

Idealism & Cynicism in Superheroes

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Abstract

In recent years, the rapidly surging popularity of superheroes movies has been a global phenomenon affecting people regardless of age, gender, and nationality. It seems there is something universal in the superhero genre that people can appreciate without necessarily relating to the story or the characters. This essay will explore the idea of idealism and cynicism in superheroes in the form of comics and movies, and how these concepts allow the superheroes stories and characters to become complex and thus catches the audience's continuing attention. These concepts are presented in the superhero genre in multiple ways, for example, the character designs and world-building, among other elements. Since story-telling in the superhero genre tends to be character-centric, the character's values influence heavily how the story is presented. Opposed to conventional literature where characters are part of the story, it is perhaps safe to say that every story, told by different authors, intertwine to become part of character development. This paper will focus on source materials mainly from DC comics and the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This paper concludes that the existence of superheroes itself is a form of idealism, a way for people to relieve themselves of the burden of the real world which is often not idealistic.

Reflection

I decided to explore the Superhero genre for two reasons: first, it is my passion. I fell in love with reading comics as a teen and my love towards Superhero comics never faded. I wanted to combine both things that I love (English studies and Superheroes) so that I could thoroughly enjoy the process of writing a very long and challenging paper. Second, despite the genre's popularity, no English courses (until the 2nd semester of 2018-19) were focused on discussing its academic values. By doing my own research on the history and social context of Superhero comics, I learned even

more than what I originally knew as a fan of Superhero comics, as I looked into the genre through the eyes of an English major. My advisor, Professor O'Sullivan, offered great insight and commentary on my project and led me to think about comics in new perspectives, making writing my Capstone project a much more rewarding experience.