**MINORITY GROUPS**

Compare texts how genres influence audience

Analyse each text:

conventions of each genre,

language,

structure,

style,

does the text confirm or challenge conventions of that genre,

are the genres challenged, manipulated or subverted.

Compare and contrast each genre

* No Sugar – play excerpt
* Jasper Jones – Novel excerpt
* Maus by Art Spiegelman - Graphic Novel
* The Rabbits

**Minority group** is a term referring to a category of people differentiated from the social majority, i.e., those who hold the majority of positions of social power in a society, and may be **defined** by law. Rather than a relational "social **group**", as the term would indicate.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What is a minority Group**  A subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their lives than members of a dominant or majority group  Not limited to mathematical minority: example women, Blacks in South Africa, Blacks in Mississippi and South Carolina in the 1920's  Interchangeable with subordinate group. A minority or subordinate group is a sociological group that does not constitute a politically dominant voting majority of the total population of a given society. A sociological minority is not necessarily a numerical minority — it may include any group that is subnormal with respect to a dominant group in terms of social status, education, employment, wealth and political power  A group that experiences a narrowing of opportunities (success, education, wealth, etc) that is disproportionately low compared to their numbers in the society |  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

A **documentary film** is a [nonfictional](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-fiction) [motion picture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motion_picture) intended to [document](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/document#Verb) some aspect of reality, primarily for the purposes of instruction or maintaining a historical record.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_film#cite_note-1) Such films were originally shot on [film stock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_stock)—the only medium available—but now include [video](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video) and [digital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_media) productions that can be either [direct-to-video](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct-to-video), made into a TV show or released for screening in cinemas. "Documentary" has been described as a "filmmaking practice, a cinematic tradition, and mode of audience reception" that is continually evolving and is without clear boundaries.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_film#cite_note-2)

**UTOPIA**

***Utopia*** is a 2013 [documentary film](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_film) written, produced and presented by [John Pilger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Pilger) and directed by Pilger and Alan Lowery, that explores the experiences of [Aboriginal Australians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aboriginal_Australians) in modern Australia.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_%282013_film%29#cite_note-IMDb-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_%282013_film%29#cite_note-2) The title is derived from the Aboriginal homeland community of [Utopia, Northern Territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia,_Northern_Territory), one of the poorest and most desolate areas in Australia.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_%282013_film%29#cite_note-Guardian-3)

A new film on Australia by journalist John Pilger, *Utopia*, commissioned by ITV and backed by the UK company, Network Distributing, and produced by Dartmouth Films, will be delivered in the summer in Britain, and broadcast worldwide near the end of the year and early 2014.

*Utopia* set to lift the veil on Australia’s “racist” treatment of its Aboriginal population, with the journalist calling the conditions faced by Australian Aboriginal people the country’s “dirtiest little secret”.

The film Utopia will focus on the experiences of Aboriginal Australians living in Western Australia.

Utopia is a vast region east of the Stuart Highway. But the film also compares the utopia of suburban Australia with the actual Utopia in the remote Australia. *Utopia* is a film about these two Australias.

“Barely a fraction of mining, oil and gas revenue has benefited Aboriginal communities, whose poverty is an enduring shock,” says Mr Pilger [[1]](http://www.creativespirits.info/resources/movies/utopia#fn-1-a). “In Roeburne, in the minerals-rich Pilbara, 80 per cent of the children suffer from an ear infection called otitis media that causes partial deafness. Or they go blind from preventable trachoma. Or they contract Dickensian infections. That is their story.”

Pilger would have been delighted to show Utopia in Australia first but no local distributor offered a cinema run. “One Australian distributor refused to take the film because he said it was ‘too dark’ and ‘it might upset people with its myth-busting’,” the veteran journalist says [[2]](http://www.creativespirits.info/resources/movies/utopia#fn-2-a).

Utopia can make some viewers feel bad or guilty or uncomfortable. As an Indigenous person I want to let you know that the majority of us find those kinds of feelings are unproductive. For us, watching something like this is about equipping as many non-Indigenous Australians as possible with knowledge and information about the history of Australia to give you a better and more informed understanding.—Dr Bronwyn Carlson, Executive Director, Echidna Group [[](http://www.creativespirits.info/resources/movies/utopia#fn-3-a)

**PICTURE BOOKS**

**Picture books** are profusely illustrated books in which the pictures are essential to complete understanding and enjoyment of the story. The illustrations may provide clues to setting, plot, characterization and mood. Types of picture books include baby and toddler books; alphabet, counting and other concept books; wordless books; picture storybooks; pattern books; and beginning readers.

Picture books are often considered to be ‘books intended for young children which communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no texts at all’. Picture books that combine text and imagery may be viewed as being multimedia artefacts.

The Rabbits, written by John Marsden, is partly allegorical fable about colonisation, told from the viewpoint of the colonised. An unseen narrator describes the coming of ‘rabbits’ in the most minimal detail, an encounter that is at first friendly and curious, but later darkens as it becomes apparent that the visitors are actually invaders. The style of the book is deliberately sparse and strange, with both text and image conveying an overall sense of bewilderment and anxiety as native numbat-like creatures witness environmental devastation under the wheels of a strange new culture.

The parallels with a real history of colonisation in Australia and around the world are obvious, and based on detailed research, in spite of the overt surrealism of the imagery and the absence of direct references. It was named Picture Book of the Year by the Children’s Book Council, which in part generated some controversy due to it’s confronting themes, and was attacked on several occasions for being ‘politically correct propaganda’, but only by right wing conservatives of course. In spite of this (or because of it), the book went on to win numerous awards in Australia, the US and UK, and is studied widely in secondary schools. It would seem that some of my concepts and designs were unacknowledged inspiration for a section of the opening ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics, although I’ve never been able to find out if this is true.

 One reason for the initial controversy is that The Rabbits is a picture book, and therefore thought to be children’s literature, and wrongly assumed to be didactic, whereas it had been originally conceived as a book for older readers, and generally difficult to categorise. Some children may get a lot out of it, but generally it defies most picture book conventions and is not necessarily a good choice for pleasant bedtime reading!

What other texts support this book?

CONVENTIONS OF A PICTURE BOOK

32 Pages long

Stand in characters, eg: fox for Mother

Relatable characters

Narrative flow

Protagonist solves the problem, all is well in the end

Common colour throughout

**GRAPHIC NOVEL**

**MAUS**

As a story about the Holocaust in comic form, [Art Spiegelman](http://www.barclayagency.com/spiegelman.html)’s ***Maus*** accomplishes the seemingly impossible. *Maus* tells the story of Spiegelman’s father, Vladek, and his experience as a Polish Jew during the Holocaust. Running parallel to the story is the story of Spiegelman’s interactions with his father as he visits his father on numerous occasions to record his memories. All of the characters are represented as animals: the Jews are mice, the Germans are cats, the Americans are dogs, and so on. Within this seemingly simplistic framework, *Maus* confronts the terrifying reality of the Holocaust, the systematic genocide of millions and millions of Jews carried out by the Nazi regime during World War II.

Widely acclaimed, *Maus* received a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992 and was the subject of a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Part I, “My Father Bleeds History,” appeared in 1986, followed by Part II, “And Here My Troubles Began,” in 1991; both parts are now available in a single volume, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor’s Tale.*

*Maus* is considered a representative work in second-generation Holocaust literature, literature about the Holocaust written from the perspective of the survivors’ children. As the critic Arlene Fish Wilner explains, “In the Jewish tradition, the transmission of familial and communal history from parent to child is a sacred obligation” ([source](http://www.jstor.org/pss/30225464)). Inheriting and preserving their parents’ stories is a way for children to connect with their families’ pasts. This becomes especially important when you think about the fact that whole families were wiped out during the Holocaust.

Yet *Maus* also inherits the special problem that all Holocaust literature has to deal with when it tries to confront this historical catastrophe: How can any form of representation – literary, cinematic, visual – do justice to what happened in the Holocaust? Isn’t any representation going to fall short in the face of such horror?

*Maus* tackles this problem by using an unconventional medium: the comic. Spiegelman was a key figure in the underground comic scene, which emerged in the 1960s. Unlike mainstream comics with their superheroes, underground comics challenged all forms of authority and took a darkly ironic view of society.

Spiegelman exploits the comic form in *Maus* to unsettle the reader, playing with panel frames and arrangements and with his own animal motif to unsettle the reader’s expectations. Within the comic, Spiegelman reflects a lot on the making of *Maus,* inviting the reader to inhabit his creative process. In using a form of popular culture to talk about serious historical issues, and by reflecting on the form within the text itself, *Maus* is also considered a postmodern text.

Spiegelman once remarked, “In making *Maus,* I found myself drawing every panel, every figure, over and over – obsessively – so as to pare it down to an essence, as if each panel was an attempt to invent a new word, rough-hewn but stream-lined” ([source](http://books.google.com/books?id=JkE8SE-y3uwC&pg=PA16&lpg=PA16&dq=%E2%80%9CIn+making+Maus,+I+found+myself+drawing+every+panel,+every+figure,+over+and+over%22&source=bl&ots=sPvVPzFJuy&sig=qqCThaom2dkdhENtVCid40F7GZY&hl=en&ei=xS46TbOWBoKssAO9teH8Ag&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%E2%80%9CIn%20making%20Maus%2C%20I%20found%20myself%20drawing%20every%20panel%2C%20every%20figure%2C%20over%20and%20over%22&f=false)). Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of *Maus* is its excruciating honesty about the difficulties of capturing his father’s story, of capturing the Holocaust.

**NOVEL**

**JASPER JONES**

**Genre fiction**, also known as popular **fiction**, is plot-driven fictional works written with the intent of fitting into a specific literary **genre**, in order to appeal to readers and fans already familiar with that **genre**. **Genre fiction** is generally distinguished from literary **fiction**.

*Jasper Jones* is a novel that deals with so many different issues and themes ranging from truth and lies, to stereotypes and assumptions, to the cruelty of humankind. Its literary quality is apparent in the universality of these themes and issues.

Charlie Bucktin is a small, thin, smart guy born without speed or courage (or at least so he says even though he proves himself to be quite the courageous kid) who comes from an average family with both parents. Jasper Jones is tall, muscular, does not try in school, and comes from a poor broken home. Jasper Jones is known for his terrible reputation in Corrigan. He is known as a thief, a liar, a thug, a tyrant, as lazy, unreliable, feral, and he might as well be an orphan because his dad is a good for nothing drunk. Everybody knew kids in their school that fit these descriptions. The complete opposites: the nerd and the bad ass. So from the start, Silvey draws us in by making his characters relatable. I felt like I already knew them from the beginning of the book.

One of the big themes that *Jasper Jones* deals with immensely is the idea of secrets, truths, lies, and the unknown. When Charlie finds out Jasper’s secret and has to keep the secret to himself, he asks himself, “I wonder what it is about holding in a secret that hurts so much” (Silvey, 51). Charlie’s uneasiness and apprehension with holding in this secret shows how secrets can eat at a person from the inside out. I too have felt the destructive nature of a secret. It begs to get out, but you must endure the pain and keep your mouth shut. As Charlie says, a secret can be an illness that festers inside of you.

This novel also deals with the idea of the unknown. Charlie’s Dad explains to Charlie that when people do not really understand something, they assume the worst. He uses the example of being scared of the dark. People usually are not scared of the dark per say, but that they do not know what is in it (Silvey, 109-110). Silvey also touches on this theme of the unknown when he has Charlie consider the bombing in Vietnam and how it is not on the news. Charlie ponders that if we “took every bad event in the world to heart, [we’d] be a horrible mess. [We’d] spend [our lives] crying, wading from one tragedy to the next” (Silvey 126). In other words, the less we know and the further away we are from something, the easier it is to pretend it is not happening. I wish I could say that I have never ignored an issue just so that I could pretend it was not real, but I have. I think most of us have. For instance, I knew that our soldiers were dying in Iraq and Afghanistan, but I refused to look at just how many because if I didn’t look, I did not have to feel the pain as deeply.

Another major universal theme that Silvey addresses in *Jasper Jones* is the popular issue of racism and stereotypes. His character, Jeffrey, is Charlie’s best friend and also Vietnamese. Because of his differing ethnicity, he is bullied. Racism and stereotyping is prevalent in our society today as well. I am sure that we can all remember a time witnessing this type of injustice. However, I found it touching, moving, and inspiring that Jeffrey is also unflappable and always smiling. He does not let the mean comments and rude actions of others get him down or make him ashamed of his culture. Related to this is speculations and assumptions. People are so quick to judge! Too often people speculate and make assumptions that often end up being false. Silvey portrays this idea using the character Mad Jack Lionel. Mad Jack Lionel supposedly killed a woman and has never left his house since. He is thought to be a scary-looking, towering man and he becomes a character of much speculation and intrigue for the children of Corrigan even though they really know nothing about him. Jasper Jones is also assumed to be a bad kid even though he has never stolen anything he didn’t need. One of Jasper’s lines that really sat with me was,

“They don’t know shit about what it is to be me. They never ask why” (Silvey 35). I am afraid that too many people are guilty of assuming and judging, often falsely, other people even though they know nothing about them.

Another overarching theme in *Jasper Jones*, one that most of us can relate to, is that life is a lottery; it’s unfair and most of the time we are unhappy with it. Charlie reflects on his life and all of the privileges he has had but taken for granted when he thinks about the life Jasper Jones has had to endure. He states that it is not fair but isn’t that life? At least my mom always told me that life isn’t fair! This theme is also seen when Charlie describes his mother as hating Corrigan, unhappy and dissatisfied with her lot and her plot. He describes her as being at the end of her rope, and I am sure that we can all relate to feeling that way. But it saddened me when Charlie said that he felt that he was not good enough for his mother; that he was a burden to her. Like he says, after all, he had no choice about being born!!

Finally, this novel is a quality literary work because it addresses an issue that most of us would rather not face: the cruelties of humankind. Silvey uses the story of Sylvia Likens, a girl who was tortured and killed by her foster mother while the rest of the children, including her own sister, and neighbours stood by silent. After reading about Sylvia and other murderers, Charlie makes an important realization that many of us are too afraid to admit: “We are monsters” (Silvey 32). This leads him to ask the always lingering question when it comes to the realities of the world and the cruelty that humans are capable of. Charlie says, “And it occurs to me for the first time that people can do this to each other. People really can. And I wonder: How thin is the line? Is it something we all have in us? Is it just a matter of friction and pressure? Is it shit luck and a poor lot? Is it time and chance” (Silvey 85)?

But for me, one of the things that made *Jasper Jones* an even better quality work was the little wisdoms that were spread throughout. For instance, when Charlie states, “…the more you have to lose, the braver you are for standing up” (Silvey 56). Or, “And I’d tell him that life might be easier if you give in a little, but it’s better if you hold on to something so hard you can’t give it up” (Silvey 112). Or my favourite because it resonates personally with me, “After a whole morning’s reading, I’ve collected more questions than answers” (Silvey 88).

So for me, the universality of this book and the themes that it addresses are what make it a quality piece of literature. Of course, the fact that it is a mystery and that Silvey keeps his readers on their toes and wanting to turn the page does not hurt!

**VISUAL IMAGES**

This is a poster for a 2012 campaign by the non-government environmental organisation,

Greenpeace.

