

# Pop culture

[Media](#), [Television](#)



Pop Culture Popular culture is your friend. Popular culture is good for you. Today consumers are the dictators. The people have spoken and we wish to be satisfied with something more substantial than " Perfect Strangers" and The Monkees. And we have that now, for the most part. In his article " Watching TV Makes You Smarter," Steven Johnson argues that culture today is far different from that of the glory days of the 1970s. Culture today is more demanding cognitively. He introduces what he calls the Sleeper Curve. The Sleeper Curve forces the viewer to pay attention, make inferences, and track shifting social relationships. (Johnson 3) Television today, though possibly morally bankrupt, is exponentially more cognitively stimulating. Yes, reality television shows like " Flavor of Love" and " Laguna Beach" are enormously, and unfortunately popular. Yes, they are smut. This is not an ideal world. There will always be Paris Hiltons and Lindsay Lohans to keep those unable or unwilling to understand higher programming entertained. But this is not to say all reality shows are not stimulating. Shows like " Survivor" and " The Apprentice," though of the reality genre are far and above " Flavor of Love" in terms of subject matter. They also aren't glorifying prostitution (the argument that Donald Trump & friends are a bunch of prostitutes is for another time and place). This is why culture cannot be viewed as a simple skyscraper. Within genres there is so much going on now that it's primitive to think higher or lower and not any other way. Popular culture as I see it is more of a map. However, not a map as described by Campbell (24). It's more or less that there are things to be seen everywhere. There's the Grand Canyon, The Hanging Gardens, and the Golden Gate Bridge, and of course New Jersey, the Valley in California, and Laguna Beach.

This idea helps to further justify the use of threading. Threading is a technique used in the high brow entertainment today. It's a somewhat complex device that takes several characters and several storylines and interweaves and relates storylines and characters (Johnson 2). This technique is far different from that of the old 70s shows which had a nice, slow moving, and horizontal storyline with little complication (Johnson 4). The threading technique challenges the viewer. It requires close attention be paid to everything going on, every detail must be accounted for. This of course requires a better developed attention span, and more cognitive function during the viewing of the show. So how can popular culture really be bad? Most critics would deem popular culture as trash for no other reason than that it is popular. One may argue the violence in movies like "History of Violence," and "Crash" is just as bad as the reality, or lack thereof, of "Flavor of Love." But it isn't, it's there to serve a purposeful point, this is what goes on. It isn't pretty, but it's happening. Along with the graphic visuals there is also rapidly paced dialogue. For example typical dialogue in a show like ER, "[WEAVER AND WRIGHT push a gurney containing a 16-year-old girl. Her parents, JANNA AND FRANK MIKAMI, follow close behind. CARTER AND LUCY fall in.] WEAVER: 16-year-old, unconscious, history of biliary atresia. CARTER: Hepatic coma? WEAVER: Looks like it. MR. MIKAMI: She was doing fine until six months ago. CARTER: What medication is she on? MRS. MIKAMI: Ampicillin, tobramycin, vitamins a, d and k. LUCY: Skin's jaundiced. WEAVER: Same with the sclera. Breath smells sweet. CARTER: Fetor hepaticus? WEAVER: Yep. LUCY: What's that? WEAVER: Her liver's shut down. Let's dip a urine. [To CARTER] Guys, it's getting a little crowded in here, why don't you

deal with the parents? Start lactulose, 30 cc's per NG." (Johnson 6) When something like this happens in fifteen seconds before your eyes on a regular basis throughout a forty minute show it's going to require attention, and contemplation. Of course critics of popular culture are too busy focusing on negative exploitations of higher culture to take the time to notice this. Rappers and other hip hop stars, the most recent victims of pop culture critics, are today's upstart Rock N' Roll, and Jazz stars. We need them. They are a new fresh voice that has yet to be heard all over. And, like their predecessors they are being discriminated against for their style, subject matter, and lifestyle. The critics don't see that what they're criticizing is what they were doing twenty and thirty years ago. We simply have a new sound, a new face, and new problems. In twenty more years people will be listening to Jay-Z and Nas wondering what was the big deal? Nothing. Nothing, was the big deal it was simply ignorance and arrogance on the part of the " more cultured." We're talking about extremely intelligent lyricists that are bashed for the way they grew up. I would argue that the rhyming techniques, patterns, and complexity of the lyrics used by the aforementioned MCs are similar to listening to Maya Angelou's poetry on tape. What's wrong with that? The people need pop culture. Whether it's Jay-Z's new album, back-to-back episodes of " 24," or " The Apprentice," It gets us through and as evidenced by Johnson it certainly can make the masses smarter, or at the very least thing critically about situations they would never normally be in. Just because it's popular doesn't mean it's bad. The people wanted it. They're smarter now and require much more stimulus and have a much greater understanding of the world. Threading is necessary in television

shows because otherwise they're just too boring. Rappers need complex rhymes to be respected or they're just too boring. The people want to be entertained because nothing is fun if it's just too boring. Works Cited  
Campbell, Richard, Christopher R. Martin, and Bettina Fabos. Media & Culture. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. Johnson, Steven. " Watching TV Makes You Smarter." NY Times 24 Apr. 2005. 23 Sept. 2007