

Paper: Mass media, popular culture and contemporary society

Essay question: "The Kardashians are the epitome of popular culture" (Brown, 2011, p.15). Discuss.

Mass media and popular culture have the capacity to shape the values and norms of society. In contemporary society, the role of the celebrity is particularly pervasive. The Kardashians are an American family with their own TV show ("Keeping up with the Kardashians"). As such, they are an example of the mass media genre of "reality TV" and the celebration of the celebrity. Moreover, the Kardashians are the epitome of popular culture because their show and subsequent lifestyles reflect consumerist values, trivial pastimes and superficiality.

Popular culture is a debated concept. Smith (1999) suggests that popular culture constitutes values and norms that are promoted by the mass media and enjoyed by the majority of the population. Henry (2008) adds that popular culture is the mass publication and promotion of what is glitzy and superficial. Brown (2011) furthermore, argues that popular culture is by definition negative and damaging. "Popular culture sees the death of difference and in-depth thinking, and is ultimately the celebration of the trivial" (Brown, 2011, p.19).

The consumerist values reflected in the show and lifestyles of the Kardashians illustrate how they are the epitome of popular culture. For example, the recent wedding on the TV show was paid for entirely by advertising revenue (Kenny, 2012). Furthermore, Harris (2009) states that consumerism and popular culture "are entwined and produce a self-fulfilling prophesy" (p.212). This integrated reinforcement of consumerism and popular culture is also represented in the Kardashians lifestyle and TV show in that the clothing worn by the lead women (in particular, Kim Kardashian) are part of the Kardashians' fashion label and available for sale (Laylor, 2012).

In addition, the trivial pastimes of the Kardashians are ...

The high level of superficiality depicted in the show and in the lives of the Kardashians also ...

In conclusion, their lifestyle and reality TV show have made the Kardashians the epitome of popular culture. The consumerist values promoted in the design of their reality TV series, the trivial pastimes and the high level of superficiality all blend together to reinforce and perpetuate the celebration of the celebrity, which in turn shapes the norms and values of society. Discussion and analysis of examples of popular culture is vital, as it leads to a greater understanding of the influences shaping contemporary society.

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Essay question: "The Kardashians are the epitome of popular culture" (Brown, 2011, p.15). Discuss.

ESSAY STRUCTURE EXPLAINED:

Introduction	<p>Mass media and popular culture have the capacity to shape the values and norms of society. In contemporary society, the role of the celebrity is particularly pervasive. The Kardashians are an American family with their own TV show ("Keeping up with the Kardashians"). As such, they are an example of the mass media genre of "reality TV" and the celebration of the celebrity. Moreover, the Kardashians are the epitome of popular culture because their show and subsequent lifestyles reflect consumerist values, trivial pastimes and superficiality.</p>	<p>Comment [s1]: The first sentence is a broad opening statement that establishes the context. If you are struggling for ideas, sometimes using the key words from the name of the paper helps.</p>
Definition	<p>Popular culture is a debated concept. Smith (1999) suggests that popular culture constitutes values and norms that are promoted by the mass media and enjoyed by the majority of the population. Henry (2008) adds that popular culture is the mass publication and promotion of what is glitzy and superficial. Brown (2011) furthermore, argues that popular culture is by definition negative and damaging. "Popular culture sees the death of difference and in-depth thinking, and is ultimately the celebration of the trivial" (Brown, 2011, p.19).</p>	<p>Comment [s2]: This is the thesis statement (the answer to the question). The thesis statement is the argument you will be making in your essay. The Kardashians ARE the epitome of popular culture BECAUSE...</p>
Body paragraphs	<p>The consumerist values reflected in the show and lifestyles of the Kardashians illustrate how they are the epitome of popular culture. For example, the short-lived wedding on the TV show was paid for entirely by advertising revenue (Kenny, 2012). Furthermore, Harris (2009) states that consumerism and popular culture "are entwined and produce a self-fulfilling prophesy" (p.212). This integrated reinforcement of consumerism and popular culture is also represented in the Kardashians lifestyle and TV show in that the clothing worn by the lead women (in particular, Kim Kardashian) are part of the Kardashians' fashion label and available for sale (Laylor, 2012).</p>	<p>Comment [s3]: These three areas listed here will become the structure of the essay – each of these will be discussed in turn below.</p>
	<p>In addition, the trivial pastimes of the Kardashians are ...</p>	<p>Comment [s4]: This paragraph is defining the key concept of "popular culture". Use citations when defining a concept – often also a good place for a direct quote.</p>
	<p>The high level of superficiality depicted in the show and in the lives of the Kardashians also ...</p>	<p>Comment [s5]: This first sentence is the topic sentence which describes the focus, it also has clear links to the thesis statement.</p>
Conclusion	<p>In conclusion, their lifestyle and reality TV show have made the Kardashians the epitome of popular culture. The consumerist values promoted in the design of their reality TV series, the trivial pastimes and the high level of superficiality all blend together to reinforce and perpetuate the celebration of the celebrity, which in turn shapes the norms and values of society. Discussion and analysis of examples of popular culture is vital, as it leads to a greater understanding of the influences shaping contemporary society.</p>	<p>Comment [s6]: After the topic sentence, a paragraph usually provides evidence and examples.</p>
		<p>Comment [s7]: Links back to the literature here (illustrating you have read widely, and can analyse the topic with reference to the literature), before providing another example to reinforce the point of the paragraph.</p>
		<p>Comment [s8]: Topic of sentence is second area as listed in introduction.</p>
		<p>Comment [s9]: Topic sentence is third area as listed in introduction.</p>
		<p>Comment [s10]: The concluding paragraph doesn't have to start with "in conclusion", but it is a nice way to highlight to the reader that this is your final paragraph (could also be: "in summary" or "Overall").</p>
		<p>Comment [s11]: The argument (thesis statement) is repeated here.</p>
		<p>Comment [s12]: A summary of the main points is provided.</p>
		<p>Comment [s13]: The conclusion ends with a statement of significance (often a broad statement of the relevance of the topic, giving your essay that sense of completion).</p>

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