Michael Pendley

Eng 255

Dr. Reiff

10 November 2009

Satire

Merriam- Webster defines satire as a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn. They also describe it to be trenchant wit, irony, or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly. Satire is usually thought to be specifically as a literary genre however, it can also be found in an assortment of materials such as graphics and performing arts. One mean for Writers to voice disagreement with current situations is to use satire. Satire can be done with or without the use of humor. The type I chose to analyze is the form of satire that encompasses humor. Do not be mistaken satire is an attack directed at something or someone only the weapon used is wit.

The exact model of parody I am going to analysis is one currently found on television. This show has captured popularity amongst the younger generations. The parody is in cartoon form. They are just one of many that display their parodies through cartoon animation. A few to name is The Simpsons, King of the Hill and South Park. The specific one I have chose to cover in detail is South Park.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with South Park it is an American animated sitcom. South Park’s writers Trey Parker and Matt Stone created the show in August of 1997. The writers use four animated children named Stan, Kyle, Eric, and Kenny to develop a parody showing societies follies. The show is set in a small fictional Colorado town usually housing much of the cultural vices. The show has more than just satirical jokes it is just one of the more favorite forms.

South Park has covered issues ranging from hate crimes to prostitution to most religions in general. Each show begins the same with a disclaimer that exempts them from receiving lawsuits. Most shows have an overall theme that is suppose to correlate to a degree of what is right. They do this by poking fun at the most impolite things allowing society to laugh at them letting them see that in some instances the impolite thing is not such a bad thing after all.

If you were to try to imitate this show there are a few things you need to do. First, you must choose a topic that has recently been in the news or something that causes controversy. This is always the focal point of the whole show. As the cartoon develops this will, be the recurring theme that the writers want to make sure is heard. Most times the writer’s will have some bizarre way for the four young characters to meet this truth. Whether the encounter this “truth” at their local elementary school or out on the field of their state championship baseball field. The creators like to keep the viewer earlier on in the show unaware of the direction the show is about to take. This allows the audience to speculate and wonder where the overall message is headed. Later on in the show, the writers then blatantly refer to the topic they have chosen to bring to light. For some this is finally the last piece of the puzzle allowing them to understand and grasp the entire episode. This may seem like an easy concept to enact however, the writers for South Park are genius about doing this in the most obscure way.

For instance, South Park has covered an array of satirical topics such as entertainment wrestling and sex changes. In the episode addressing entertainment wrestling named “W.T.F.”. The title of the episode alone teases WWE and WWF by using the popular acronym W.T.F. meaning “What The F\*\*K”. This gives the audience an easy way to see where the writers are planning to take the show. The show begins with the boys going to their first WWE match. After the exciting experience, the boys instantly want to become professional wrestling. The try out for the wrestling team at school and quickly realize it not the same so they decide to start their own league the “W.T.F.”. With each joke, the writers manage to poke fun at professional wrestlers and their fans. The do this by brining to light some of the more goofy traditions within the professional wrestling community. Another example of satire they have chosen to cover is sex change operations. This specific episode begins with the boy’s elementary teacher receiving a sex change operation. The boys run into their teacher downtown for the first time as “Ms. Garrison”. Once they boys go home, they begin to ask questions of why their teacher chose to become a woman. The fathers are instantly infuriated while the mothers show more sympathy to the situation. The mothers explain the reason for Mr. Garrison transformation is that he felt like a girl on the inside and his outside body just did not match up. This makes perfect since to the boys especially Kyle. Kyle is a short Jewish boy that loves basketball therefore; he goes to the plastic surgeon to become a tall black kid. Kyle’s father Gerald has always loved dolphins therefore; he wants to become a dolphin. The people receiving the surgeries in this episode believe that after their operation they are actually, what they dreamed to be. However, throughout the episode they quickly realize they are still the same person, and not actually, what they wanted to come. Each episode makes fun of some piece of our society. The writers of South Park equally make fun of each issue showing no bias nothing is untouchable.

The main theme is often not directly mentioned so they must rely on other means to bring it to the viewer’s attention. Often this is done through jokes and other means such as monologues amongst the characters. The writers want to make the audience members think and personally discover the social flaws within each episode. They create each episode with an easy to understand storyline and dialogue. This allows more people to understand the story and purpose letting them further enjoy the show.

The satirical techniques used in South Park are targeted towards younger generations. This is primarily due to the fact that the show is in animated cartoon form and their sense of vulgarity. Let there be no mistake South Park although a cartoon has impacted many of viewers ideas on certain issues. Most time people are unaware of how ridiculous certain issues are until they are questioned. This is exactly what South Park is designed to do. The show questions things in our society that we often grown accustom. By pointing out our follies, South Park helps us to enhance our attention towards our problems and possibly enact change.