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Rhetoric 102

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Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper

## Primary Sources

### Superman. Directed by Richard Donner, performances by Christopher Reeve, 1978.

This movie marks the beginning of a series of Superman movies that has had great influence on a generation. Although Superman had already existed before the movie came out, the movie contributed a lot to the on-going popularity of Superman for about eighty years. I will use this movie as a representative of Superman icon in the past era to find what makes the character a persisting hero. In particular, the movie will be compared with another movie, *Superman Returns* (2006) and I will explore the remaining characteristics and differences between Superman in two eras.

*Superman Returns*. Dir. Bryan Singer. Perf. Brandon Routh. Warner Bros, 2006.

About thirty years after the movie Superman (1978) came out and nearly twenty years after the last Superman film debuted, this movie came out as a return of the superhero. And another series of six superman films is already planned in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century. Such dense existence of Superman movies implies another trend of Superman’s popularity. I will use this movie as a representative of Superman in the modern times to explore the secret behind Superman’s popularity.

Webster, Dan. "Heroic Comeback: Fans Reminisce as Superman Returns."*Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, Jun 27, 2006, pp. 1*, ABI/INFORM Collection*, https://search.proquest.com.

This primary source is basically an interview of older audience of the movie, *Superman Returns* (2006). The interviewees talk about the impressions and influence Superman had given to them before the movie came out as well as their ideas toward the movie. Their interview implies the reason for people’s love toward Superman in the past years and their feelings of the Superman who returns in 2006. The author tends to demonstrate Superman’s heroic icon and thus implying the difference between Superman who dominated the last era and antiheroes who have been popular in the modern times. Therefore, such difference can reflect people’s change in taste, which is related to my essay.

## Secondary Sources

Call, Corey. "Our Hero: Superman on Earth."*The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2011, pp. 415-416*, Research Library*, https://search.proquest.com.

Call accounts the success of Superman in popular culture for merchandizing, where the icon of Superman emerges in all kinds of media such as television, radio, films and so on. Moreover, Superman’s changes over the years also includes the growth in power. Such growth agrees with his change in role from a depression-era crusader against social injustice to the main character of stories aimed more at children. Such change in role can be essential in explaining his persisting popularity.

Carney, Sean. "The Function of the Superhero at the Present Time."*Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 6, 2005, pp. 100-117*, Research Library*, https://search.proquest.com.

To get a better understanding of Superman’s popularity, it is helpful to look into the function of such a superhero for people in the modern time. Carney argues that superheroes solves problems of the society in an ideological and imaginary way. He also mentions the role of Superman where he functions as conservative myths to “solve humanity’s real social problems.” Although the author limits Superman’s function to an imaginary military force that is concerned with the “Corto-Maltese Crisis” and other wars, I still think Superman also helps satisfy ordinary people’s mental needs and thus probably becomes indispensable for people, which can contribute to the explanations of Superman’s popularity.

Evans, Jonathan C. *American Arete: The Man of Steel as a Rhetorical Model*, Texas Woman's University, Ann Arbor, 2014*, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global A&I: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection*, https://search.proquest.com.

In his article, the author tries to dig into the deep meaning of Superman as a rhetoric model. He argues that “Superman’s continued endurance in American culture is the result of his embodiment and function as a model of American cultural excellence, of what the Greeks called *arête*.” From his argument we can learn the connection between Superman who has existed for about 80 years and the culture behind him. I will use this secondary source to explore the secret of Superman’s success.

Martin, Judith. “It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's the Movie!” *Washington Post,* December 15, 1978. https://www.washingtonpost.com.

In her review, Martin thinks the success of the movie, *Superman* (1978) lies in the quality of the movie itself. She emphasizes that the success relies on its characterization to show Superman’s charm and Superman’s identity as an ordinary man and a superhero simultaneously. While she provides several advantages of the movie, the first of the Superman movie series, I’d like to compare these advantages to those of the movie, *Superman Returns* (2006) to find what similarities or changes may help to maintain Superman’s popularity.

Soares, Michael. "The Man of Tomorrow: Superman from American Exceptionalism to Globalization."*Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2015, pp. 747- 761*, Research Library*, https://search.proquest.com.

Soares argues that “Always a reflection of the times, Superman over the last seventy-five years has shifted both in persona and mission, evolving with each generation to match the domestic mood.” He thinks Superman changes as American changes to satisfy people’s need. And he also finds that Superman is expanding his territory from American to the whole world while reshaping himself. Such expansion can explain Superman’s on-going popularity, which can form a conversation with my paper. Sragow, Michael. "'Superman Returns' but Doesn't Fly."*Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, Jun 27, 2006, pp. 1*, ABI/INFORM Collection*, https://search.proquest.com.

In the author’s point of view, although the director uses some methods such as mentioning Superman’s hometown to prevent boring audience, the movie is merely a deluxe version of the old slam-bang and Superman even loses his nobility in this movie. He gives readers a hint on the reason of Superman’s success in the past——nobility in contrast with other “slashing visual art or farce-like melodrama.” Therefore, his argument would be helpful in exploring Superman’s popularity.

Yockey, Matt. "Somewhere in Time: Utopia and the Return of Superman." *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 61, 2008, pp. 26-37*, Research Library*, https://search.proquest.com.

In his article, Yockey explores the success of the movie, *Superman Returns* (2006). On the one hand, he contends that the long-standing popularity depends on audience’s familiarity with the character and moderate derivation from the texts of Superman. On the other hand, he argues that the movie “exploits a tension between the past, present, and future that Umeerto Eco sees as instrumental to the appeal of Superman texts.” This secondary source is helpful because the author explores the reason of the on-going popularity of Superman in terms of ideology, which is exactly what I would explore. This article is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal article, so it is a reliable source.

Zizek, Jela K. "Superheroes: The Making and Unmaking of a Genre in a Stupid Culture." *Teorija in Praksa*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2016, pp. 859- 874,1021*, Research Library*, https://search.proquest.com.

Zizek tries to explain the popularity of superheroes over the tens of years. While doing research and studying Umberto Eco’s text “The Myth of Superman,” he finds that “The shift from “the ironic self-referential tone of the early Superman and Batman films to the more serious tone in later adaptations is not a sign of progress but a regression,” which can be interpreted as ideological differences between Superman in the past and Superman nowadays. Such work is related to my topic, and can help to explore people’s change of taste in ideology as well as to understand Superman’s endurance of popularity.