

Why has utopian literature remained popular essay

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All works of Utopian literature are designed to present ideologies and protest. Through this they have maintained their popularity whilst retaining the ability to reformulate. This ability to reformulate itself has created a way for authors to explore and investigate ideologies and protests whilst keeping the issues contextual to the time. More has done this extremely well, establishing the genre at the beginning of the 16th century, in his novella *Utopia*.

By using Rafael as the narrator he successfully presents his alternative of a communistic style state where everyone is equal, whilst keeping him safe; also convincing them that it was a non-fiction text and as a result protecting himself from punishment. He did this so successfully that many men set off in their boats in search of the island. This satire is part of what I think has caused the continued popularity of the text. Alma De Groen subverts More's form of a single setting novella by creating play in two time frames; the present scene and the 1922 scene. De Groen takes us on a journey through Katherine Mansfield's eyes and we see two worlds, the patriarchal society of 1922 and the matriarchal society of the present. *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller, is a novel, published in 1961, that focuses on the corruption of war.

Given the context this novel was very popular because of recent and current war times affecting people. *Utopia* has remained a popular text for centuries due to the fact that it was believed to be a non-fictional tale. He cleverly used the character "Raphael Nonsenso" as his narrator to present his the story of *Utopia* which masks his protest against the feudal system and the monarchy of Tudor England. * He also used made up satirical names based

on Greek words to protect himself, for example, Utopia means ‘no place’ in Greek.

* These tricks enabled More to make his protest with less risk of retribution from the King and others in power in Tudor England. *Rivers of China* is a powerful text published in the 1980s making us question feminism. It contrasts the patriarchal society of the early twentieth century with an imaginary matriarchal society in the late twentieth century. But what the play is really doing is making us question the gender roles that currently exist.* De Groen does this by cleverly switching the roles of men and women in the imaginary society of the late twentieth century. * For example, in the imaginary society, women have the powerful jobs such as doctor and men are in lesser roles such as the orderly in the hospital. In the opening scene Audra, the doctor, is a woman portrayed with traditional male characteristics, strong and dominant, unemotional, and says to Wayne “you’re cute, you’re funny, you make me laugh, and when I can get you to shut up, I like going to bed with you. That’s all there is to it”.* Wayne is portrayed as traditionally female, needy and emotional because he wants more from the relationship.

Catch 22 uses its odd and dysfunctional characters and plots to portray the absurdity of war. For example, in one scene Colonel Cathcart is feeling generous and tries to promote the absurdly named Major Major Major Major but he is rebuked by his superiors as they only have one Major Major Major Major and don’t want to lose him. Colonel Cathcart then sulkily threatens to bust Major Major Major Major down to Lieutenant and is teased by his

colleague Colonel Corn who points out that they probably won't let him do this either, for the same reason. * In another scene, Doc Daneeka is pronounced dead as his name was listed on a mission where there were no survivors. The fact that he didn't actually go on the mission and was actually alive didn't stop the army from paying his 'widow' a pension and several insurance policies.

In conclusion * Utopian literature has remained popular for many centuries. * The formula remains constant - using fictional writing to protest against current ideologies and/or presenting alternate ideologies * However, the context of each story changes to raise issues relevant to the time of writing. In More's Utopia written in 16th century Tudor England we have a protest against feudal society and the presentation of a communist ideology.

* In de Groen's Rivers of China written in the late twentieth century following a wave of feminism in Australia we have a protest of patriarchal society and the presentation of the alternate matriarchal society. * In Heller's Catch 22 we have a protest against war and a presentation of an ideology that ridicules war. Each of these works opens up the possibilities of new ways of thinking and it is this creativity and its relation to the current day issues that keeps the readers interested. Even though De Groen and Heller didn't have to hide behind the fiction style utopian genre, they chose it anyway to get their messages across. People are more likely to accept the ideology presented when it is given as a story or a metaphor, than if the authors just wrote openly critiques of war or gender roles.