Name

Professor name

Class

Date

Review of Four Books

1. The book *Dead until Dark* written by Charlaine Harris has a few themes in it. One of the themes is humor. The author incorporates a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor despite the thrill and escapades this book has. One example of humor is the heated dispute with Bill. He took a tumble and Sookie responded by saying, “This was pretty exotic stuff for a telepathic barmaid from northern Louisiana” (Harris). This was a funny line because Sookie is considered an exotic barmaid herself: a telepathic barmaid from Louisiana who hangs out with vampires, werewolves, and other creatures. Her role in this novel is to provide a sly sense of humor, but she is also very appealing because she is also a survivor. Another time Sookie offers comedic relief is with the line “woo woo, secret vampire stuff!” (Harris). There are plenty of moments in this novel where the humor comes from the vampires, making a mockery of themselves. It is nice for the readers to see a different side of vampires instead of the stereotypical one. This book is not a comedy, the humor is not overpowering but instead, it is subtle and delivered in a clever way. It is not a childish humor either, but rather a more mature one that is more appealing to adults. What the author, Charlaine Harris, has done with his novel is something that has not been done before: writing a humorous vampire story that is set in the South. Harris does a great job at portraying the vampires to be beings who are scary and powerful, and he incorporates it into the humorous moments. Instead of having moments where the vampires are only scary and taking themselves too seriously, Harris has allowed them to step back and be likable. One of these moments can be seen in this dialogue between Sookie and Eric: “I snuck a look to see how Eric was taking this, and he was staring at me the same way the Monroe vampires had. Thoughtful. Hungry. 'That's interesting. … I had a psychic once. It was incredible. 'Did the psychic think so?” (Harris). The author does an excellent job of mixing humor into the world of vampires in a way that has not been done before. He uses characters like Sookie and Eric to provide that humorous aspect through their dialogues. Sookie and Eric are two characters that do not take the vampire world as seriously as others and are constantly poking fun at the characteristics of being lethal and keeping their actions secret. The humor is very tongue-in-cheek and geared more towards adults instead of children. It appears that the role of the humor is to deflate the overly serious aspects that vampires seem to have or the too serious feelings that they have about themselves.
2. The novel *Guilty Pleasures* written by Laurell K. Hamilton has themes of violence and sexuality and oftentimes these themes intertwine with each other. In this book, there are characters called “Rat-men” who are portrayed as being gross and involved with the rape culture. There were a few moments in the novel that can make the reader cringe when they are mentioned, such as the moment when Mister Nikky asked them to provide entertainment to Anita when she was waiting. It just made one hope they would not do anything sexually inappropriate to her. Unfortunately, rape gets covered in supernatural novels with little pushback: often, the heroines in the novel get threatened with rape and other horrible things to threaten them to do the right thing. One example of sexuality with the Rat-men is with the lines “he rubbed claws through the fur of his thighs. It drew my attention to him, between his legs” (Hamilton). What happens next shows how the theme of sexuality and violence go hand-in-hand with one another in this novel. As the rat-man climbs on top of Anita, she kicks him in the chest, which makes him fall to the ground. Once he is on the floor, Anita continues to kick him in the chest. The rat-man retaliates because Anita did not accept his sexual advances and calls on rats who come and viciously attack her by biting. Anita begins screaming at the rat-man saying that he must be afraid of humans who cannot do much back to him, “you stink of fear, human. Blood and fear, smells like dinner to me” (Hamilton). Anita goes to the hospital in fear that she too will turn into a rat. At the hospital, there are a few lines that add to the theme of sexuality and violence. The first line is upon entering the hospital: she is asked if she has ever been “had” by a were. Getting “had” is a sexual reference. She responds by saying that she is not sure if the person meant food or sex but took it as a sexual reference and told her story about what just occurred. Anita shared details, such as the line where she tells how rat-man treated her, “he stiffened, hand sliding down his body, claws combing fur. We’ll see who has what human” (Hamilton). Anita then shares a line where it reveals that with the sexual theme there is also an explicit mention of rape with the lines "“Is this the only way you get any sex, forcing yourself on someone? Are you as ugly in human form as you are right now?” (Hamilton). It is jarring that the people and vampires she encounters in the novel view her as unafraid when all the lines mentioned show that she was indeed afraid. It is as if they are shocked that Anita did not just lie down and take the sexual attack.
3. The movie *Blade* is based on a comic-book written by Marv Wolfman. The movie is based around vampires who have electrifying mixed martial arts sequences, but there is also a deeper meaning in the film. The deeper meaning is how the movie attacks the issues of race in Modern America. This starts with the character Deacon Frost who is Blade’s villain. Frost does not fit in with the Secret Boys Club and is envious of the way Blade fits in. Frost believes that the reason he is not allowed into the Club is because he is a victim of race and there is a hierarchy that will not accept him because of that. Frost is not considered a “pure blood” vampire, which is a vampire from birth, but rather he was turned into one. The hierarchy of vampires use this fact to demean Frost and keep him out of distance. He can act as a vampire but he will never be considered one of the elites. The way Frost tries to fix the way he is treated is by reviving a blood god called “La Magra” from the dead. Frost believes that La Magra will get rid of any held differences between “impure” or “pure blood” vampires. Frost hopes that La Magra will make a ruling of “all will serve” as equals. Frost wants La Magra to be the one to erase all race barriers. Another example of racial identity with the vampires is Blade himself. Blade is a mixture of half-vampire and half-man who is also African-American. Blade does not accept his vampire heritage and takes drugs to hide his cravings for blood. Blade’s racial identity comes to an end at the ending of the film where he realizes that he cannot identify as part of the human race because of his vampire tendencies. He still does not like being a vampire but does not want to lose his superpowers so he settles for being an outsider of both worlds. It is interesting that Blade does not accept who he is because neither the vampire nor human race accepts him either. The human race views him as an overall lawbreaker and the vampire race views him as an enemy and aims to destroy him. Frost and Blade have a lot in common. Both are not “pure blood” vampires and are shunned because of it. They are both on a quest for racial identity, however, they do not get along. Frost is disappointed that Blade does not do enough to protect humans. When they see each other face-to-face, Frost always calls out Blade’s excuses which he can see easily since they are so much alike. *Blade* is a movie that has a lot of racial subtext

that can often get looked over due to the thrills of the action sequences.

1. Justin Cronin’s novel *The Passage* takes place in a primarily post-apocalyptic vampire world. This setting is very successful because it ties in closely with the plot. The plot of the book is about following a young girl named Amy as she tries to save the world from a apocalypsis and the subsequent post-apocalyptic outbreak of vampires. The world becomes taken over by vampires who are infected with a contagious virus. The virus began as a project that was developed as an immunity-boosting drug that was influenced by a virus that swept the bat species in South America. This virus eventually became the virus that has taken over the world. The novel is easy to comprehend because it takes place in 2016 and carries the reader through a span of ninety years. The novel depicts how human colonies try to live on the planet among superhuman creatures like vampires who are constantly trying to get their blood. Amy spends time learning about these vampires and figuring out ways they can be defeated. By the end of the book Amy has gained and spread enough information to the point where humans are ready to go to war with vampires and have a good chance of winning. The characters in this novel are the ones that make the apocalyptic setting come alive. The characters are heroic despite their typical human flaws and failings. These humans are the ones that explore the small communities that get created once the world has ended. They are the ones that tell the story and describe what an apocalyptic world would be like. It is interesting what the author has done with conveying an apocalyptic world: he uses the setting to guide the characters as they come of age. It adds to the vampire element. There is nothing scary about vampires roaming around in a perfect world causing trouble; however, in this novel, the apocalyptic world that is infected with a virus adds to the thriller. This story displays how humans can overcome even the worst of circumstances. Humans in an apocalyptic world find themselves with uncommon things to deal with. *The Passage* does a great job at showing how humanity can overcome even the worst hurdles. In *The Passage*,the characters overcome a massive feeling of overwhelming and constant danger. The humans in this novel need to protect their families, and on this journey, they create new relationships that can bond humanity even closer and give the humans more of a sense of family or kin. The world as they know it is completely lost and gone and the humans need to deal with it the best they can. Most of life they know is lost but not completely, and throughout the novel, there is a theme of “a lot is gone but what is left is worth saving.”

Works Cited

Hamilton, Laurell K. *Guilty pleasures*. New York, NY: Marvel Publishing, 2006. Print.

Harris, Charlaine. *Dead Until Dark*. London: Orbit, 2004. Print.