

Closer Examination of Arguments Audience Analysis

What do you see here that looks good? What do you see here that you feel is missing or could be better?

SAMPLE 1

Thesis:

Authored by Alan Moore and illustrated by Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* is—for a mature audience—a worthwhile read due to the persistent relevance of the themes, motifs, and perspectives it explores.

Argument:

One of the first things that stands out is Moore's portrayal of the media and its effects on the common populace. He uses a news vendor, Bernard, to display just how much of an impact the news has on public opinion. Since he comes into contact with massive amounts of media daily, he regards himself as well-informed and thereby validates his viewpoints. At his introduction, Bernard, with supreme confidence in his "informed" opinion, insists that America should simply deal with the Russians by means of nuclear warfare. He feels that "[America should] nuke [the Russians] 'til they glow!" (Moore 74). Later in that same chapter, at the behest of articles released the following day detailing Dr. Manhattan's exile and Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, he completely reneges his previous views and the superiority with which he put them forth is replaced with fear and a certain sense of benevolence is born from it: when he previously scolded his young companion about not paying for a comic that he was perusing he decides instead to let his young friend take the comic home free of charge. This shows not only that Bernard's convictions were weaker than expected but also that the media plays a significant role in the opinion and outlook of the general public. This situation mirrors the sentiment expressed by renowned mass communications expert Max McCombs, who asserts that though the news media may not necessarily be successful at telling their audiences what to think, "...they are stunningly successful in telling their audiences what to think about" (McCombs 2). Initially Bernard, given the knowledge that America held an advantageous position in their relationship with Russia, adopts a very aggressive stand on the issue, but when it is brought to his attention that the Russians are no longer in a position to sit back and be dominated, he forms a

new, much bleaker viewpoint. This illustrates that the media's influence on people is unimaginable and most fail to even realize this.

Interestingly, Bernard also points out that his sales go up in direct proportion to the number of disasters that occur (Moore 73). This implies that the media has a motive to promote catastrophe that preys upon people's fear, a sentiment echoed in the real world as well. According to a principle first defined by scholar Herbert Simon, the result of an abundance of information is the scarcity of attention (Boyd). Outrageous headlines garner the attention of the masses, and the media thrives on the sheer amount of attention it receives. It then follows that news publishers across the board will actively sensationalize their headlines, highlighting tragedies and crises to do so. This fear-mongering, while effective, paints an atmosphere of panic and unease that is incongruent with reality. Because of the information and topics they are constantly bombarded with, people perceive the world as more dangerous than it actually is and, as a result, they often respond with behavior that is irrational and ultimately damaging to a healthy society. Moore illustrates the dangers of consistently grim headlines by having a man murder his children "to save them" from the looming war incessantly teased by media outlets. Not only does the incident ironically become another tragic headline but it is implied that many more such incidents are likely to occur as well (Moore 146-56). Through Bernard's aside, Moore slyly reveals and critiques the methodology of the media.

Watchmen also provides commentary on scientific advancement and the woes that may come with it. Through the character of Dr. Manhattan, Moore presents the audience with the possibilities and potential drawbacks of man's never-ending pursuit of innovation. The miraculous result of a science experiment gone terribly wrong, Dr. Manhattan is a being that has gained a certain level of mastery over time, matter, and space (Moore). This means that in a story full of masked adventures, Dr. Manhattan is the only one that actually possesses spectacular, supernatural abilities, which makes his character that much more significant in-story. Moore draws an obvious parallel between the atomic bomb and Dr. Manhattan in that they are both products of scientific understanding employed to devastate America's enemies into submission. In the real-world America unleashed destruction on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the form of the atomic bomb in an attempt to force the enemy nation out of World War II. This event is implied to take place in Moore's world as well,

but he takes it a step further by having the awe-inspiring Dr. Manhattan help secure an American victory in the Vietnam War in a matter of days (a victory that was *not* achieved in reality). Dr. Manhattan goes on to serve as a deterrent for Moore's rendition of the Cold War, with America having an edge in the struggle all the while she has access to Dr. Manhattan's might. It is not until Dr. Manhattan leaves due to a self-imposed exile that the Russians are emboldened enough to make a defiant move. Moore clearly illustrates that the power that can muster and weaponize scientific knowledge will have a decisive advantage over its opponents.

SAMPLE 2

Thesis:

Saga, by Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples relates the story of the parents Alana and Marko who despite their terrible circumstances do all they can to be good parents in how they seek to protect, care for, and love their child even though the circumstances in which they raise Hazel.

Argument:

Throughout the time that Alana and Marko are trying to escape being killed by their enemies, they still demonstrate that they are good parents. Despite the dangers they face, both parents show that they have their child's best interest in mind, they think about their child's future, they try to protect her and they show that they deeply love her. An example of Alana and Marko showing good parenting skills was when they Hazel was first born and Marko chose to use his teeth to cut the umbilical cord instead of his sword. He used his teeth because he said that he would not take his sword out of the scabbard again because he was now a parent, and "10 Good Parenting Tips" says "A good parent strives to make decisions in the best interest of the child" ("10 Good Parenting Tips"). He is keeping child away from his warrior's past and the blood that was shed when he was involved with and probably started in some events. Biting the baby's cord may seem to be a barbaric act, but it also showed that Marko was trying to be gentle around his child by not use his sword against her in anyway because he was thinking about her well-being and future as the past, he was leaving to be a great parent to her.

A second example of Alana and Marko showing good parenting was when they discussed what to name their new baby girl after they took their first look at her. They were deliberate about her name representing who and what type of person they wanted her to become and see her grow up to become. They already knew that Hazel's future and current life style set alongside with their past; she would not have a "normal" or boring life. The choice of her name was a declaration of her being and an expression of what kind of future they wanted for her. This ties in to the article, "6 A's of Good Parenting," when the author states that "When we affirm a child's feelings, it gives them a sense of authenticity" ("Home"). So, by choosing a name other than "Pico", which has a negative name to Marko or "Beatrice," which Alana thought was too "girly," the parents tried to give their new baby a sense of her authenticity by naming her Hazel.

Then Alana and Marko showed good parenting when it came the time with that the ghost, Izabel, a stranger to the two, offered to care for their child. Alana was skeptical of Izabel because she did not know who she was or what her intent really was. The hesitation that Alana had of letting a stranger help her child showed the protectiveness that a good parent demonstrates for a child. Barrie Gillis in the article "50 Ways to Be a Fantastic Parent," advises parents to "Trust your mommy gut" ("Pregnancy, Birth, Babies, Parenting"). In other words, trust your gut when it comes to your child, the author encourages parents to follow their instincts when it comes to their child's health and well-being. However, this same article encourages some other behavior which Alana finally demonstrates when she remembers her mother's advice to "ask for help when you need it." He also says to "Give Yourself a Break." Parents are not "perfect" and cannot expect to do everything to raise a child without help from time-to-time. Alana acknowledges that a good parent knows when to ask for help, and she eventually does this by allowing Izabel to help her care for the child.

In *Saga*, Alana and Marko are concerned about their daughter Hazel's future. In addition to working hard to keep her safe while they are on the run, they also begin to think about more than survival. They begin to think about what they want their daughter's future to be. This includes their desire to move and make a home in a place where their child will meet the

smartest person in the universe. Although most parents want their child to do well, be productive, be responsible and able to take care of him or herself, often parents are spending most of their time just trying to survive (“Parenting For Brain”). However, the author of this article encourages parents to spend time thinking about how to reach these goals for their children, but good parents spend time thinking about how to help their child to thrive, which is what Alana and Marko were doing when they decided to focus on where they wanted to live in order to provide their daughter with great opportunities and life.