FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Culture

Profiles of Popular Culture: A Reader
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Popular culture—fact or fiction, highbrow or lowbrow—imprints indelible images in the minds and psyches of most individuals about life, society and, equally important, themselves. In many respects, popular culture defines a society and its people: its likes and dislikes, its desires and fears, as well as its aspirations.

Popular culture also enables individuals to gauge, communicate, and make sense of the world. “It is the way of life we inherit, practice, change, and then pass on to our descendants,” writes the author, professor emeritus at Bowling Green State University, who founded the *Journal of Popular Culture* and worked to make popular culture a subject of serious inquiry. Here, he presents a collection of articles on the many facets of popular culture. The subject matter of the individual articles ranges from insights on myths and heroes, to understanding Mickey Mouse as a symbol of a generation, to the pageantry and ritual associated with football. Most of the articles are just a few pages long and conclude with Browne’s suggestions for further study.

The myths, fairytales, and heroes of childhood were never merely stories, the book demonstrates, but were imbued with the values, beliefs, and cautionary tales that elders wanted to pass on to the next generation. For example, one article in the book explores the legendary adventures of *Pinocchio*. Unlike the sanitized Disney version of author Carlo Lorenzini’s serial about a wooden puppet who wants to be a human boy, the original *Pinocchio* was a far darker tale about poverty, prejudice, the longing for acceptance, and ultimately, conformity.

The book is geared to scholarly readers who have an interest in an analytical approach to and exploration of popular culture. The suggested questions at the end of most chapters will be extremely useful for instructors and students alike who want to conduct a more in-depth examination of a given topic. Generally, the articles are well-written and the construction of the book allows the reader to skim through the sections that may not be of particular interest.

Whether one bemoans the culture of celebrity promoted in media or absent-mindedly hums the latest commercial jingle on the way to work, it is undeniable that popular culture replicates the society that humankind has created. Browne and this group of writers have made a significant contribution to the growing and complex field of popular culture by holding up a mirror and reflecting back the strengths, dreams and foibles of modern-day society.