



Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number		0	0						
Candidate name									
School number		0	0						
School name									
Examination session (May or November)	MAY		Year	2009					

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: ENGLISH A1
 (For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: What effect does Oprah Winfrey have on American literature and its success?

Candidate's declaration

If this declaration is not signed by the candidate the extended essay will not be assessed.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____ Date: 1/15/2009

Supervisor's report

The supervisor must complete the report below and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator. The supervisor must sign this report; otherwise the extended essay will not be assessed and may be returned to the school.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

Comments

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

Overall this essay was well presented and the required format followed. Beyond that the research and investigation seemed very thorough as well as thoughtful. The analysis was well considered and argument well developed. My one criticism is that this student may have used too much from outside her own views. I wanted more of the student's own voice. How could she know effect?

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _

Date: 1-28-09

What Effect Does Oprah Winfrey Have on American Literature and its Success?

By:

Candidate

Written for the International Baccalaureate Programme at Summit High School

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Extended Essay Word Count:

3191

Not a suitable literary topic.
RD could be answered by a set of
statistics on book sales.

Table of Contents:

A. Abstract, page 3

B. Introduction, page 4

C. Investigation, page 5

D. Conclusion, page 12

E. Works Cited, page 13



A. Abstract:

This research paper examines the effect Oprah Winfrey, the American female media mogul, has on American literature and its success in regards to sales. The paper delineates the patterns in book sales before and after a promotion by Winfrey and her famous Oprah Winfrey Book Club, bolstering the idea that Oprah has a positive influence on the sale of her designated novels. The majority of sources referenced in this paper come from articles relating directly to Winfrey and her involvement with literature, books regarding the influence of Winfrey as an overall icon, and research figures examining the affect of Winfrey and book sales. The indisputable pattern that can be drawn from all three types of sources is that Oprah Winfrey's promotion of any piece of literature will lead to success for the author. Oprah Winfrey is a huge influence in the literary industry, helping to bolster sales and increase the popularity of the authors she deems worthy of her list.



B. Introduction

Oprah Winfrey is by far one of the most influential people in the twenty-first century. ^{in America.} Raised in extremely destitute socioeconomic conditions, Winfrey had neither the chances nor the support to become anything great in life. Raped as a young girl by an uncle, and suffering from constant displacement from relative to relative, Winfrey's life was turbulent to say the very least (Garson xiii). However, through her hard work and determination, Oprah Winfrey elevated herself to be one of the most powerful members of society in this era. Starting out from humble beginnings as a radio host in Nashville, Tennessee during the 1970s (Garson xiii), Winfrey has grown into one of the largest media moguls in the world. Entertaining people for over forty years, having a top rated show for over twenty-one seasons, selling more than one magazine in more than ten countries, and starring in several motion pictures, Winfrey's success is clearly evident. Moreover, because of receiving numerous rewards for her work, Winfrey is now considered one of the world's finest philanthropists. By establishing a young women's school in South Africa, giving away thousands of dollars in charity, and helping American's find the path to self-improvement and happiness, Winfrey rakes in love from millions of her constituents on a daily basis. ^{ww} Because of this love and influence in many different spheres, Winfrey is held in the highest regards in one specific area: literature.

An educated woman who appeals to other women, whether educated or not, Winfrey stresses literature as an imperative component to life, happiness, and success. Therefore, when Winfrey suggests a book to the masses, the book sells at astronomical levels. The Oprah Winfrey Book Club shimmers as a jewel in the publishing industry because of the influence it holds over individuals. Millions of books have been sold when holding the honor of being a member of The Winfrey Book Club, and the highly selective list of less than one hundred books

✓ ✓

are not only best sellers in America, but around the globe. As Professor Cecilia Konchar Farr of The State University of New York writes in reflection about the amount of reading taking place recently: “[A] public space that had been increasingly abandoned in the last century but one that ambitious Americans once lit out for with book in their knapsacks,” Winfrey has helped ignite the desire in American citizens to read (Reading Winfrey: How Winfrey's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads 51). And it is because of this, that we must get “literal,” and discuss more in depth Oprah Winfrey and her affect on American Literature and its success.

C. Investigation

Oprah Winfrey has a multifarious agglomeration of accomplishments when it comes to the area of literature. First in that list comes the famous Winfrey Book Club. Established in 1996 by Winfrey on her Oprah Winfrey Show, based in Chicago, the club ran productively until 2002, when Winfrey chose to end its fruitful run. In this six-year period, Oprah Winfrey changed the paperback and hardback sales rate for many authors. As Konchar Farr points out in her book, Reading Winfrey: How Winfrey's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads, Winfrey’s club significantly changes the number of books sold by that author. Most books on the famous list have sold at least five hundred thousand copies, in both hardback and paperback. Toni Morrison’s Paradise, after being added to Winfrey’s prestigious list, sold 804,862 of hardcover only in 1998 (Farr appendix A). Moreover, Farr cites this was in a year when only her hardcover book was available, proving just how much power Winfrey yields, since followers were willing to buy a more expensive book. Sales have only climbed since, and Morrison holds another accomplishment because of Winfrey’s help: her eighteen-week running as a New York Time Bestseller.



Another example of success because of the Winfrey Book Club according to Konchar Farr is Barbara Kingsolver's The Poisonwood Bible. Before being added to the Winfrey book club, The Poisonwood Bible sold in 1998 approximately 300,000 copies in paperback (Farr appendix A). After being added to The Winfrey Book Club in late June, Kingsolver's book sold 1,759,929 copies in paperback. This is not including the hardback cover sales, which also increased by more than two-fold. Therefore, drastic affects the club can have on any book can be seen by the two previous examples. The Professor of English puts it quite simply in her data: Winfrey sells, and she sells phenomenally (Farr 3). Moreover than that, authors and publishers adore Winfrey for her input on the industry. Ever since reinstating her book club at a much smaller scale in 2003, Winfrey has still wielded influence over authors and demanded love from many a publishing company. An incident as recalled by David Mehegan in the Boston Globe on April 23, 2005, describes the relationship between Winfrey and her literary friends. As of 2005, the United States publishing industry was on a downward slope, and sales were not meeting expectations, causing both publishers and authors to suffer, and moreover, the industry stopped employing, and publishing levels decreased to their lowest levels since The Great Depression (Mehegan Seeing Book Sales Drop, Authors Make a Plea to Winfrey). The Globe reports that therefore, a group of one hundred writers actually went to Winfrey and asked her to renew the famous book club to what it once was, pleading with her to add more books to her list so that the descending trend would not continue. Mehegan describes the new club as a much less rigorous and more laid-back group, so the authors asked Winfrey once again to place more passion into the club, making modern writers members of the prestigious list of books. However, Winfrey's response though was, "There are no plans to change the focus of the book club selections at this time" (Mehegan Seeing Book Sales Drop, Authors Make a Plea to Winfrey). Nevertheless, the

✓
and
surprising

97
source

✓

✓

begging group did not stop, and still implore Winfrey to reinstate the Book Club to its grandiose former self. This plea by the workers in the literary industry shows the influence Winfrey wields over the American people, since such esteemed people are willing to beg at the feet of Oprah Winfrey in order to make their livings.

In addition, Winfrey is close friends with many people in the literary business. According to Professor Kevin Young of The University of Mississippi in his book, Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth Century African American Literature, “No doubt it is tempting to conclude that Morrison simply sells herself out by appearing on the *Winfrey*, [...] but that would be absurd” (120). What Young is specifically addressing are the presumptuous ideas that authors only appear on the Oprah Winfrey show in order to promote their books. Young states this idea is false and emphatically agrees with the idea that authors do maintain their integrity. In relationship to the Morrison and Winfrey friendship, Professor Young strongly supports the idea that the two can be friends and work together: in other words, business does not have to mix with pleasure. Still, the camaraderie that the two women share only goes to show Winfrey’s pull with people in the literary industry, since she not only befriends them but also controls them (Young 120). *How?*

However, the largest question is still, how does Winfrey seize the hearts of her viewers? The answer can be simply answered with the now common phrase, The Oprah Effect. According to the book, Career Strategies for Women in Academe, the Oprah Effect is not actually just applicable to just Winfrey. The Oprah Effect, as defined by the book occurs when, “society welcomes and rewards hardworking and talented minority women” (Collins 26). This quotation, by definition, sounds as if it was a pity receiving, but the authors of the book go on to further develop the idea, saying that the reception is entirely free of pity (Collins 28). More



clearly, the point Collins, Chrisler, and Quina are trying to get across is that the triumph of Winfrey comes because her readers are pushing ^{what?} for such. The desire of society to be balanced and more racially and gender accepting propels them to support such women as Oprah Winfrey. Moreover, The Winfrey Effect expands into more areas than just Winfrey herself does: The Winfrey Effect can actually characterize some of the authors included in The Winfrey Book Club. Winfrey, being an equal opportunities employer and supporter, often chooses books for her readers that are written by authors from different perspectives. Having all authors ranging from Asians, Hispanics, and Europeans, Winfrey utilizes the fact that people from different cultures can write meaningful and beautiful literature, expanding the American repertoire. Moreover, Winfrey also suggests books from drug addicts, homosexuals, and transgender people, making another aspect of her book club more complex. She has, in just the literary sense, become more than just a person who likes books: Winfrey now fights for such causes as understanding and diversity, making the American culture richer and more complex. The young woman who had to overcome so many struggles now can fight with her own two fists in order bring up issues her constituency are interested in, making the public love her.

So
fight?

Winfrey's influence on American literature can be seen specifically in the Book Club Work Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison, which is a classic piece of American literature. The haunting tale of a son who faces constant rejection parallels Winfrey and her childhood years, so it is no wonder that Winfrey selected this book for her readers. In fact, this novel was picked to be one of Winfrey's first choices for her selective book club. Morrison, an already fairly established author, had enough experience under her belt to write a novel that was applicable to people's search for themselves, making the book an already successful one. However, it is only with the help of Winfrey that Morrison's popularity and sales were able to reach the acme that



they did. Since the book was added to the Winfrey Book Club before it was officially published, there are no statistics to back up how much Winfrey increased the sales of Song of Solomon. Still, there is sufficient evidence to support that Winfrey greatly bolstered the success of Morrison, since her book Song of Solomon spent sixteen weeks on the New York Times's paperbacks bestsellers list. With four books in the selective club and over sixty-five weeks on the New York Times bestsellers list, it is quite evident that Toni Morrison has the talent to succeed. However, if it is the boost from Winfrey that helped make her so successful, so quickly; then the readers still play a part in the accomplishment. According to the previously cited article from The Boston Globe, Winfrey and her authors can only be successful so long as people buy the books. The upside of this idea, as stated by Mehegan, is that people will follow Winfrey wherever she takes them. People like to be told what to do, especially if it benefits them. According to TIME Magazine, "In a nation where reading serious fiction is always in danger of becoming a specialized pursuit, something like playing the dulcimer, Winfrey's Book Club, with her 26 million U.S. viewers a week, has made reading nearly as popular as professional wrestling," (Lacayo 38). This sensation of Winfrey has grown to be so powerful, that people will just do what she says without even thinking (Lacayo 3). Ironically, it is the point of the Winfrey Book Club to get people to think, not just accept things. Nevertheless, if Winfrey and her readers are willing to play that game, then the game is played extremely well, with all sides being pleased. In this last argument, the parts of the literary accomplishments of Winfrey can be seen. The full culmination of The Winfrey Effect, a good writer, and an eager audience allow for the success of any novel she deems to be hers.

Still, the primary reason The Winfrey Effect and The Oprah Winfrey Book Club are moguls in their areas is the fact that Winfrey brings excitement to the mundane life of the viewer.



*in form of
sales - there
are other kinds
of success*

*what
game?*

As discussed by Hilary Hylton of TIME Magazine in July of 2007, James Frey's work, A Million Little Pieces, was not only highly fabricated, but also a member of The Oprah Winfrey Book Club. The scandal emerged when The Smoking Gun published a brief article questioning Frey's book, citing that no evidence for the happenings in the book existed. Hylton says after this occurrence, Random House Publishers was forced to investigate the situation, finding the story completely fabricated. Since A Million Little Pieces was publicized as a book for the family, friends, and victims of substance abuses of all kinds, the outrage that followed was astronomical. Random House Publishers filled a complaint against Frey, who had to offer refunds to all readers that purchased the book, and lost money in the whole affair. Because of Winfrey's close connection with the publishing company and her viewer's indignation, she invited Frey back onto her show to question him. Hylton says the incident that followed caused Winfrey to become outright furious, causing her to say she felt, "really duped" and completely betrayed (Winfrey vs. James Frey: The Sequel 45). However, Nan Talese, the publisher who got Frey his book, was sitting right next to Winfrey as she said all these things, and Talese refused to back down from her adamant stance. As Hylton writes:

At a literary convention in Texas last weekend, after a speech by novelist Joyce Carol Oates on the nature of truth in memoirs, Talese took the opportunity to go after the queen of television. In an earlier discussion at the convention, Talese had already called Winfrey's slap down of Frey on television "mean and self-serving" and described it as an ambush. At the Oates event, she was even more outspoken, and her remarks were captured by C-SPAN cameras. The show may air as early as this weekend. Talese had apparently come to the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Writers Conference of the Southwest in Grapevine, Texas, ready to



rumble. In an afternoon discussion on Saturday, Talese brought up the issue of Frey's memoir. Saying she was unapologetic about publishing the book, Talese said in her genteel, mid-Atlantic accent that it was Winfrey who needed to apologize for her behavior in the affair. Talese argued that Frey, in the gripping manuscript he submitted, had described himself as a liar, a cheater and an addict, and under those circumstances she did not believe she was reading "the New Testament," where every word was avowed truth. She described Winfrey as exhibiting "fiercely bad manners" Talese's comments produced a buzz in the audience, made up of budding writers and journalists as well as successful authors and national magazine writers who are drawn to the annual conference as speakers or participants. But her afternoon comments proved to be just the opening salvo before a much bigger blast later in the day (48).

Talese went on to publicly call out Winfrey, saying that her invitation to the show was a proposition that sounded as if it was a positive one, not an attack session against Frey. Hylton even writes that the next day, Talese went so far as to approach The Dallas Morning News and say that Winfrey had attacked her. The scandal that started out on the most basic level had evolved into a full-fledged war. After many talks, all sides received forgiveness, and The Oprah Winfrey Book Club returned to its peaceful state. However, for that short period of time, audiences at home were on the edge of their seats, waiting for the next response of either side. Sales of Frey's book event increased on such websites that still offered it, in spite of the invalidity of the tale. Viewers had real life suspenseful action readily available, making The Oprah Winfrey Book Club what it really is: exciting. As long as Winfrey can continue with this

~~_____~~
Is that the purpose?

✓

kind of stamina and exhilaration, audiences will be captivated around the world and her success will only blossom at an exponential rate.

Finally, the success of Winfrey's Book Club will continue. So long as Winfrey does not develop a great rift with her audience, The Oprah Winfrey Book Club will reign supreme until she ends it once again. As said by the book The 1990s, by Marc Oxby, generation x has been highly influenced by the media mogul (Oxby 79). In a generation that continues to grow and mature, eventually this group of individuals will reproduce. And when the generation does, they will not only pass down their genetic makeup, but also their passions and hobbies. Since Winfrey has unquestionably made reading enjoyable for such a large group, her influence will continue over into the future.

D. Conclusion

Oprah Winfrey has visibly had a large impact on American Literature and its success. Through her book club, the impact that Winfrey has had on previous and future generations is unmistakable. Winfrey, from humble beginning, has come to shape the literary industry, as we know it. Americans now read Winfrey Books, putting literature into an entirely different category, and a highly successful one. Oprah Winfrey will live on eternally through her work, especially in the literary field.

No discussion of any literary qualities of any of these books provided by Winfrey. Answer to RQ is well-known as a set of statistics would be enough. No attempt to analyse type of books chosen or why Winfrey has such a powerful effect.

Yes - not a literary essay at all. Though it demonstrates how inappropriate essays can still achieve marks for doing the mechanical things (abstract, presentation) correctly

E. Works Cited

Works Cited

Collins, Lynn H., Joan C. Chrisler, and Kathryn Quina. Career Strategies for Women in Academe. 3rd ed. New York: Sage Publications Inc, 1998.

Farr, Cecilia Konchar. Reading Winfrey: How Winfrey's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads. New York: SUNY Press, 2004.

Garson, Helen S.. Oprah Winfrey; A Biography. Greenwood NY: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004.

Hylton, Hilary. "Winfrey vs. James Frey: The Sequel." TIME Magazine 30 July 2007: 43-49.

Lacayo, Richard. "Winfrey Turns the Page." TIME Magazine 15 Apr 2002: 38-40.

Mehegan, David. "Seeing Book Sales Drop, Authors Make a Plea to Winfrey." The Boston Globe April 23(2005):

Oxoby, Marc. The 1990s. 1st ed. Westport CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003.

Young, John Kevin. Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth Century African American Literature. 1st ed. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006.

Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number	0	0							
--------------------------	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Assessment criteria		Achievement level	
		First examiner	Second examiner
A	research question	0	2
B	introduction	1	2
C	investigation	0	4
D	knowledge and understanding	0	4
E	reasoned argument	1	4
F	analysis and evaluation	0	4
G	use of subject language	2	4
H	conclusion	1	2
I	formal presentation	4	4
J	abstract	2	2
K	holistic judgment	0	4
Total out of 36		11	10

Name of first examiner:
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _

Name of second examiner:
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _