

There is wealth of great literature beyond pulp fiction



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LEWIS AND CLARK

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LEWIS AND CLARK

Let's play a quick game of trivia, shall we? Nothing too extensive, just a little check-up on your reading skills.

1. Who is Doctor Zhivago?
2. What is the significance of the Scarlet Letter?
3. Who is the phrase "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" referring to?

Not quite to your taste? Try these:

1. Who is Edward Cullen?
2. What is the significance of the Elder Wand?
3. Who is the phrase "I like my men cold, dead, and sparkly," referring to?

Notice a difference? The books referenced in the first set of questions made an impact on society and the world. The books referenced in the second set made an impact in their own way, but one far less admirable.

These latter books are commonly referred to as "pulp fiction," and they mark the steady demise of literature in our generation. Perhaps the first notable work of pulp fiction to take Generation Y by storm was the infamous Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

Let me first state that, like many of you, I am a fan of J.K. Rowling. The series, while not flat-out stunning, is an entertaining and enjoyable read. The characters are believable (aside from the whole magic aspect), and the plot line makes sense.

I read recently that Harry Potter has been put on the English language and literature syllabus for A-level students in Britain. These students will be required to write a 1500-word essay comparing Rowling with another author, as well as an 800-word story inspired by the first book in the series.

Initially, this idea struck me as a clever one. Mandatory school reading, particularly in elementary school, was never a fun experience. The books chosen were often dull, and the unit tended to drag on. What better way to get young kids interested in reading than by giving them a book they are almost sure to like?

I then looked up what an A-level student actually is, and all the cleverness of this plan vanished. A-level students are equivalent to our high school juniors and seniors. Where is

the literary challenge in this?

What would a student gain from analyzing Harry Potter? Is there even enough depth in the books to analyze them at all? Does our generation honestly come off as base enough to need to rely on magic and wizards to prepare us for college?

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The next thing you know, Stephanie Meyer will be considered comparable to Dickens or Shakespeare.

Which brings us to the next point: Twilight, the vampire romance series that has made millions off of our generation.

Like Harry Potter, this series is a fun, light read. Unless you actually think about the characters. Or the plot. Or really anything that typically makes a good book... good. The main characters have no dimension. The personality of the protagonist, Edward, can be summed up in three statements: he loves

Bella; he would do anything for her; he loves Bella some more.

The secondary characters are hardly any better. The plot line of all three books is that of some bad Spanish soap opera.

A brief summary of the third book: the lover and mate of the vampire antagonist in the first book, who was killed by Edward because he wanted to kill Bella, builds up an army of a hundred newborn vampires to take on Edward and his adoptive family of vampires so that she can kill Bella to avenge the death of her mate.

Here's my question: Why has this book taken over the lives of so many teens in this country? Where on earth is the appeal? What has happened to the literature in this country?

Once upon a time books actually meant something. They brought knowledge and understanding to the reader. They provided insight on any number of social and political issues. They actually made one think.

So please, do yourselves a favor. Pick up a book with meaning, theme and depth. Look to Twain, Hugo, Orwell, Wells--anyone and anything but just vampires and magic. Read pulp fiction if you must, but don't confine yourselves to it.

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Summer music highlights include Bumbershoot, Gorge concerts

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GONZAGA PREP

As summer draws near, I frequently wonder how I am going to occupy myself for the next three months. The most painless and enjoyable of my solutions is consistently music.

Summer is the perfect time to get out of town and do something different. With music festivals and popular concerts spanning all genres, you can be sure to beat the Spokane summer boredom. There are plenty of different opportunities, because re-runs and Hoopfest only last so long.

For all you punk rockers out there, be sure to catch the steadily digressing Van's Warped Tour, featuring acts such as Against Me!, Reel Big Fish, Norma Jean, Rise Against, Pennywise and Cobra Starship.

It takes place at the Gorge Amphitheater Saturday, Aug. 9. The Vans Warped Tour is an epic event which often times includes greasy pre-teens, burning outhouses, tapered jeans and sloppy mosh pits.

Bumbershoot Music and Arts festival, from Aug. 30 to Sept. 1, has something for nearly every art appreciator.

Held in the Seattle Center, it hosts both visual and performing arts, literature, film, dance, lectures and music. This year it will entertain its usual outstanding showcase, including Beck, Stone Temple Pilots, M. Ward, Saul Williams and Anti-Flag.

As far as concerts go, the Gorge is hosting a number of popular artists. The Police, with special guest Elvis Costello, will be visiting the Amphitheater July 12.

Jack Johnson will be performing Aug. 22, and of course, what summer would be complete without the three day festival of nothing but Dave Matthews Band. This spectacle will appear Sept. 3-5.

A series of other great shows are happening in the Seattle area. Radiohead will be making its awaited arrival to the White River Amphitheater Aug. 20. B.B. King appears at the Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery in Woodinville, Washington July 3. Also at this venue will be Ringo Starr and His All-Starr Band July 19.

The Capitol Hill Block Party will take place on Seattle's famed Capitol Hill district July 25 and 26. It is basically an obscenely indie street party, boasting such acts as The Hold Steady, Kimya Dawson and Vampire Weekend.

Also in Seattle is the True Colors tour, which is scheduled for July 1 at the WaMu Theatre. This sounds like the strangest event yet, featuring Cyndi Lauper, the B52's, Joan Jett, Regina Spektor, Tegan and Sara, and for some reason, Rosie O'Donnell. Not only this, but it is being hosted by Carson Kressley (of Queer Eye).

Keep an eye on local venues, like The Empyrean and The Service Station for cool local acts and a few special guests as well.