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Culture and Popularity: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Dystopian Texts

Joseph Spieles
John McCombe Ph.D.

Defined Concepts

**Utopia:** A hypothetical, idealized location or society without imperfection

**Dystopia:** A society or utopia "gone wrong." Society corrupted by basic human flaws that has created a location where people live dehumanized and fearful lives

**Cultural Icon:** Aspects of a novel or film that transcend its source material and become a part of mainstream society easily recognizable outside of the original context.

Psychology of Popularity

**Sociometric vs Perceived Popularity**

**Sociometric Popularity:** Popularity derived from idealized or inherently "good" characteristics. A person to be emulated or looked up to.

**Perceived Popularity:** Popularity derived from an appearance of popularity. Often defined by aggressive or manipulated behavior, both overt and relational.

- **Overt:** Direct attacks or verbal assaults designed to increase their own popularity and tear down challengers
- **Relational:** Subtle use of relationships, rumor and manipulation to control popularity through perception, inclusion or exclusion

Real World Identification

Personality traits, life events, and similarities between Panem’s and America’s society are identified as a means of showing why the dystopian genre resonates with its target audience.

Cultural Icons

Cultural Icons are identified as a means of demonstrating widespread effect and popularity of the franchise and genre. “If We Burn You Burn With Us”

- “I Volunteer” Internet Meme
- Three Finger Salute of Solidarity
- “May The Odds Be Ever In Your Favor”
- Katniss’s Braid
- Mockingjay Pin

The icons are also analyzed through their meaning outside of the genre to show their impact.

Methods and Areas of Analysis

**Methods:** include close reading and textual analysis and critical viewing of films in comparison to scholarly research and popular culture

**Areas of Analysis**

- Psychology of Popularity
- Character Analysis
- Real World Identification
- Creation of Cultural Icons

Character Analysis

The characters of Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark along with other key characters were analyzed through the concepts of perceived and sociometric popularity in both the films and novels. This comparison helped to identify areas where teens and young adults identify with the characters and why they have such a strong popularity in contemporary culture.

Source Material

*The Hunger Games Trilogy - Novels*

*The Hunger Games – Film*

*Catching Fire – Film*

*Mockingjay Part 1 & 2 - Film*

Literature Cited
