
'The book has no place in modern society.' Discuss.

Introduction

In the past, sewn and binded books were valuable documents of human consciousness. Physical books vividly detailed the human experience that could be conveyed to generations past and present. Over the past millennium, the emergence of digital media has threatened the very existence and reading experience of books. As such debates arise regarding its relevance in modern society. Modernists assert that books hold no place in modern society due to the rigours and demands of a utilitarian modern society. Coupled with the convenience, dynamism and popularity of new media and e-books, physical books would hold absolutely no value. However, conservatives would caution against such an extremist worldview. They argue that physical books are an incomparable, unique experience whilst the process of reading does bring about practical benefits too. In view of such contrasting beliefs, it is important to delve into this issue from a multi-dimensional perspective before arriving at a nuanced and balanced conclusion.

Main Body

The book has no place in modern society due to the multifaceted and dynamic nature of media forms which outdo the passive medium of physical books. For time immemorial, the hard bound books serve as repositories of information and keepsakes of knowledge. Yet, much of the time such information is static, rigid and one-dimensional. It is often presented in written language and occasionally the visual form. In comparison, new media offers much more diversity, dynamism and flexibility, information could be repackaged into different mediums such as film and video games that fully utilises, captivates and caters to the varied human senses. Thus, it is no wonder that the adaptation of novels goes on to break previous boundaries and popularity.

However, it can be argued that books hold a place in modern society as it generates an incomparable personal experience that triumphs every other media form in modern society. When one views books as static resources of the written word, they do not consider the subject-object relationship of the book and the reader. More often than not, one would say that they are “in their own world” while reading. It means that one visualises, imagines and constructs their perceived reality of the written word at their own pace and time. This is incredibly valuable and important when considering the directive nature of other medium forms. One is guided to think, see and perceive the way the director wants you to. Even the flow of the movie

is not something you are in proper control of and you would have to pause to notice the small details and cues. For example, the cinematic takes of films create a particular point of view that the directors intend you to see and feel. Therefore, with proper consideration of the incredibly individualistic experience that books provide, they hold an unshakable status in an increasingly conformist, equal thought society.

From a utilitarian perspective, books hold a place in modern society as it cultivates critical thinking skills and the proper procession of information. With fiction books, the information or concept is not presented in a direct manner to the reader. The use of literary techniques nurtures a proper reading habit where one has to decipher, analyse and evaluate the given cues and form one's perception about the issue. As such, it forms the habit of self judgement and critical thinking. In contrast, the internet may provide one with instant solutions and answers to their problems but it can be argued that the directive nature of a google search box offers no room for self-interpretation and evaluation. Simply put, books offer a much needed respite for evaluation from the fast-paced dynamics of the modern internet. For example the US News and World Report in 2015 listed book clubs among five useful tools to develop critical thinking skills before college.

From a cultural perspective, books have a place in modern society as it is a firm testament of the cultural and historical progression of human civilization, imprinting a permanent legacy that is unheard of from its evolved predecessors. Throughout history, books were important documents of crucial human insights and developments. Other than the contents, the appearance of the books matters too as it serves as cultural symbols of our progression. This is even more pertinent in our times of moral relativism and identity turbulence, where books possess the ability to entrench us in the sands of time and imbue within us a sense of identity and rootedness. Take for example the papyrus scrolls documenting the discovery of paper), to the printed characters symbolising the invention of the printing press, the development of human society follows the appearance of the book through time. Simply put, through books, we delve deeper into the human psyche and history, cultivating a sense of identity and belonging.

Lastly, books have a place in modern society as the physical medium cultivates a special emotional connection that promotes better information retention in contrast to its digital counterparts. In other words, there is just something special about the crisp pages and tainted pages. Holding the physical copy creates a unique subject-object connection where the act of turning pages creates an "index" in the brain, mapping information in a book to a particular page. As such, it allows better information

retention as compared to swiping the screen of one's kindle. According to research from *The Shallows* by Nicholas Carr, readers retain more information when they read a physical book. Therefore, physical books offer an incomparable relationship that promotes better information capture and retention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, books definitely hold a place in modern society. In comparison with different medium forms, books cultivate an irreplaceable emotional, social and cultural relationship with the individual, community and society. Whether we like it or not, books are here to stay.