Example of the cultural significance of spider-man research paper

Countries, United States

ASSIGN BUSTER

Spider-Man was created in 1962 by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko for Marvel Comics (" Comic Art"). Ever since his first appearance in the comic book Amazing Fantasy #15, Spider-Man has entertained audiences and become a global phenomenon (" Comic Art")! His image has become easily identifiable worldwide and his persona has become synonymous with the word " super hero".

The original Spider-Man comics have spawned countless movies, books, television series and merchandise. The image of Spider-Man has become so engrained into society that the world has fallen in love with this underdog hero and feels " a sharp mixture of projection, longing, admiration, and aspiration." (Conway) in regards to this character. Psychologically Spider-Man is a role model to many fans and a symbol for the fight against social injustice in society (Conway). By looking at the message Spider-Man projects to society I feel that we can gain a better understanding of societies desire to end social injustice and aspire to become more moral.

The History of Spider-Man

This hero's story begins in 1962 at his creation and chronicles to the present. " The Amazing Spider-Man" was developed as conservative view of politics and public life (" Comic Art"). Often the plots involved Cold War issues (" Comic Art"). Throughout the early 1970's, Spider-Man evolved to target more social issues that were a concern at the time (" Comic Art"). This tradition continues to the present, however the social problems addressed have of course also changed as society did. Mondello states, " During the late 60′s and early 70′s, Spider-Man had helped to keep alive American liberalism among the young, a tradition stressing cooperation among individuals and

minorities rather than conflict, moderation in politics rather than extremism, and the right of each American to social recognition and economic opportunity." (" Comic Art"). Spider-Man was meant as a way to both address social concerns and provide entertainment.

Spider-Man chronicles the adventures of Peter Parker. Parker develops his alter ego after becoming the victim of a spider bite (" Comic Art"). Parker himself is an everyday young man. He received his powers as a teenager, but before then he was a nerdy, unsociable young man looking for his place within society. Throughout the years, Spider-Man has faced many different issues and fought many different villains, but one thing remained the same Parker's devotion to use his powers for the greater good of humanity (" Comic Art").

Spider-Man and Social Injustice

The issues presented as plot points in the Spider-Man comics and movies often are real life social issues, although exaggerated to fit the sensationalism of pop culture. The character of Spider-Man is searching for an idealized version of society that doesn't exist (Conway). The conflict between him and these injustices spark a conversation about these issues but in a light hearted and easily accessible manner.

The villains in the Spider-Man franchise are often figure heads for social problem. For example, Green Goblin is a manifestation of corporate greed. With his riches he developed a dangerous chemical plant that led to his transformation. He uses his riches for his own betterment and revenge instead of for the good of others. He is also not above using his political

influence for his own means. Doc Oc represents the other side of society. Those who struggle in poverty and ill health only to be continually beat down. These two characters are just two of many who are symbolic representations of the problems Spider-Man faces.

Spider-Man: The Unlikely Hero

Compared to other muscle bound, rich, and super talented heroes, Parker is relatively normal guy. Scrawny and nerdy, Parker seemed like an unlikely candidate for heroics (The Amazing Spider-Man). As Spider-Man his powers are still minimal in comparison to other Marvel heroes and villains (The Amazing Spider-Man). Although he has some physical powers, Spider-Man relies primarily on his wits to succeed.

Peter Parker is a character developed to be relatable to the everyday American (Conway). We feel as if he could be our neighbor, friend, or even us! After a long day of fighting crime, Peter goes home to his bedroom in his Aunt's house not a mansion or bat cave (The Amazing Spider-Man). Peter's interactions with his crush M. J. remind us our own awkward moments and frustration at never quite " getting the girl" (The Amazing Spider-Man).

His friendships are deep and family connections are strong. Peter seems to be an all-around good guy, without being perfect. By not showing an overly exaggerated heroic figure, we feel that Parker's quest is believable and his goals are obtainable by the everyday person. Peter Parker never reveals his identity to the public there for can continue living these parallel lives. The recognition he receives as Spider-Man offers him a source of fame without

the hindrance. Spider-Man is considered an American hero and is hailed in the newspapers and television. Recognition from his peers is well earned.

Spider-Man and Religion

Some feel that comparisons can be drawn between Spider-Man and key religious figures. In Richardson's evaluation of Spider-Man he states, " Spider-Man not only employs pastiches of famous scenes from the Bible but also examines the theology of Christian belief. The film's narrative, like Christian ideology, centers on the hero's shame for his flawed and lustful flesh and his attempt to transform shame into atonable guilt."

Spider-Man's motto is " with great power comes great responsibility". The idea that power should be used for the greater good of humanity is as the basis for any number of religions. Spider-Man's personal suffering is often the result of his efforts, yet the sacrifice is essential for him to reach his goal. He did not choose to have his power, one could say it was his destiny to receive it. His promise to protect others and extraordinary devotion to morality may be seen as a " godly" presence.

Parker is also on a personal quest for redemption. After being unable to prevent the death of his Uncle Ben, Peter is racked with guilt (Fingeroth). He realizes the errors of some of his judgment and re-accesses what is important in life. Peter could have decided on the path of revenge but instead choose redemption by fighting evil (Fingeroth). Good versus evil is a key theme in religion and Spider-man's fight for justice certainly draws parallels to many religious ideologies.

The Iconography of Spider-Man

With great powers comesSpider-Man pajamas? The image of Spider-Man has been plastered on practically every kind of merchandise one could image. So what is it with our desire to collect every Spider-Man comic and drink out of our Spider-Man mug while watching one of the many Spider-Man films? Perhaps it is because Spider-Man appeals to such a wide variety of people. The Spider-Man fan base is a global one spanning children and adults, women and men, and many different culture (Fingeroth). Those who grew up reading Spider-Man comics have often introduced their love of the character to their children. The nostalgia for Spider-Man has kept his alive through the ages.

The visual aspects of Spider-Man have changed very little from the early days. Few might t be able to describe the more non-descript Peter Parker character, but if you asked any random person on the street they could probably describe Spider-Man's iconic red and blue costume. The costume is unique to the character and has only gone through minor re-adaptations through the years. By having such an easily recognizable and undated image, Spider-Man has been able to stay in the public forefront. The red and blue costume is almost as recognizable to American's as McDonald's golden arches or Nike's swoosh mark logo.

The adaptability of Spider-man is uncanny. Evolution of the character and character branding changes with current interest. New generations of fans have been born as the result of the film series. Those who may not have previously read the comics have now been exposed to Marvel characters through film (The Amazing Spider-Man). The Spider-Man film franchise has

been amongst the most successful in movie history (Fingeroth)! Spider-Man comics have been translated into many different languages with over six separate Spider-Man themed comics per month(Brown). The world simply can't seem to get enough of their favorite hero!

Spider-Man and the American Dream

Peter Parker went from a down and out teenager to an American hero throughout the comic book series. The idea that a normal kid can grow up to save cities offers hope to children that they may one day also accomplish something great. This is the American dream. The goal is to help society realize its potential and inspire the everyday American to become the best citizen they can (Conway).

Even the creation of Spider-Man is in essence the quintessential rags to riches story. Spider-Man comics are what gave Marvel Comics the competitive edge to keep up with the wildly popular DC Comics Superman and Batman. Without the success of Spiderman it is unlikely that Marvel would have become as successful. The sale of Spider-Man related merchandise, comic books, and films has made Spider-Man one of the most recognizable super heroes!

The Negative Effects of Spider-Man

With all of the lovers of Spider-Man there will also be critics. Some feel that Spider-Man promotes an unrealistic image of society and encourages vigilantism. Law enforcement within the Spider-Man series is considered " useless" with political officials " corrupt" (Brown). Some feel that this is a negative portrayal of our society.

The Spider-Man series has also been criticized for its lack of diversity (Brown) . Nearly all of the main characters within the series are Caucasian, as are most super heroes (Brown) . Marvel attempted to counter this discord in 2011 by inserting a black/Latino boy in the role of Spider-Man (Brown). However this was not met with much success from those that missed their nostalgic Peter Parker. Women are depicted in three separate roles: the femme fatale, the damsel in distress, and the motherly figure. This offers a very narrow view of women and suggests negative stereotypes.

The desire to " profit" off of Spider-Man seems to go against the values set in the series. Money has driven an almost over exposure of Spider-Man. Peter Parker would not sell out Spider-Man, yet Marvel certainly does. Despite its critics, most still feel that Spider-Man is a true comic book hero, and are comprised of traditional comic book elements. The challenge remains to balance modernity with tradition (Brown) .

Conclusion

In summary, Spider-Man has web slinged his way into the heart of American pop culture. His backstory was created to make him an " anti-hero" type character. He presents the picture of the everyday American, yet his devotion to justice gives him the strength to change society. People love Peter Parker for his normalness and Spider-Man for extraordinary love of America.

Spider-Man has become a recognizable icon that has resulted in many forms of media and merchandise. His appeal is very broad and appropriate for many demographics. Nostalgia for the Spider-man character has ensured

that the love for Spider-Man has been passed down throughout several generations. Spider-Man's stories have evolved to address social concerns of that time period, however Spider-Man's fundamental belief system has remained the same.

Overall, Spider-Man has been engrained into our culture and offers a positive message of hope for social justice and the American dream. When Stan Lee and Steve Ditko developed Spider-Man for Marvel Comics they also developed an idol for people to aspire to (Brown).

Works Cited:

Brown, R. " Virginia Journal of Law and Technology." Virginia Journal of Law and Technology. 8. (2003): n. page. Print.

Conway, C. " The Cultural Meanings of Spider-Man: Critical Approaches to an American Icon." Professor Conway. N. p., 1 2007. Web. 2 Dec 2012. .

, ed. " History of Spiderman." Comic Art. N. p., n. d. Web. 2 Dec 2012. .

Fingeroth, D. " Spidey and Me and Us." L. A. Times 2010, n. pag. Print.

Webb, M, dir. The Amazing Spider-Man. 2012. Film. 2 Dec 2012.