

Essay for Pop Culture: RD due in class on 3/7

Using the questions and quotations below, examine the power of pop culture as exemplified by the genre of teen films.

Use Twain's argument of "Corn-Pone Opinions"- that there are no independent or original opinions, only opinions we conform to- to analyze the genre of "Teen Movies" as discussed by Denby. Do the conventions of the genre support Twain's assertion? Is teen life defined by the "word of mouth" conventions seen in these movies? How does "Perks" fit into this discussion?

Mark Twain – "Corn –Pone Opinions" - "We know it is a matter of association and sympathy, not reasoning and examination; that hardly a man in the world has an opinion upon morals, politics, or religion which he got otherwise than through his associations and sympathies. Broadly speaking, there are none but corn-pone opinions. And broadly speaking, corn-pone stands for self-approval. Self-approval is acquired mainly from the approval of other people. The result is conformity. Sometimes conformity has a sordid business interest -- the bread-and-butter interest -- but not in most cases, I think. I think that in the majority of cases it is unconscious and not calculated; that it is born of the human being's natural yearning to stand well with his fellows and have their inspiring approval and praise -- a yearning which is commonly so strong and so insistent that it cannot be effectually resisted, and must have its way." (801)

David Denby "High School Confidential" – "Do genre films reflect reality? Or are they merely a set of conventions that refer to other films?" (820) "Genre films dramatize not what happens but how things feel – the emotional coloring of memory. They fix subjectivity into fable...humiliation is the most vivid emotion of youth, so in memory it becomes the norm." (821)