HARRY POTTER’S CULTURAL IMPACT

This needs to say “Running Head:” before the title.

Harry Potter’s Cultural Impact: How Harry Potter Changed Our Culture

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Since the 90s, it seems like Harry Potter has always been there, enthralling millions of kids, teens, and even adults in its creative books and movies. Since the creation of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone by JK Rowling, it has been cemented in our culture and society, with hundreds of millions dreaming they could live in the magical world of Harry Potter and getting wrapped in the plot and the world the JK Rowling created. From entire sections of theme parks dedicated to it, to influencing readers to get into more books, and even influencing how they viewed the world. Harry Potter changed our culture by changing social norms, such as literacy rates and also conventions that are socially accepted worldwide, and also influencing millennials political views and the way they treat those around them.

The article, “Harry Potter and the Functions of Popular culture” by Dustin Kidd is about how he believes that Popular Culture is important to our society. He spends the first half of his article going over the five reasons that pop culture is necessary: Popular culture as a social norm, social boundaries, rituals, innovation, and change. The first reason, popular culture as a social norm, was based on how popular culture can be used to teach people the social norms of a society. This can be important because, “Durkheim’s study of suicide and Robert Merton’s study of crime reveal that anomic communities experience higher suicide and crime rates, suggesting that adherence to social norms increases one’s sense of social importance and responsibility” (Dustin Kidd, 2007), meaning that social norms can make a society feel closer together. The second reason, social boundaries, was based on how every region has a specific set of social norms and popular culture. For instance, how the south is known for its country music. Social boundaries can also refer to separations in our society, for instance what is acceptable and what is not. The third reason, rituals, was how social rituals bring us together as a society. Rituals like a weekly TV show, a midnight movie release, or even a book release. The fourth reason,
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innovation, was how pop culture causes our society to find new ways to innovate. For example,
how movies inspired the creation of DVD’s and Blu-ray devices. The final reason, change, was
about how popular culture can and has caused change in our society as a whole. Dustin Kidd
uses the book, “The Jungle”, as an example of change, stating, “Upton Sinclair’s book The
Jungle (1906) led to significant reforms in the American food industry”. (Dustin Kidd, 2007)
The second half of Dustin Kidd’s article was about how Harry Potter in particular proves
all five of his points and why this is important. Once again we start with social norms. Harry
Potter addresses social norms in its narrative through the ministry of magic and through the
schools rules. For instance the rule that underage witches and wizards are not allowed to use
magic outside of school creates a norm for all our main characters and can be relatable to the
reader. Outside of the books narrative, Harry Potter has become a norm in our society as well.
Dustin Kidd goes on to explain that Harry Potter has become a piece of literature that “must be
read” (Dustin Kidd, 2007) or so most of our society says. Its popularity and its fans have made it
a norm in our society. Harry Potter has also created some very large social boundaries around it,
such as certain groups finding it appropriate school material while others believe that Harry
Potter books should be banned from school. Some religious groups have also taken a hard stance
against Harry Potter because of its magical themes. The ritual portion of his argument is by far
the easiest to see. Harry Potter books and movies have created many different rituals amongst
fans. Rituals like public book readings, conventions, book releases and movie releases all see
high traffic from fans and newcomers alike. As for innovation Dustin Kidd explained that
innovation was not always made in the technological sense, “I know of no technical innovation
that has occurred as a result of Rowling’s novels, but the books have changed the publishing
industry in important ways. For instance, as a result of the Potter novels, a new list of children’s
bestsellers was formed. This allowed the Potter novels to take their appropriate place as bestsellers while freeing up the primary bestseller list for more adult novels—of course” (Dustin Kidd, 2007). So although it has not changed how we use technology in any foreseeable way it has changed how our novels are rated and seen by the public. Finally the social changes that Harry Potter have made can be clearly seen in the literacy rate in children. According to Dustin Kidd ever since the Harry Potter books have come out the literacy rate in children has steadily risen. This is because the series has inspired kids who would have otherwise never gotten into reading to start reading books. Dustin Kidd has shown through five different points that Harry Potter has affected our culture in so many ways. The rest of our articles will continue to reinforce this idea.

In the article, “A magically nice guy: Parasocial relationships with Harry Potter across different cultures”, Hannah Shmic and Christopher Klimmt both set out to see the different effects a Parasocial relationship with Harry Potter has on two different cultures. The article starts by explaining that a parasocial relationship (PSR) is a one sided relationship that occurs normally between a person and a media figure. For example, a PSR could occur by you watching Game of Thrones or reading the Harry Potter series. Shmic and Klimmt go on to say that the more parasocial interaction (PSI) you have with certain characters or actors the more likely it is that you will develop a PSR with them. “Repeated PSIs over time can result in a PSR with the mediated character, with each subsequent PSI potentially affecting the quality and intensity of the PSR and the PSR already held influencing the PSI’s quality of subsequent encounters with the media character”. (Shmic and Klimmt, 2011) They go on to say that the most interesting part of these relationships is that since they are one sided these relationships can change or end at almost any time without the consideration of another person. Before they continue on to the
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actual research they focus on the differences in media in different culture. Specifically, the talk about how the same story can be told in two different places but be completely different because of where it is being told. Shmid and Klimmt use this as an example, “When English students re-narrated a native American fairy tale, they modified the original story so that the fairy tale fit better their own cultural background and beliefs; they not only forgot details, but invented additional information so that the story became a ‘more English one’.” (Shmid and Klimmt, 2011)

The second half of this article was explaining how they conducted this experiment and what the results were. They decided to choose Germany and Mexico because they felt that they both represented opposite extremes in their culture. Germany being an extremely individualistic culture and Mexico being an extremely group oriented culture. They then set up a questionnaire online for both countries about Harry Potter. They then took their sample and condensed it so that they would have an even male to female spread for both countries. Their questions were separated into two different categories: admiration and homophily (how alike they felt to Harry Potter). In the end they found that fans from Mexico found Harry Potter to be more socially attractive but that they also felt he had a bigger ego. The surprising thing was that despite the overall results they found that many fans from both countries have very similar, if not the same, views on Harry Potter. In the end they found that despite the cultural differences between Germany and Mexico Harry Potter had created a substantial amount of relationships in both countries. This shows that cultures from two extremes, and most likely many other cultures in between, have been affected by Harry Potter.

In examining the influential Harry Potter series, one thing to consider is the effect it has on its readers. It is plain to see that even though many people of different ages and backgrounds read
The introduction of the *Harry Potter* series brought about a vast number of changes and has produced monumental impacts on society at large. The most substantial impact is the resultant increase in reading levels among children and young adults as a result of the series’ publication. This impact came into fruition due to the fact that the series is composed of many differentiating themes and genres that have the ability to appeal to a vast array of audiences, and due to its effective marketing and movie production strategies.

No doubt readers have noticed that it is the varying themes of Harry Potter that make the story appealing to such a broad audience. Seeing Harry and his friends grow up while going to a magic school will allow younger readers to identify with the characters of the story, while themes of bravery, friendship and good triumphing over evil will appeal to older readers who still find these themes relevant in their lives.

The magically entertaining environment of Harry Potter effectively fosters a story that young readers may enjoy while increasing their reading level. It has been found that the magical elements of the story have drawn in young readers and improved their reading ability (Damian98103, 2014, p. 1). Another positive effect of the Harry Potter series is its presence and influence in young adult fiction. According to Damian98103 (2014), Harry Potter’s influence on society inspired an interest in the fantasy genre that had not been seen since Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* or C.S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It could be said that Harry Potter inspired the birth of series such as *The Hunger Games*, *Twilight* and *The Maze Runner*.
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The influence of Harry Potter is not limited to reading levels and literature culture, though. In an online article, Professory Anthony Gierzynski discusses the political influence that Harry Potter has had on Millennials. He says, “Reading the books correlated with greater levels of acceptance for out-groups, higher political tolerance, less predisposition to authoritarianism, greater support for equality, and greater opposition to the use of violence and torture” (Gierzynski, 2014, p.1). This is believable, since the story focuses mainly on the triumphs of underdogs, distaste of elitist family bloodlines and oppression of wizards whose lives are deemed to have less value than pureblood wizards. Since Millennials are shown to be more in touch with entertainment media than political media, it is useful to study the effect that entertainment media has, since it often has subliminal political messages (Gierzynski, 2014, p.1).

While some may argue that people will seek out entertainment that aligns with their political views, Professor Gierzynski (2014) says “we’re often drawn to stories for reasons that may have nothing to do with our views”. He goes on to say that people let their guard down when viewing entertainment media and therefore become more susceptible to subliminal political messages. In these times, we are relaxed and having fun, so we don’t feel a need to protect ourselves from aggressive propaganda (Gierzynski, 2014, p.1). It can be concluded from these findings that many of the political themes in Harry Potter will line up with many of the social issues we face today. The main issues seem to fall in areas of promoting equality and opposing elitism, which are also issues that are the main focus of the Millennials who grew up with Harry Potter. This correlation could prove to be a key piece of the puzzle to understanding the political convictions of younger generations.

In conclusion, Harry Potter changed our culture by changing social norms, such as literacy rates and conventions that are socially accepted worldwide, and also influencing millennials political
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views and the way they treat those around them. The studies showed that the creation of social
norms are beneficial to society, and the ones by harry potter are no different while the others
showed how Harry Potter shaped millions political and worldly views. All articles showed the
impact Harry Potter had on our culture and the millions of children and adults who
experienced, leaving lasting memories and experiences that affect their lives to this day. This all
means that books can change the way a world thinks and acts, and Harry Potter created one of
the largest cultural shifts since its inception and its stories will persevere through time to affect
future generations through the novels, movies, and the people who experienced this cultural
phenomenon.

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Article Summaries: D (two non-academic sources)
Argument: A
APA Formatting: C
GSP: B
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Total: B- (80)
References


Lots of APA issues with references here. Check the online APA guide and make sure to correct for the final portfolio.