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Ready Player One In-Class Essay

In the novel Ready Player One, author Ernest Cline not only writes a phenomenal and compelling story, but he also touches on some important topics. These topics, while rather contemporary, should classify this novel as a prime candidate for a literary necessity for schools. The topics, social and ethical, may not seem too applicable to life due to them being exacerbated for dramatic effect, but this hasn’t stopped other works, such as 1984 and it’s unrealistic theme of limiting freedom of speech (or freedom of anything, really). Concepts such as climate change, the issues with monopolies, and judgement based on character rather than identity make this novel a perfectly reasonable candidate for wider reading in schools.

Today, climate change has yet to make any *major* changes to the environment, but, according to NASA and many other scientists, it most definitely will if the human race stays its course. Cline makes this a pivotal plot point in Ready Player One, and he shows us a world that *has* been ravaged by the possible effects of climate change. One of the main characters, Art3mis, illuminates readers to this fact when she says, “... the world is ruins, entire countries are flooded…” (133). Other lines of dialogue and narration fill us in that the world [in the novel] had entered major famines due to climate change, as well as a debilitating energy crisis (which was caused by fossil fuels becoming too rare to sell commercially, effectively removing them as an energy source). This could help the future leaders of industry (students) to realize that renewable energy needs to become much more prominent in today’s world.

Monopolies have been identified as a corrupt/unethical way to make money, at least by the US government (through multiple antitrust, or anti-monopoly, acts). This novel also seems to do that. The antagonist, IOI (a large corporation) wants to control the OASIS, the novel’s equivalent to the world wide web. This is revealed to the reader when Wade, the protagonist, holds an interview with them (139) .This would allow them to force users to pay any fee decided upon by IOI to use the OASIS. This is exacerbated when you take the fact that almost all of the world’s economy is rooted in the OASIS into account. This is an obvious pass to the concept of monopolies being evil, and would serve as a foundation to the idea to students.

In today’s day and age, homophobia, racism, and other forms of judgement play too large a part in society. Aech, one of the main characters in the novel, is assumed to be a “normal” guy for the majority of the story, but is later revealed to not be who he was expected to be (318). Despite Aech being a minority in a variety of ways, none of the characters ever pass judgement on him for this. This concept of judging people based on their character, rather than what they are, is an important moral value that many people have yet to learn. If this book was to be read by more students, it could help reveal to them that judging people based on what they are isn’t right.

Climate change, monopolies, judgement, and other important concepts and themes are heavily touched on in this book, and that is why this book becoming a literary classic could benefit those who read it. While there may be other, more “traditional” novels that could serve this role, Ready Player One may also serve as a reprieve from the “boring” novels that english classes typically assign readings for. Who doesn’t love a little sci-fi, right?