

Discuss such as star wars, psycho and the



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Discuss the ways it may be termed popular culture. For this essay I am going to be studying the popular animated TV series The Simpsons and saying why I think that it is a classic example of popular culture texts. The programme is twenty-five minute animation about a family at the bottom of the social ladder, the Simpsons. Revolving around the central family the show takes a sideways look at the life of ordinary American people. The family has five main members; Homer the father of the family is a blue-collar worker at the local nuclear power station. Marge the mother is a housewife who stays at home all day, then there are the children. Bart (a mischievous prankster) and Lisa (school swat) are pre-teens and lastly there is baby Maggie who doesn't do that much at all. Every week the family get into various and amusing scrapes and generally carry out the activities that a working class family are supposed to do. There are many factors that could categorise The Simpsons as being popular culture, one of them being its intertextuality.

The show makes great use of both parody and pastiche as a reference to other popular culture texts such as Star Wars, Psycho and the James Bond films. The programme also features guest appearances by stars of popular culture, such as actors, sports personalities and musicians. Very few people in these roles could be classed as examples of high culture. The other major factor in The Simpsons being termed popular culture is the fact that the show is in animated form. No form of animation has ever been seen as a worthy piece of culture by academics and those who decide what is significant and what is not. To establish just why The Simpsons can be termed as popular culture we have to define just what it is that we mean by the phrase popular culture.

To put it in its most simple form popular culture can be anything that isn't categorised as high culture. Academics and members of certain social groups look down on anything termed popular culture as dumbed down entertainment for the masses and something that isn't worthy of reading. These people attack popular culture as being vulgar and brash, they say its texts are insignificant culturally and that they are only superficial forms of entertainment. Popular culture on the other hand strives to include all forms of entertainment and cultural texts.

Raymond Williams defines popular culture in four basic points; 1, its well liked by many people, 2, inferior kinds of work, 3, its work that deliberately sets out to win favour with the people and 4, culture actually made by the people for themselves. So let's take these points and use them to see if they can define The Simpsons as popular culture. Ok then point 1, something that's well liked by many people, well The Simpsons certainly is that. It takes up one of the highest positions in the ratings charts, which are published in the Radio Times magazine as well as on their website. These figures can also be obtained from the BBC's site, and American audience figures are freely available on the web. During this summer the Auntie screened a Simpsons night, an evening dedicated to the show, something which is very rare and shows us how significant a show it is for the BBC. Point 2, an inferior kind of work. Well the show is an animation, a form of entertainment which until recently was seen as something just for the kids.

The only artistic merit going to the drawing skills of the animators. 3, work that deliberately sets out to win favour with the people. Right from the start The Simpsons was intended as something that everyone could enjoy.

It began life as a small segment on the Tracy Ullman show, which was very popular in the USA, so you can say that it was targeted to be something that was hugely popular. And finally point 4, culture made by the people for themselves. Creator Matt Groening was never a culturally snobbish academic; he was an ordinary person who wanted to create