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**The Utility of 1980s Allusions in Ready Player One**

Allusions have been used in literature as inspirations and inspection to the story’s components. Many stories reference or connect to the real world to attract the readers. Ernest Cline’s *Ready Player One* is a fairly recent fictional story that takes place in future human civilization but its main source of story is allusions from media from the 1980s. The 1980s media allusions are all over the novel, the over top amount of allusions in the novel can detract many readers. *Ready Player One*’s 1980s many allusions do enhance the story and surrounding elements of the novel.

The 1980s allusions give us a look at two different sides of the world. The world of *Ready Player One* is very dead and apocalyptic, it’s a place that is always against the characters, its counterpart is the OASIS. Unlike the world, the OASIS is an endless virtual world, based on the 1980s culture, it has both a fantastic and sci-fi feel to it. The OASIS is shown through 1980s media, the OASIS world represents the best parts of humanity while the world outside of it is seen as the worst possible reality that can happen. *Ready Player One* has its main character Wade, describing the two worlds saying, OASIS is “The collected knowledge, art, and amusements of all human civilization.” (16) He then says that this, “information turned out to be something of a mixed blessing,” because of the “ugly truth” of the real world and the “Global Energy Crisis,” (17) and other terrible problems that seem to be impossible to be solved. The settings that *Ready Player One* provides a great contrast to the tone of the novel and tells its views on society. The 1980s allusion is used to heighten the OASIS but also provides the bitter sadness of the real world. The novel tells two different sides of the world showing us two perspectives of what is good and bad and how we improved upon them.

The 1980s allusions give the obstacles and challenges of the novel a very familiar feeling but there are many twisted turns that make them more intense. The main story of *Ready Player One* is the egg hunt, basically a race course where the entire world can compete by completing hard challenges. These challenges are based on movies and music from the 1980s, it gives a friendly and connected atmosphere. The crazy part is what the characters are to face while being in these peaceful places. Ready Player One consists of Wade’s obstacles he has to overcome, they tell a very absurd saga of events in a few words like, “Three hidden keys open three secret gates, Wherein the errant will be tested for worthy traits, And those with the skill to survive these straits, Will reach The End where the prize awaits.” (6) This is a riddle that sums up the entire obstacle the characters have to faced. It doesn’t say it but it consists of traveling to multiple different worlds, hunting for keys that open up gates that show the experience of 1980s movies, games, and music. This challenges the characters’ skills, knowledge, and communication. The 1980s allusions are a part of these challenges, they are both calm and chaotic to the characters. These aspects can test the characters in ways no other novel can do. It also makes characters mention the wonderful spectacles and frustrations about the challenges.

The 1980s allusions affect the characters in a way that makes them relatable. The characters in *Ready Player One* are connected to the 1980s allusions and their knowledge of them makes the challenges to be overcome. But their biggest problem is their obsession with the 1980s allusions giving them a personal problem they must face. 1980s allusions can be symbolized as a flaw with the characters holding onto things they must let go. This flaw can be seen in many people, everyone wants to hold on to their greatest memories but it has to be let go. *Ready Player One*’s main character, Wade, is in an obsessive state with OASIS, he calls it, “an escape hatch into a better reality,” (18) keeping him “sane.” This obsession is a cover up for his “epic loneliness,” he feels. (19) Wade’s obsession is a problem he has to come to terms with, he has to focus on his goals but also his terrible state. The novels use its 1980s allusions as a personal flaw for the characters. These flaws make up relatable situations and lifestyles, it also gives the characters an inner goal to overcome making them very relatable to readers.

*Ready Player One* is filled with 1980s allusions that benefit the novel in many ways. Two different worlds are shown with these allusions showing us what a good and bad world is like while still being real. It makes the conflict go in many places that makes the characters and setting feel very peaceful and chaotic pain. And characters have deep and personal flaws connected to the allusions making them feel relatable as our biggest conflict is with ourselves. The 1980s allusions are used in a very interesting and great way in Ernest Cline’s *Ready Player One*.

Works Cited

Cline, Ernest. *Ready Player One*. Broadway Books, 2011