Great depression critical essay

History

If someone went to prison in 1989 and was released in the year 2000, he would probably be surprised by how drastic change can be in ten years can bring. When 1990 started, people were still communicating through letters and the telephone. The Bible was still the greatest bestseller and people used the word " terror" to describe how scared they were of their neighbor's dog. By the end of 1999, however, children were engrossed with a new book. People were sending e-mails to their loved ones, and our idea of terror has been redefined.

The 90s was shaped by things we could not have imagined, things that have brought about major changes in our lives. Though the decade was made of numerous and note-worthy events, this paper will zero in on three factors that best define the 1990s in America: the story that mattered to the young, thetechnologythat changed the face ofcommunication, and the heartbreak that we suffered as a nation. In trying to define the 1990s in America, it is important that we take a look at the decade's popular literary works. Literature is an important indicator of the times.

By reading the popular literature of the early 1920s, we see a generation dried out by the

. If we read thepoetryand fiction of the Beat writers, we see a carefree generation of the late 50's ready to break into the sexual revolution of the 60s. I've always thought of literature as a reflection of a people's state of mind. It is, after all, the collection of stories of people. And people only write stories of the things that truly matter to them. Ironically, in the 90s, the most popular story ever told could not have happened to anyone.

That would just be silly. No 11-year-old boy could have found out that he was a wizard and then went off to wizardry school. But that is exactly the premise of the most popular book of the 90s ---Harry Potter. The premise does sound pretty simple, but author JK Rowling managed to craft intricate storylines of various adventures, with mysteries being deliciously unraveled along the way. The result? The highest selling children's book in history. No other children's book has ever made much of an impact as " the boy who lived".

From then on there were several other books written about magic, wizards, vampires, robots, things not of this earth. And I think this is indicative of what we as a people are ready for. We are a generation ready to be bewildered, to consider things outside our immediate reality. Wiktorin, in his paper about how the Harry Potter books relate to contemporary life, states that " constructing a world different to the ordinary one and marketing this, can certainly be a very lucrative enterprise" (2). This is exactly what Harry Potter and all the fantasy books of the nineties have offered us.

A constructed world so different from our own, but governed by the rules and emotions that are quintessentially human. This readiness to consider things outside our realm went hand in hand with the explosion of the internet in the nineties. In1984, if you were a lonely kid in school, you went home and dealt with it. In 1998, a nerdy 13-year-old who probably feels ill at ease with his schoolmates can log in on the internet after school and find an online community of people to talk to. In the 1990s, the internet was really primarily used for communication.

The e-mail and the chat functions were the most popular internet activities. A study conducted by Axel Franzen shows that email increases social

involvement and regression analysis shows that Internet users have 24% more friends (Lesnard, 4). The world got a lot smaller, and getting in touch was just a few clicks away. The amount of information that the World Wide Web has brought to individuals cannot be emphasized enough. If Harry Potter led us to believe or consider things that are outside our realm, the internet allowed us to think of the things that existed beyond our personal reality.

It allowed us to be tolerant of differences, because these differences are no longer miles away from us. We hear about it a few clicks away. The things that we can see on the internet can also be seen by people with internet in China. It equalizes us somehow and allows us to interact in astounding ways. As much as Harry Potter brought about a considerable amount of whimsical escape and the internet allowed us to be more aware of others' cultures and differences, certain events of the 90s unfortunately gave us first-hand experience of evil.

In the middle of the decade, America experienced its first terror attack through the Oklahoma Bombing. Despite the number of wars that have been fought by our country, a terror attack was so surprising because it just didn't make sense. The Oklahoma bombing wasn't an unfortunate result of any military operation. It wasn't the work of some psychotic man. It wasn't an accidental occurrence. Rather, it was a carefully calculated plan with the sole purpose of terrorizing people. The perpetrators were apprehended and convicted, and the reasons behind their actions was said to be disappointment with how the U.

S government handled past issues. Instead of letting their opinions known through protests, they took a course of action as arbitrary as it is terrorizing. The Oklahoma Bombing killed 108 people, including babies on daycare. This terrorist attack reminded us of the need for security, to protect our nation from people who are on the mission to destroy it. When it comes to vigilance againstterrorism, " unlike most other enterprises, success andfailureare measured according to the number of lives saved and lost" (Manzi, et. al. , 10).

We cannot afford to lose the war against terror, as it will mean losing precious lives. After the Oklahoma bombing, the government implemented tighter security measures and that has stopped numerous other terror attempts. However there still continues to be groups of people who vehemently disagree with what America stands for as a nation. So much so, that they are willing to kill thousands of people just to show their hatred and defiance. Sadly, they succeeded again in 2001, when we found ourselves dealing with the horror that is 9/11.

Every year we learn something new. Every decade stands for something. But during 1990s, aside from learning the Macarena and wearing baby doll dresses with high cut boots, aside from thinking that boy bands were actually cool, we grew a lot as a nation. The internet has shown us that the world as we know it could be perceived as an entirely different world for others. And it is important to be tolerant of differences, torespectdifferences. Terror attacks have shown us the extreme effects of our intolerance.

Even the preferred choice of reading material shows that we are ready to tolerate changes, unlike Harry Pottter's humanfamilywho can't accept the

fact that he's a wizard. There is still so much to be learned, so many virtues to put into practice, and knowledge to be put in use. But I'd love to believe that the experiences we had in the 90s helped us a lot. And in retrospect, I hope that I will also consider this decade as great as the one it preceded. Works Cited: Lesnard, L. " Social Change, Daily Life, and the Internet", Chimera Working Paper, 2005-07: Retrieved on 17 November 2008, http://hal.

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