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## Essay 2 Prompt

### General Question:

Write a paper exploring the way popular culture perpetuates a specific cultural stereotype (negative or positive) that has personally affected you and explore the effects of that stereotype on your experiences. You could write about a stereotype that has impacted the way that people perceive and treat/ed you. You could write about a stereotype that you hold or once held and how it affected the way you see and treat/ed others. You could write about a stereotype that someone around you (at work, school, home) holds and how it affects those aspects of your life. As always, you should support your essay with specific examples from your own life.

First, you will analyze a piece of popular culture and show the ways that it depicts, embodies, or creates that stereotype much like we have been doing in class. Remember that a stereotype is a *widely held* image that is fixed and allows for little individuality among a group's members.

You can focus on any aspect of popular culture you like. Remember we said that popular culture is quite broad and exists in the *mainstream*. We listed television, movies, music, magazines, and the internet as common mediums through which popular culture is transmitted (though this is certainly not a comprehensive list). There are so many possibilities of material to analyze, but here are some general ideas:

- You could write about a contemporary TV show, book, music album, magazines, or movie (all must be post-2000). However, you could also choose to focus on one character within that show/movie/book or one particular pop-artist or author. If it is a movie or a long-running TV show, you could pick one story arch to examine. If you were interested in talking about the effects of a *genre* (say, sci-fi), you should pick a few examples within that genre in order to analyze the elements of it in a concrete, specific fashion.
- You could write about something you find on the internet such as: a website, online video series, a blog or vlog. (Netflix, Hulu, or TV providers whose content is streamed online don't count as a website. However, you could write about a TV show or a movie that you can watch on Netflix.) Make sure to pick something with enough complexity and enough of an internet "life" to make it a deep enough subject to write about. Many times, what we find on the internet is evidence of or are manifestations of larger cultural attitudes and stereotypes, either confirming them or perpetuating them. And many times, the reason a piece of internet popular culture exists or functions is largely due to the fact that it relies on the audience recognizing and understanding a pervasive stereotype.
- You could also pick something else such as fashion or popular art.

After your analysis of the piece of popular culture, you need to trace the societal effects of the stereotype on your life. Some things to consider:

- What sort of misconceptions does the stereotype perpetuate?
- How does it affect the lives of those it stereotypes?

- How has the stereotype shaped peoples' experiences or shaped how they imagine themselves (their identity) and their place in our society?
- How has the stereotype affected the way people are treated by others on a large or small scale (i.e. governmental policy to school room bullying)?
- You can examine groups that have sprung up in response to the stereotypes (groups invested in either perpetuating the stereotype or combating it)?
- You can explore how people have tried to subvert or change the stereotype (though remember, you aren't trying to argue that a stereotype is wrong—that's inherent in the very definition of "stereotype").

Remember, it's your job to analyze your chosen stereotype within a piece of popular culture, to show how the stereotype exists. Then it's your job to trace the effects of that stereotype on your life and experiences.

Length: 650-750 words (include word count at end of paper). This paper will be checked for plagiarism through SafeAssignment, so it's imperative that you cite your sources correctly—*especially* if you draw from anything outside of the reading assigned for this course.



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