

Breaking bad research paper example

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Even if you have never watched extremely controversial and phenomenally addictive series Breaking Bad (which I am sure you must have heard of), and even if you have never listened to to your closest friend ranting about how deeply he was impressed by its finale (though I am certain you would have heard it if you really listened) and even you have never stumbled upon its trailer on youtube (which I am deeply convinced you must have, just did not pay enough attention to), the fact that numerous publications including such well-known and trusted sources as the New York Post, the AP, Time Magazine, and even master of horror Stephen King at Entertainment Weekly singled out AMC's drama as the best series of the year and even the whole century (AMC Tv) would undoubtedly plant the seed of curiosity into your head. Trust me, it escalates pretty quickly after that. First you decide to search for " 1st season 1st episode", and the next thing you know is that you find yourself sobbing over the last episode with your mind absolutely and completely blown on so many levels.

It all started with Vince Gilligan's desire to create a series where the protagonist would eventually turn into the antagonist. He said, that television had been always good at keeping its characters stationary and self-imposed, which could go on for years and years, and when it all suddenly dawned on him, the only logical next step was to try and create a show in which the fundamental rush is toward change (Klosterman). Who knows what other idea would come into Gilligan's mind and whether it would have been as spectacular as the concept of the show he randomly got during the conversation with his fellow writer Thomas Schnauz while they both were unemployed and joked that the only possible option for them was to put a "

meth lab in the back of an RV and [drive] around the country cooking meth and making money." (Callaghan). Funny or not, but that joke earned its makers a fortune and its main hero, chemistry teacher-turned-villainous meth-maker Walter White, a memorable spot among American television's pantheon of captivating antiheroes (Glasner).

Critics and audiences seem to have spent the past five years deconstructing and analyzing every layer of *Breaking Bad*, while some called the show a recession-era accusation of the failed American Dream while others have thought this show to remind them of Shakespearean tragedies such as "Hamlet." No specific definition or perception is necessarily more significant than another—what truly distinguishes this show among many others is simply that it can be analyzed in so many different ways (Xie).

It is truly shocking how much the series reveal about American community and how much of a mirror to the nowadays society the show becomes.

First of what I thought of is how many people lead double-life. Walter White, who is dying of incurable cancer, is humble schoolteacher, a loving husband and a perfect father in one life and a relentless drug-producer in another.

How often do we mistakenly take people for not who they really are and simply accept the side of them they choose to reveal? Of course, Walter could be justified: his son is physically and mentally challenged, his wife is pregnant and if he were to die today, they would certainly have zip to live off of. He dares to start a risky and illegal business only because he needs to make money. But here comes another side of the medal: how many families has meth ruined? Where lies the line of what can be justified and what cannot be forgiven under any circumstances? Who has the power to judge?

American admiration of nihilism clearly shows here: absolute absence of any moral and spiritual values, as well as an undaunted " Wild West" strain of capitalism, perpetually overshadow that still small voice of social justice (Fairman). It is in human nature to seek justice, and there is no and cannot possibly be any uncertain justice when pure and sincere characters of Gretchen and Elliott Schwartz take their masks down, now exposing themselves as: opportunistic, perfunctory, and fainthearted personalities that all along have been persuading the only goal of feathering their nests and solving their materialistic issues. But Walt/Heisenberg turns the tables on the couple. Hereafter, it will be their moral juvenility that will set into motion Walt's next-to-last " good deed;" and therein, sort of change his original worthy aspiration of supporting his surviving family. Unfortunately, it turns out that even the brilliant Heisenberg cannot escape the primal chaos that he has spun in order to achieve his goals.

Of course, family is the most important thing is everybody's life. Though there are no instructions written on how long one's devotion to their family stretches out and where does it cross the line of being capable of even the most horrible deeds for the sake of their loved ones.

Speaking about the loved ones, however, it becomes quite clear over the course of the final episodes, for our anti-hero his " fair exchange" of money for his humanity had resulted in losing everything and everyone he had ever loved.

Walter thought that the worst thing had already happened to him: he was diagnosed with incurable for of cancer and he lost all his hope. However, this thought-to-be the worst thing resulted in something even more horrible:

Walter glad-handed with devil and sold his soul to the evil long before his body was dead.

I used to be of the opinion that good television shows should establish a problem or a goal right at the beginning of the episode. This would make the episode self-contained, coherent and relevant. I thought that whenever an episode dealt with a series of threads, it would most likely result in being unfocused and not following any particular subject. Though, having watched Breaking Bad, I was surprised of how many layers were there and how many issues and problems the audience had to watch, deal with, reflect on, think over and take some lessons out of. Throughout the whole show the audience is guessing who the real " do-gooder" is, because with each episode the protagonists of the story do something that makes them look more like antagonistic villains. These ideas are not common among many other shows and that is why Breaking Bad captivates anyone who watches it. Another significant issue is human's natural desire for fast gratification. Of course, who does not want to win a fortune without even working or making hardly any attempts, and be settled for the lifetime? Walter White may be a fictional character; however the unbelievable \$80 million profit he turned by producing meth in less than a year is a very realistic sum for a true-life drug-maker. It's not until the last season of the series that viewers learn just how much cash their favorite meth-making bad guy has earned by cooking crank (Isidore).

" The show has a lot of reality to it," said Ralph Weisheit, a professor of criminal justice at Illinois State and an author of the book, " Methamphetamine: Its History, Pharmacology and Treatment." " It clearly

employs consultants who know a lot of about the business," he added.

(Isidore)

According to the latest government statistics, approximately 20.4 million people in the United States used some kind of illicit drug in the past 30 days (1 million users used Methamphetamine) (Buddy T). It makes it quite clear that there are people who are dependant on and addicted to drugs, whose families are torn apart and whose optimistic future has faded due to the heavy drug abuse, and then there are those who make money on such people selling drugs to them, and who virtually ruin their lives. Observing everything that is going on in this world, it is hard not to agree with the idea that some counterparts of evil will forever lie unresolved and there is no way to prevent it. It is in human nature, and even though world does not always appear in pure white or pitch-black colors, it is important to see the contrast and be able to compare things, for that is the only way we can observe the differences and value the side of the world which is most appealing to us at the moment, because we would never be able to distinguish one from another, should there not have been a wide gap between what is wrong and what is right. Conflict is the important part of every show, and Breaking Bad contains a various number of conflicts, which together represent a tight knot, that the main hero - or a bad guy, if you wish - is desperately trying to untie but finally finds himself trapped into. Now to develop this character and the contrast of his personality, the writer of Breaking Bad series uses techniques similar to a novel. The audience sees the character change of Walter White as he goes from a generally innocent teacher to a hardened criminal feeling little remorse for killing his enemies or people in his way, apart from the

deaths of numerous drug addicts, whose deaths he is virtually responsible of (Baughman)

Another extremely significant aspect of the show is Walter White's battle to pay his medical bills and make enough money to guide his family through and, perhaps, after cancer, which makes Breaking Bad more than a character drama or a crime series, but an extraordinary satire and reflection of modern American life (Kroll).

Let the facts speak for themselves: In 2010, over 17 percent of America's GDP went towards healthcare. An average American spend more than \$8,000 a year on health insurance - simply insurance, not even medical treatment - which sums up to be \$3000 more than the second highest OECD nation. American's life expectancy is a year shorter than the OECD average. In 2008, when Breaking Bad first came out on the screens, the average cost of treating lung cancer was almost \$40,000, which is the total of \$6,000 more than in 2002. Several reforms which slowed cost increases have been made since 2008, though not all reforms have certain effect and haven't affected the show's time frame. In that sense, Breaking Bad could be described as a cautionary tale against the way things used to be. Still, it's not these numbers that force Walt to become the bad guy; it is what these numbers cause (Kroll).

One may think, and will be absolutely right and reasonable, that Walt's cancer would be his only concern in most countries; however Breaking Bad depicts the American phenomenon of the price for treatment turning out to be more stressful than the disease itself. The show casts Walt as an average American, a typical member of a typical American society (Kroll).

Breaking Bad's satire of the American healthcare system doesn't emphasize the cost but brings our attention to the mentality that the system has created. Americans are raised to the understanding of medical care being expensive and an unscheduled doctor's appointment should come as a last resort. Americans are taught that unless you are feeling too sick to take two steps without someone else's help, or hemorrhaging violently from the head, do not go to see the doctor. You can deal with it on your own, just like with anything else. You are, after all, supposed to be the person who takes care of yourself (Kroll).

This show is deeply involving and captivating, and it is very easy to cross the line between merely observing the series and putting yourself into heroes' shoes. Though, I would agree with (Ryan) and say that Breaking Bad needs to keep its viewers at a distance. Otherwise, maybe Walt and Jesse and the bleakness of their future could be extremely hard to handle. There is coolness to this show; even as it shows their suffering and pain, the show still keeps these people an arm's length away. Being like ants in an ant farm, they expose themselves to us and we are observing them, making our debts: how much more pressure can they take? What will make them lose the battle and go bad?

It is rather symbolic that the show is about a former chemistry teacher and reminds us about a giant experiment itself: we are testing the main characters and studying their relationships, we are observing and learning, we are receiving some lessons.

As many could have noticed, the Breaking Bad finale wrapped up many points quite tidily - it almost felt like the whole universe had lined up to

Walt's bidding (Ryan),

No doubt, that Walt is a seductive personality, and it must be hard to have to be merciless when it comes to your story's main character, especially when the story is so close to an end and you are about to leave him for good. Still, the story tellers are supposed to be at a certain remove from the characters, and knowing them so well and having developed them themselves, they should not let the characters trick them and be so easily seduced.

Nevertheless, at the end Breaking Bad makes a big mistake and ignores the main point of all drug related enterprises: Do not get high on your own supply (Ryan).

At the end of the show we see Walt smiling, surrounded by the chemicals he loved. The Greek chorus that had been giving its chorus was gone. Walt was a meth addict - he loved meth for its help to win his battle. Yes, he was dying and yes, he has wrestled with too much disappointment, still Walt hardly could picture any other ending for himself. Breaking Bad is Walt-addict, as it simply could not bring itself to lower the boom on Walt (Ryan).

All that leaves the audience Breaking Bad-addict, because even after watching and re-watching the series, analyzing every possible detail and looking at every character through the microscope, there are still seems to be too many unanswered questions and too many unlearnt lessons, something that we would have to reflect upon when some time has passed, and then a little later, because such great depth is simply impossible to comprehend at one go. I cannot say whether the resolutions at the end of the show were too cynical or too merciful, but I know that they were precisely what they should have been, and no other ending seems possible

to me. I agree with Xiw, who says that regardless the outcome of the finale, Breaking Bad has undeniably changed the way audiences watch television and drastically raised standards for what good television is from now on expected to be like.

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