

The Outsiders vs. the 1960s

Essay Example

History is important to learn about because of the impact it has on the future. To paraphrase the philosopher George Santayana, without understanding of the past, we run the risk of repeating mistakes out of ignorance (Saatkamp). The vehicle through which we view history, though, can have a major impact on how we understand the past. An article such as "Pop Culture: The Way We Were" by Ally Wright, gives a generic overview of 1960s USA, with little emotion or experience to grasp the small details of life and culture. On the other hand, a novel set in the 1960s like The Outsiders, by S.E. Hinton, gives all those small details, while giving only one specific culture within the complex history of the 1960s. The article "Pop Culture: The Way We Were" is more effective at teaching history than the historical novel The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton.

The first way to tell that an informational article is more effective than a piece of fiction is to look at the texts and see what they actually say about that time period. The Outsiders gives us some information about pop culture and activities of the era, such as when the main character, Ponyboy, narrates about going to the drive-in theater with his friends (Hinton 28). The article, on the other hand, spends time discussing the impact of movies, when it states that with the accessibility of TV at home, the number of drive-in theaters in the U.S. went from 6,000 in 1962, to 3,500 in 1963 (Wright 1). This difference shows how the fiction may be able to give a personal account of the era, but the article can give a broader understanding of the time, and the effects it has on the culture as a whole.

Another way that the article is a better way to understand history as a whole is that historical fictions like The Outsiders can only give a vision of the way a certain type of individual or community lived. While the descriptions of the conflict between Socs and greasers certainly give a clear picture of those two groups, there are many other types of people that were unaccounted for. For example, Ponyboy describes greasers as being "almost like hoods" in that they "steal things and drive old souped-up cars...and have a gang fight once in a while" (Hinton 11). This description may be accurate, but it only is useful for understanding one portion of society. The article, though, spends time on the entirety of teens when it informs how in the 1960s teens had "\$22 billion dollars at their disposal" (Wright 1). This shows that while a fictional piece is helpful for understanding one specific area, it cannot generalize to everyone.

Lastly, non-fiction is simply shorter. The article "Pop Culture: The Way We Were" covers music, books, religion, and TV/movies in two pages, whereas the novel The Outsiders, while entertaining, gives a narrow vision of the same time period in nearly 190 pages worth of story. Readers are often impatient, so in order to help the chances that they will take in the information, it would be prudent to shorten the material. While it is painful to push readers away from a quality story like The Outsiders, it may be necessary.

In the end, while fiction does have the ability to gain attention for the past by being entertaining, the amount of information in a small amount of reading in a non-fiction text proves to be more effective at teaching history. What may be the best for teaching history is a healthy dose of non-

Comment [CM1]: Hook

Comment [CM2]: Background provides the two articles & a brief one-sentence summary of how they relate to the topic of history

Comment [CM3]: Claim – states the two readings & which is more effective at teaching history

Comment [TM4]: Topic Sentence – reminds the reader of the claim & lets reader know what that one paragraph is going to be about (single topic)

Comment [TM5]: Examples , Details, and Explanations

Comment [TM6]: Conclusion

Comment [CM7]: The required FOUR citations appear in the BODY paragraphs. Citations include the author's last name & page number. If no author is known, use the title of the article/reading + page number.

Comment [TM8]: Restatement of claim and main points.

fiction informational texts mixed with a smattering of fiction texts to keep interest in history alive. To
adapt Santayana paraphrase, if we don't care about the past, we are bound to repeat it.

Comment [TM9]: Generalized statement

Comment [TM10]: Reference to the hook!

Resources

Hinton, S.E. The Outsiders. Penguin Group (USA), Inc., 2007.

Saatkamp, Herman. "George Santayana." Stanford Univeristy Website. Herman Saatkamp, 2010. Web.

20 Feb. 2014. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/santayana/>>.

Wright, Ally. "Pop Culture: The Way We Were." PBS.org. Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2005. Web. 20

Feb. 2014.

<http://www.pbs.org/opb/thesixties/topics/culture/index.html?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=pbs&utm_campaign=sixtiespopculture>.

Comment [CM11]: Title is under the essay & is centered. Entries are in alphabetical order by first entry. Entries are double-spaced and include a hanging indent when needed. Punctuation & capitalization is all double-checked, and url is included at the end. Need help? Use easybib.com