That's Entertainment!

by Allison

"This is the Fox 47 evening news." "Can't fall asleep!" "Must be the coffee." "#sleeplessinSeattle" "Off with their head!" These phrases all appear in some form of entertainment. We may hear a television reporter introduce the local news, or a restless traveler complaining on Facebook. All of these media provide entertainment for people, and they have been affecting our culture for years. Even before the arrival of modern-day technology, people found ways to occupy their time. But one question that can be asked is: How do different forms of entertainment affect people's lifestyle and attitudes? Since the beginning of time, the way people entertain themselves has affected the way they behave. From the viewing of public torture and the practice of alchemy in the Middle Ages, to social media and video games today, entertainment is like a double-edged sword, both benefiting and harming us.

For centuries, people have been publicly tortured and executed, often providing entertainment to the people around them. In *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by Victor Hugo, the people declare, "I think we ought to hang the bailiff of the palace for entertainment!" (4). We see a similar scene when Pierre Gringoire is going to be hanged for entering the Court of Miracles. The citizens of the Court view it as Gringoire simply receiving punishment, while also providing entertainment for them, as told by the King of Fools when he explains to Gringoire "I'm going to have you hanged to amuse my subjects . . ." (39). What this says about their culture is that there is a very thin line between justice and entertainment, and often both are intertwined into a kind of horrible amusement. The attitudes of the people in medieval Paris are in a way cynical, because they encourage the use of torture. Painful methods of torture and executions were taken for granted as a part of justice (Wikipedia History para. 2), yet people also viewed it as a way to make their day more interesting and exciting. They became so desensitized to it that they eventually began to encourage the torturer to inflict more pain and even helped in making the victim feel humiliated. While in our modern day society we view torture as a horrible, devilish thing, in medieval times it was simply a form of reform and punishment, much like our prisons are viewed today.

In medieval times, another popular form of entertainment was alchemy. One of the main characters in *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, named Dom Claude Frollo, is an alchemist himself. He conducts his research for the elusive philosopher's stone in a small secluded cell in a tower located inside Notre-Dame. This follows one of the lifestyle choices set up by Geber, the master of alchemy. He states that "For heaven's sake do not let the facility of making gold lead you to divulge this proceeding

or to show it to any of those around you, to your wife, or your cherished child, and still less to any other person" (Jaffe n. pag). Frollo keeps his work a secret, letting no person know what he actually does in his small cell tower. He mutters to himself that he has been working on his experiments for a long time, yet all of his experiments have been failing (Hugo 127). It has completely overtaken him, driving him to accomplish the unfeasible. "This pseudoscience with its alluring goal and fascinating mysticism dominated the thoughts and actions of thousands" (Jaffe n. pag), and Frollo was no exception. His own personal lifestyle had been greatly affected by this all-consuming drive, and with no end in sight, he continued to dive into this action, which was nothing short of madness.

In our more recent age, we have many more forms of entertainment which impact our lifestyle and attitudes. One of the biggest culprits that consume our time is video games. A popular pastime for boys and girls of all ages, this industry is constantly growing and producing new games that beg to be played. Video games have been attributed with helping to "promote learning, problem solving, and help with the development of fine motor skill and coordination" ("Children and Video Games" para. 3). An interviewee can attest to this by saying that video games are a good way to relax and help with his coordination and pattern finding (Student 2). However, there is a dark side to this popular pastime. Numerous studies have shown that video games, especially ones with violent content, make teens more aggressive ("The Impact of Video Games." para. 4). Teens are prone to confront their teachers, engage in fights with their peers, and suffer in school ("The Impact of Video Games" para. 7), after playing violent video games for extended periods of time. They have impacted our lifestyle by making users have a more violent nature, and while this may not apply to everyone, it does affect our culture enough that we need to be aware of the games we play and how they affect us.

Social media is another huge form of entertainment that has radically changed how we live and play. People are connected to their friends, jobs, and various apps almost instantly. Some people have even begun to say that "social networking may be on the verge of replacing traditional personal interactions for the next generation" ("Effects of Social Networking" para. 1). However, the impact of social media on our life is not always positive. Along with the good comes the risk of lower security, cyberbullying, and even sexting. Many teens have taken to social media sites in order to impress their peers, gain popularity, or even bully others in an online space where it is impossible to see the victim's reaction ("Effects of Social Networking" para. 3). In asking some students how social media has affected their lifestyle, one person said that "Social media just makes everyone's lives worse. It gives them (the bullies) the power to hide behind screens and hurt other people . . ." (Student 1). Another person pointed out that "It's a nice way to connect with friends and meet new people, but it definitely has taken a toll on my schoolwork" (Student 3). Social media affects our lifestyle by making us more "targetable," yet we are also able to share information at a quicker pace and receive instant feedback from

our peers. Social media is a wonderful source of entertainment, but also hides dangers that our culture must be constantly vigilant of.

Different forms of entertainment have a huge impact on our lifestyle and attitudes. Public torture and violent video games often cause people to become desensitized to the harm going on around them, and even cause them to wish harm upon others. Alchemy and social media have connected people through their aim of providing information, yet they also have their dark corners. As with everything, we must be careful about how we treat these cultural aspects, yet that does not mean we cannot have fun with them (as least with our modern-day entertainment choices). Enjoy your video games and social media accounts; who knows how much longer we have until the next form of entertainment comes out?

Citations:

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