

Task 1: Manifesto writing

Task 2: practise-based writing

Task 3: Observational writing

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How BLEACH portrays “Just War” theory

Introduction

This Essay is about the sole biggest influence in media that I’ve probably ever had, the Japanese Graphic Novel series BLEACH. BLEACH started its publication all the way back in August of 2001 and was written and Illustrated by a single man Tite Kubo weekly till its end in 2016 for a total of 74 volumes. It’s garnered massive popularity since, earning a total of 120 million from its volume sales alone. The series is about a teenager named Ichigo Kurosaki, that takes on the powers of a soul reaper after a fateful accident, with his newfound abilities he’s dubbed a “substitute soul reaper” and is tasked with taking over the job. This power to protect eventually leads him to a whole new world named the “Soul Society” where he is faced with a world ending threat.

Introduction – Influence/inspiration

In terms of what influenced me to create and start researching this topic was an already prominent fascination with ethics, so when a story becomes ethical and showcases different moral point of views that tends to be where I’m most interested. However, the main thing that caused me to look back onto all the war related media I’ve consumed was the quote “In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity” from Sun Tzu’s the art of war (Tzu, 1521) . It caused me to remember all the story’s I’ve read that have subtext’s on their author’s individual perspectives on war which I found incredibly interesting. The easiest and cleanest way I could think to cover this topic in this essay was to go about with “Just War” theory which are a set of rules made to justify war ethically, as that can be a jumping off point to go into my overall narrative the easiest.

Personal Connections

When I first started the series, it was the first time I’d ever been exposed to a story that was so lore intensive, with a world and cast of characters that rival even Lord Of The Rings or Star Wars and with such a massive cast comes conflict. In the form of multiple war story arcs, Such as the Arrancar invasion, or the Thousand Year Blood War. It deals in multiple themes associated with war as a result, whether it be war crimes, what constitutes as justice or treason. With its long length of 74 volumes, it also deals in many different themes and topics, such as PTSD, Trauma, Poverty and classism. However, as previously mentioned one of the prolific theme’s is war, as the 13 court guard squad’s protect the Soul Society.

Critical Reflection

After taking in the entire series, I believe it made me more confident to handle such a big task as creating a cast on the same scale as something like Bleach’s. it also helped influence me on the sheer range of personalities people can have, leading to my creative decisions in character creation becoming more precise and varied. In terms of the topics and themes of the series, It helped open me up to a basis template on how to write and portray certain aspects of character’s such as mental illnesses and realistic reaction’s and emotion. This will eventually help me to write a lot more interesting character’s as exploring mental health can gain major relatability within a character.

Observational Analysis

According to the series in question, Bleach. It takes the stand that a “just war” isn’t necessarily as simple a thing as it’s made out to be. I feel that it takes a very valid view point, that despite the war’s that take place in the series being “justified” in the eye’s of both parties involved and according to the official rules. Despite this, I feel it convey’s a message that both sides are in no way’s justified as

they are both ultimately fuelled by fits of revenge or personal gain. It even goes as far as the main protagonist group; the soul society being portrayed as morally questionable, to even go as far as to show them committing genocide for personal security while hiding under the veil that their actions were for the sake of the world. (Tite, 2001)

Critical Reflection

From researching deeper into the series for the purposes of this essay, I have had somewhat of a change in the way I think in terms of the creative process behind story making, worldbuilding and character writing. It led me to think about how I present ideas and the meaning behind them. As before starting the research, symbolism and meaning didn't concern me much. However, as I learned just how much symbolism, parallels and different meanings there were behind almost every chapter of this series, the more I was interested in the concept of a series that heavily relies on the "Chekhov's gun" principal. Which states that: every single detail within a story must relate back to the overarching narrative and that everything else is worthless (Adam, 2020). I hope to use this principal in my practises from now on which will help me make more deeper art than usual.

Societal 'Universal' Themes

One of the biggest points of societal themes I believe BLEACH presents incredibly well, is the idea of who's in the "right" and "wrong" in a war scenario, it shines an interesting perspective which even made me change my perception. This comes from one of the characters in the series Captain Shunsui Kyoraku, as he cuts down an enemy and gives the perspective "Someone may owe you or you may owe someone. But the moment you start a war, You're both evil" (Kubo, 2009) it tells us that despite the main characters, the soul reapers being in the protagonist role. They are just as bad as those they're fighting as the circumstances, they're in still don't warrant all the bloodshed they've caused. They even make it a point to subtly show how similar the opponents are, showing how under different circumstances, they could get along.

Making Wider Connections

There's another piece of media in the same medium which I've noticed has a lot of similar messages and similar ideals about "just war" to Bleach. That being the graphic novel series Attack On Titan, similarly to Bleach it tells how there is never any good reason to war as it's always a personal grudge of hate against someone. It even goes one step forward and tells about the effect of hate propaganda on youth's as it did in one of its most recent chapters where it has the quote "we made use of our hatred. We let it grow. We believed it would save us, we took every problem caused by our shortcomings and spat them all out onto an "island of devils" and the result was the birth of a monster who has now come to repay us for all the hate we've ever shown." (Isayama, 2020)

Reflective Summary

After all the research put into this assignment, I believe it has helped me to have a much better understanding of war as a topic. From now understanding the basic rules of engagement better, to understanding the series I've looked up too even better. The research also gave me a wiser outlook on media and how portrayal of certain subjects is key particularly when the subject is on the sensitive side of things. On top of this, I now have a much bigger range of outlooks and perspectives to choose from when creating unique characters as I have looked and gained more knowledge of different viewpoints. I've also seemed to pick up on some of the deeper symbolic aspects of Bleach that would have gone over my head when I originally read the series.

Reflecting Forwards

As a creative practitioner, this research and reflection has helped make me take a real step back and process my idea's fully before simply writing without any real thought. It's helped me gain a broader outlook on what I need to improve on as a creator and the aspects that I was previously lacking in. It's also helped me realise I still have a very long way to go until I am truly satisfied with my thought process, creativity and overall ability to create as a whole. This in turn has also caused me to look at my previous work and distain it to a certain degree. As I now realise how simple, non-expressive and by the book I was being, meaning that I now have concrete goals to work on as a result of this reflection.

Bibliography

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