments are rarely happy”. For better or for worse, these answers satisfy the questioners. However, I am no longer satisfied [14].

At a summer institute two years ago, a master teacher encouraged me to take a hard look at my own curriculum and consider not only what I was teaching, but also what the students were learning. We claim to teach students to analyze stories and express themselves, but for teenage students who read high school novels and coming-of-age stories, what we teach turns into a lesson that I don't think any of us intended. If these are stories that show a character growing up, students will learn that they need to adapt to these stories in order to become adults. They engage in a process of self-creation that is intrinsically linked to self-narrative: they strive to become the stories they want to tell about themselves based on the models we have provided. We teach students that pain is vital to growing up [15].

This is a common theme in most, if not all, English departments. We teach literature to students in part to help students understand themselves [29; 30].

In his book *The Power of the Text: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English*, Robert Scholes applies Foucault's theories of poststructuralism to the study of English as a discipline, particularly as an institution that seeks self-reproduction and is averse to systemic change. He seeks to undo the perpetuation of the oppositional binary between literature and non-literature in English departments. My problems are similar. When we teach coming-of-age stories, told in the higher hopes of teaching students how to find and express their own truths, we implicitly tell students how to achieve adulthood and how to tell a story of their own making. The problem can be narrowed down to two popular features of most English departments: the “story mountain” or main arc of the story (as traditionally expressed in this scheme), and the “Hero's Journey” [9].

The story mountain and the hero's journey share a common trajectory. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell argues that there are commonalities to be found in the cultural stories and myths of the world. This is the main story of the hero. There are several stages: challenge, crossing the threshold, testing and returning. In this basic form, the hero starts at home and is relatively devoid of power or abilities, but happy or at least content (hopefully, as are our students). Then things go wrong and he has to leave (that's the challenge). The hero (who at this stage remains unremarkable) moves to a new world, where he finds a mentor, comrades and learns about his enemy. He trains, is tested, fails, and then triumphs over his enemy before returning home. If we consider the psychological and physical well-being of the hero and try to chart this journey, the hero starts out safe and content, faces death and despair, and

then manages to return home (ostensibly becoming someone greater than when he left) [10, 11].

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the concepts and main characteristics of pop culture. Pop culture is a broad term that encompasses various aspects of popular culture, including music, film, fashion, literature, and other forms of expression. The main characteristics of pop culture are the speed of change, openness to innovation and influence on modern society.

The study of pop culture is important for understanding contemporary cultural and social processes. Revealing its main characteristics allows for a better analysis of the interaction between modern trends and the influence of pop culture on various spheres of life.

Examining pop culture in the context of coming-of-age novels allows us to understand how these two fields interact and influence each other. Studying this relationship can lead to new discoveries and understanding of the importance of cultural and literary phenomena in the modern world.

Coming-of-age novels are an important genre that recreates the processes of growth and personality development. This genre reflects complex internal conflicts, the search for oneself and one's own place in the world, which are relevant for teenagers and young people.

Genre features of coming-of-age novels include realistic reproduction of life, development of the main character, analysis of social and psychological aspects, and emphasis on the internal dynamics of characters. The development of this genre took place due to the influence of social changes, cultural transformations and innovations in literature.

Pop culture has been found to have a significant influence on the formation and development of coming-of-age novels, influencing their plots, characters, and themes. Pop culture reflects current trends, values, and ideals that play an important role in shaping ideas about growing up in modern society.

The connection between pop culture and coming-of-age novels is evident in the use of popular cultural symbols, language and style, as well as in the reproduction of the socio-cultural realities of the present. Pop culture influences the way in which coming-of-age novelists portray life situations, character relationships, and conflicts that are relevant to young audiences.

Pop culture has been found to influence the formation and development of these aspects of literary works, introducing new ideas, themes and images that correspond to contemporary cultural preferences and values.

Pop culture is reflected in the plots of coming-of-age novels through the use of popular themes, plot twists, and structural solutions that correspond to current literary trends. The influence of pop culture on the characters is evident in their characteristics, feelings, and behaviors, reflecting and recreating certain personality types that are relevant to the modern reader.

It was found that mass media and the Internet play a significant role in influencing young people's ideas about the processes of growth and personality formation. Information that spreads through mass media and the Internet affects the formation of values, preferences and ideals of the younger generation.

Mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines influence perceptions of growing up by disseminating a variety of informational materials that reflect current cultural and social trends. The Internet also plays an important role in shaping perceptions about growing up through access to a variety of online resources, social networks, and blogs that discuss current topics and issues of youth.

It was found that coming-of-age novels in different historical periods reflect significant differences in style, genre features, and themes that reflect the social and cultural realities of their time.

Influenced by pop culture, contemporary coming-of-age novels are marked by the relevance of themes and issues, the use of modern language and style, and the integration of popular cultural symbols and images. Contemporary coming-of-age novels reflect the influence of modern pop culture on the notion of growth and personality development in modern society.

Рецензія на курсову роботу
на тему: «Вплив поп-культури на романи дорослішання»

Пропонована до рецензування курсова робота складається з трьох розділів:

«Вплив поп-культури на романи дорослішання».

Під час написання роботи студентка проявила самостійність, творчість, наполегливість, допитливість, вміння аналізувати та систематизувати наукову літературу, чітко та послідовно формулювати висновки.

У роботі досліджуються теоретичні аспекти поп-культури. У другому розділі розкривається значення поп-культури в романах дорослішання.

Студенткою опрацьована належна кількість психологічної літератури.

Варто зауважити, що зроблені студенткою посилання відповідають списку літератури, робота грамотна, творча, відзначається багатим дослідницьким матеріалом, цілковито відповідає вимогам, що ставляться до такого типу досліджень. За умови успішного захисту, робота заслуговує оцінку «відмінно».

Рецензент:

Coursework review

on the topic: "The influence of pop culture on coming-of-age novels"

The course work offered for review consists of three sections:

"The Influence of Pop Culture on Coming-of-Age Novels."

During the writing of the work, the student showed independence, creativity, perseverance, inquisitiveness, the ability to analyze and systematize scientific literature, clearly and consistently formulate conclusions.

The work explores theoretical aspects of pop culture. The second chapter explores the importance of pop culture in coming-of-age novels.

The student has studied the appropriate amount of psychological literature.

It is worth noting that the references made by the student correspond to the list of literature, the work is competent, creative, marked by rich research material, fully meets the requirements for this type of research. Subject to successful defense, the work deserves an "excellent" rating.

Reviewer:

