**AOW2: Pre-reading questions Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Have you read the *Harry Potter* books? If you did, did you enjoy them? If you did not read them, why did you not read them?

2. Do you feel like the world is becoming more or less tolerant of people who are "different?" (Perhaps you have first-hand experience with this.)

3. What defines your generation best? What music, movies, technology, trends, etc.?

**"Did *Harry Potter* Help Shape the Political Views of Millenials" by Anthony Gierzynski / from Slate.com, 19 August 2014**

The idea that entertainment has an effect on our politics might seem ludicrous to some. Many would scoff at the notion that the *Star Wars* saga might have influenced the political socialization of Generation X. Or that the music that the baby boomers listened to played a supporting role in the development of that generation’s politics.

Perhaps even most ridiculous is the idea that J.K. Rowling’s immensely popular tale of "the boy-who-lived" could have played a role in 5 the political development of that generation, the millennials. Let alone an election result. But this is exactly what some recent [research of mine](https://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu/content/harry-potter-and-millennials) indicates.

I found [empirical support](https://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu/content/harry-potter-and-millennials) for the idea that the [*Harry Potter*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0545162076/?tag=slatmaga-20)series influenced the political values and perspectives of the generation that came of age with these books. Reading the books correlated with greater levels of acceptance for out-groups, higher political tolerance, less predisposition to authoritarianism, greater support for equality, and greater opposition to the use of violence and torture. As *Harry 10 Potter* fans will have noted, these are major themes repeated throughout the series. These correlations remained significant even when applying more sophisticated statistical analyses—when controlling for, among other things, parental influence.

I’m not saying [ . . . ] that “[*Harry Potter* helped Obama get elected](http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/14263/)” or that “[*Harry Potter* books brainwashed millennials](http://www.ibtimes.com/harry-potter-books-brainwashed-millennials-elect-president-barack-obama-new-study-says-1385521)." [ . . . ] It’s of course much more nuanced than this. And in a world where consumption of entertainment media is escalating, allowing many to avoid news coverage altogether in favor of fun, thinking about this is more important than ever.

15 Skepticism of the notion that our entertainment consumption shapes our political perspectives only has traction if you think that we arrive at our political views rationally. And there’s a long record of research in multiple disciplines (psychology, sociology, and political science to name a few) that thoroughly debunks the notion that we acquire political values and attitudes through a rational process.

And [research into how we immerse ourselves in stories](http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/the_role_of_transportation_in_the_persuasiveness_of_public_narratives.pdf) has demonstrated that we do not process ideas in entertainment the same way we process information—we react on a more emotional level, at a distance from real world facts. [ . . . ]

20 We’re often drawn to stories for reasons that may have nothing to do with our views: the stories’ popularity, attention given to them in the media, critical reviews, special effects, advertising, boredom, inadvertent exposure when we have little choice—the reasons go on. And once we’re immersed in the book, TV program, film or whatever, once we’ve come to identify with certain characters, we are [ . . . ] likely to internalize the lessons of the narrative, and [emulate the qualities of those with whom we identify](https://theconversation.com/our-transportation-into-game-of-thrones-could-have-ugly-results-25523).

Selective exposure is also complicated by the fact that the politically relevant lessons of a narrative or the qualities of fictional characters 25 are not always evident early on in the story. And they may evolve throughout it. Take the case of Darth Vader, a cultural icon of evil, for example—he turns out to still have some good in him at the end. [ . . . ]

When we’re consuming entertainment stories it’s likely that we’re more susceptible to politically relevant messages—we’re relaxing, having fun, our political “guard” is down. Indeed, [most people are largely unaware of the politically relevant content](https://www.mesharpe.com/mall/resultsa.asp?Title=Projecting+Politics%3A+Political+Messages+in+American+Films) of that which they watch or read because they are not looking for it. And certain politically relevant messages are so ubiquitous throughout our culture that 30 they become invisible to us. Take the overwhelmingly positive portrayal of guns in U.S. media—it’s rare to see a hero without a gun.

Selective exposure is also less likely to occur among younger media consumers who have yet to fully form their political views. This is a point especially applicable to the media teenagers consume, like the *Harry Potter* series.

A great volume of research has been devoted to the effects of entertainment on social phenomena such as violence, sex, smoking and drinking. In this light, perhaps it doesn’t seem so ridiculous to give some attention to how entertainment shapes our politics. [ . . . ]

**SOAPSTone this piece. Support your analysis with textual evidence. That means for each letter you need to have a citation that shows why you choose what you choose!**

**S: Speaker (Who is speaking in the article)**

**O: Occasion (When or why is the timing important on the article? Current events that influenced it?)**

**A: Audience (Who needs to read this, who the author wanted to read it! Not Why Mrs. Nickell assigns it**

**P: Purpose (What was the author trying to get across to the reader…what were they convincing us of?)**

**S: Subject (What is the main idea of this passage?)**

**Tone: (What is the author’s tone in the passage?)**

**Would you label this passage as expository, argumentative, narrative, or compare/contrast writing? Why what wording made drew you to this conclusion (Please include)**

**What was the author’s thesis statement in this essay? Identify and write it here! (Hint it is not the first line or the last line of the first paragraph!)**