Notes on Pop Culture Perks Paper:

Denby argues that the creators of the teen genre are working off the most powerful emotional memory tied to high school experiences – humiliation. He argues that those who make the films are often remembering their high school years from the point of view of the “loser” who has now made good as film makers and thus is now a “winner” – underdog/misfit triumphant becomes the story, and every person and situation in the film exists to support that narrative.

We know that part of the power of pop culture is the power of ubiquitousness – it’s everywhere and overwhelming in its repetition of message – so much so that our expectations of any situation are colored by our perception of the situation as filtered through pop culture representations of similar events. This is similar to Twain’s ideas of “corn-pone” opinions – we get our opinions shaped by our shared consumption of pop culture (where we get our corn-pone). If we “all” share images and ideas of high school life as represented by pop culture, we will “all’ have some shared expectations of how high school works. AND , that shared expectation can actually “self-fulfill” – simply because we have it.

So – if you take the two ideas above and put them together, you could find yourself writing about how remembered experiences of high school – driven mainly by the feeling of humiliation – become “norms” of how high school works that then shape the reality of high school as we experience it.

You could apply this to such details of high school genre films and reality as

-cliques and the stereotypes generated by them

-Teen romance

- Parental or teacher influence

- drama (fear of or experience of humiliation) or anxiety

- appearance

Perks can come into the discussion by the way in which it uses many of the pop culture expectations as set ups to subvert them (slightly). There is no mean girl, for example. There are definitely cliques, but they seem to merge at times (Patrick and Brad). The football thugs are defeated in an act of bullying by a freshman – who doesn’t outsmart them, but out “fierces” them. And then you might argue that the topics in the film take it beyond what we might expect of a teen experience, because previous teen films have not prepared us for such – except Patrick’s line of “my life is an after school special” suggests differently.