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THE APPEAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE

POPULĀRĀS LITERATŪRAS PIEVILCĪBA

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ANOTĀCIJA

Pētnieciskajā darbā tiek analizēta populārās literatūras pievilcība. Teorētiskajā daļā tiek pētīts kādas ir raksturīgās īpašības un elementi darbiem, kas ieguvuši popularitāti. Praktiskā daļa fokusējas uz to elementu analīzi, kas padara romānus Sūzenas Kolinsas „Bada Spēles” un Stefānijas Mejeres „Krēslu” populārus. Pētnieciskā darba mērķis ir izpētīt populārās literatūras pievilcību, pamatojoties uz teorētiskiem pētījumiem un romānu „Bada Spēles” un „Krēsla” analīzi. Darbu noslēdz secinājumi, kas iegūti veicot šo pētījumu. Iegūtie dati dod iespēju uzzināt galvenās īpašības, kas padara mūsdienu literatūru, piemēram, romānus „Bada Spēles” un „Krēsla” tik populārus un lasītus visā pasaulē. Pētījuma rezultātus un secinājumus var izmantot studenti rakstot zinātniskos darbus, kas saistīti ar šo tēmu.

Atslēgvārdi: laikmetīgā literatūra, populārās literatūras pievilcība, "Bada Spēles", "Krēsla", laikmetīgās literatūras pievilcība.

ABSTRACT

The present paper analyzes the popularity of contemporary literature. The theoretical part of the study deals with popular contemporary literature research. The practical part focuses the analysis of the features that make Suzanne Collins's "Hunger Games" and Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" popular. The purpose of the research lies in the study of the appeal of popular literature based on the analysis of the novels "Hunger Games" and "Twilight" and theoretical sources. The data obtained give a possibility to find out the main features that make contemporary literature, such as the novels "Hunger Games" and "Twilight" so popular and readable all over the world. The results and conclusion of the research can be used by students writing scientific works dedicated to the theme.

Key words: contemporary literature, the appeal of popular literature, Hunger Games, Twilight, popularity of contemporary literature

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Introduction

Background of the study. The present paper is dedicated to the analysis of the popular contemporary literature and the features that make modern literary works so appealing to the public. Special attention is paid to the research of the Suzanne Collins novel “Hunger Games” and Stephenie Meyer’s “Twilight” attributed to the contemporary literature due to the period of their publication.

Popular contemporary literature is connected with various literary genres that are gaining wide popularity among both adolescents and adults worldwide. However, it is still necessary to find out the main reasons and features that make such literature popular and enjoyable for the readers in the whole world.

The paper on “The appeal of popular contemporary literature (What makes “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” so popular) represents a thorough investigation aimed at defining the main features of popular contemporary literature and analysis of the novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight”. The theme of the present paper is relevant due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it gives an opportunity to learn more about popular contemporary literature and its audience. Secondly, the present research is conditioned by the necessity to instigate the appeal of popular contemporary literature.

Significance of the problem. The analysis of the appeal of the novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” will add to further studies of the features that make popular contemporary literature appealing to the target audience.

The goal of the research paper is to find out the features that influence and cause the popularity of literary works and to conduct a content analysis of the main features of the novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” that promote their popularity and appeal to the readers of various age groups.

The hypothesis of the research is that the novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” are characterized by the availability of specific features that make them appealing.

In order to achieve the goal of the study, it has been broken down into the following **enabling objectives**:

- to provide preliminary research of popular contemporary literature;
- to observe general characteristics of popular contemporary literature, finding out the features which increase popularity of literary works

- to investigate contemporary literature;
- to define the values and problems of contemporary society;
- to provide an analysis of the popularity of romance genre, fantasy and dystopian literature;
- to investigate critical reviews of popular contemporary literature;
- to analyse the features that make “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” popular;
- to draw relevant conclusions.

The research methods used in the Bachelor’s thesis are as follows:

1. Theoretical (a study of the relevant theories serving as a basis for the content analysis of popular contemporary literature).
2. Empirical (content analysis, close reading of the novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” written by the American writers Suzanne Collins and Stephenie Meyer respectively).

The corpus of texts analyzed includes the following: Meyer, Stephenie (2005). *Twilight (The Twilight Saga, Book 1)*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers; Collins, Suzanne (2008). *The Hunger Games*. Scholastic.

The basic theories and authors used are the following: Beck, Bernard (2013), Epstein, David G.; Gershowitz, Elissa (2013), James, Simon J. (2013), Lucey, Thomas A. (2013), Morey, Anne (2012), Pennington, David (2010), Penny, Laurie (2014), Rafferty, Pauline (2008), Rainey, Lawrence (2010), Regenia, Gagnier (2013), Šesek, Lara; Pušnik, Maruša (2014), Simmons, Amber M. (2012), Van Reenen, Dionne (2014), Wherry, Maryan (2013), Sandlin, Jennifer A. (2009) and others.

The outline or short summary of chapters: the present paper has been structured into two main chapters, one of which is dedicated to research of popular contemporary literature research, namely chapter one presents observation of general characteristics of popular contemporary literature and investigation of contemporary literature. It also defines the values and problems of contemporary society and provides analysis of the typical features of popular literature and popularity of romance genre, fantasy and dystopian literature. Critical reviews of popular contemporary literature are also included. The second chapter presents a content analysis of the features that make “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” popular and attains the stated research goals.

1 Popular contemporary literature

1.1 General characteristics of popular contemporary literature

1.1.1 The study of contemporary literature

Globalisation has led, in recent decades, to critical reevaluations of the ways in which “culture” has traditionally been understood. Global capitalism, worldwide diffusion and popularization of communication technologies, as well as increased mobility of people, information, and consumer goods, are some of the forces that account for a widespread intensification of cultural exchanges.

In this context, Zamorano, Hansen and Nordin (2013: 10) admit that “past definitions of collective and individual identities as essentially monocultural are increasingly viewed as inadequate to describe the way people perceive themselves and the world they live in”. Instead, the concept of transculturality has often been adopted to describe “the diverse and productive reality of processes of identity-formation that take place at cultural interfaces, namely in popular contemporary literature” (Zamorano, Hansen, Nordin 2013: 10). The latter offers a powerful means of exploring transcultural experience and grappling with the challenges it poses to individuals and societies alike.

According to Zamorano, Hansen and Nordin,

the very act of reading literary texts is potentially a transcultural experience, in that it invites the reader to identify with the perspectives of fictional characters from unfamiliar geographical locations, as well as from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds (Zamorano, Hansen, Nordin 2013: 10-11).

Thus, culture and contemporary literature are two interconnected notions drawing attention of scholars.

It is necessary to mention that nowadays much attention of researchers is drawn to the analysis of popular contemporary literature and features that make them so popular. The most prominent researches are as follows: Beck, Bernard (2013). *Baby's Gone A-Hunting: The Hunger Games, Bully, and Struggling to Grow Up*; Epstein, David G.; Gershowitz, Elissa (2013). *What Makes a Good "Bad" Book?*; James, Simon J. (2013). *Marie Corelli and the Value of Literary Self-Consciousness: The Sorrows of Satan, Popular Fiction, and the Fin-de-Siècle Canon*; Lucey, Thomas A. (2013). *Dimensions of Citizenship through the Lens of The*

Hunger Games: Fiction and the Visual and Performing Arts as Springboards for Citizenship Education; Morey, Anne (2012). *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the Twilight Series In: Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present*; Pennington, David (2010). *'Three Women and a Goose make a Market': Representations of Market Women in Seventeenth-Century Popular Literature*; Penny, Laurie (2014). *No wonder teens love stories about dystopian futures - they feel like they're heading for one*; Rafferty, Pauline (2008). *Identifying Diachronic Transformations in Popular Culture Genres: A Cultural-Materialist Approach to the History of Popular Literature Publishing*; Rainey, Lawrence (2010). *Popular Literature, Silent Film, and the Perils of Genre: "Chickie" (1923-1925)*; Regenia, Gagnier (2013). *Introduction: Victorian studies, world literatures, and globalisation*; Šesek, Lara; Pušnik, Maruša (2014). *Reading popular literature and digital media: Reading experience, fandoms, and social networks*; Simmons, Amber M. (2012). *Class on Fire: Using the Hunger Games Trilogy to Encourage Social Action*; Van Reenen, Dionne (2014). *Is this really what women want? An analysis of Fifty Shades of Grey and modern feminist thought*; Wherry, Maryan (2013). *Introduction: Love and Romance in American Culture*; Sandlin, Jennifer A. (2009). *Cult TV, Hip Hop, Shape-Shifters, and Vampire Slayers: A Review of the Literature at the Intersection of Adult Education and Popular Culture*.

In Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (2004: 58), the notion "contemporary" has the following meanings:

- 1) happening or beginning now or in recent times;
- 2) existing or happening in the same time period: from the same time period (Merriam-Webster, 2004: 58).

According to the Online Encyclopedia, contemporary literature represents "literature with its setting generally after World War II" (Online 1). It should be mentioned that subgenres of contemporary literature include contemporary romance as one of the most popular literary works available today. However, it is necessary to note that approaches to the notion of "contemporary" change every decade due to the development of the language, literature and society in general. In terms of the present paper, the notion of "contemporary literature" deals with literary works written during the last fifteen or twelve years and depicting characters and situations characteristic of this period of time and readers' preferences.

The literary life of the society is characterized by the availability of texts featuring innovative style. However, contemporary literature is represented by some other kinds of works depicting mystic and futuristic themes drawing attention of readers.

According to Schaub, contemporary literary situation may be characterized on the basis of the following positions:

- 1) the specific features of the end of the 20th-century literature, when the realist literature field often coexists with the power of contemporary literature, especially in the first decade of the 21st century;
- 2) new themes, characters and literary techniques enter the field of contemporary literature;
- 3) the priority development of prose towards poetry (during a significant period of time it was customary to mention the decline in contemporary poetry);
- 4) the coexistence of three literary methods that logically change each other: realism, modernism, and postmodernism (Schaub, 2009: 42).

Schaub argues that contemporary literature has much to do with Realism characterized by the following features:

- 1) adequately reflected reality;
- 2) particular attitude to the protagonist, who is understood as the one determined by the environment;
- 3) a clear understanding of the ideal, distinction between good and evil;
- 4) focus on the aesthetic and ideological tradition;
- 5) distinct realistic style, without the subtexts and sidelines, aimed at meeting the needs and preferences of a broad readership;
- 6) specific attention to details (Schaub, 2009: 47).

According to Suman Gupta, a great variety of forms are regarded as serious or popular literature now: “various kinds of poetry, short and long fiction, theatre and screen plays, personal journals and blogs, biographies, e-fiction and fan fiction, essays, etc.” (Gupta, 2012: 12). The scholar regards contemporary literature as “the literature of our time, or of the present” (Gupta, 2012: 12). That is why people like reading contemporary literature as it seems “directly relevant to their lives and their world” (Gupta, 2012: 13).

It should be mentioned that fairy tales and fantasy represent a specific part of the contemporary literature field. Contemporary English fairy tales and fantasy written by such famous writers as Philip Pullman, Roald Dahl and Joanne Rowling, as well as John Ronald Reuel Tolkien belong to most readable authors of the present.

Fairy tales and fantasy represent one of the eternal and unique ways of understanding and presentation of the world and a person in it. They are also striking and peculiar way of categorizing the world as well as the stories featuring vampires and other fantastic creatures found in contemporary literature.

Modern English writers and storytellers develop basic typological properties specified during the period of Lewis Carroll and his predecessors. Schaub (2009: 48-49) defines the following features of the English fairy tales and fantasy that can be also found in the novel “Twilight”. These features play a key role while analysing contemporary popular literature:

- humour;
- game;
- irony;
- a constant change of mood;
- common sad or even tragic motifs;
- amazing lightness of narration;
- structure of the story, in which prose and poetry change each other (Schaub, 2009: 48-49).

Contemporary writers often use intertextual relationships and associations. It also necessary to note that in most cases, the main character of the British literary fairy tales and fantasy is a child who behaves as an adult, often even exceeding them and is perceived by the readers as a serious, adequate adult character.

In terms of the present paper, it is necessary to point out that “Hunger Games” have the elements of the dystopian literature, while the novel “Twilight” combines both fantasy and romance. It should be mentioned that the above stated features also appear in the dystopian contemporary novels and fantasy chosen for the analysis.

1.1.2 The values and problems of contemporary society

Speaking about contemporary society, it deals with such a notion as morality which is considered to be a crucial one in terms of the 21st century. It is one of the issues explored by many scholars, including Bauman 1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Luhmann 1995, 1996; Habermas 1990; Selznick 1992; Singh 2003; Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska and Kowalski 2003; Small 2014; Webster, Halcli and Browning 2000. However, according to Hall, this issue has never been regarded as a major independent field of study, rather being subsumed in fields like the sociology of religion, value studies, social psychology, criminology, deviant behavior, democracy, and so on (Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska, Kowalski, 2003: 3).

Small studies contemporary society, namely culture and values which are characteristic of the 21st century. The scholar regards morality as a term which refers to “the quality of being moral” (Small, 2014: 66). The notion defines those practices and activities that are considered right and wrong; and can be related to conduct and character considered good or evil. De George has the same understanding of morality which is concerned with “our judgments of what is right and wrong and what is good and bad. Moral judgments in respect to the rightness or wrongness of an action are held to be universally applicable and important, and moral blame can accompany acting immorally (De George, 2006: 37).

According to Small, contemporary society can be generally characterized by the following values:

1. morality;
2. moral courage;
3. integrity;
4. duty and conduct relating to making the right decisions (Small, 2014: 67).

Durkheim offers his understanding of moral life which “begins with membership of a group, however small the group may be” (Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska, Kowalski, 2003: 4). He regards morals as objective social facts which, in turn, dictate individual rights and obligations. Thus, the scholar presupposes the essential moral nature of the contemporary society.

It is necessary to admit that morality and society are coextensive. Social life and social organization are made possible and reflect normative arrangements. Consequently, morality is a social phenomenon characterized by an intrinsic moral component.

Parsons regards contemporary society as “an enterprise for constructing order and control” (Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska, Kowalski, 2003: 7). However, it only seems to be under control as we cannot predict things and manage.

Fukuyama (1999: 263) studies contemporary society in terms of capitalism, destroying “traditional loyalties and obligations” and replacing them with new norms which create new order: “Indeed, it is likely that capitalism is a net creator of norms and thus a net moralizing force in modern societies” (Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska, Kowalski, 2003: 7).

Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska and Kowalski (2003: 4) regard morality as a “quality of behavior, be it individual or social; it is not just an “individual attitude or state of mind””. Analysing contemporary society, the scholars “cannot say that contemporary society, in the midst of modernization and globalization, and in the shadow of the events of September 11, 2001, has the relatively comfortable social order enjoyed in Durkheim’s past” (Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska, Kowalski, 2003: 7).

In the book by Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska, Kowalski we can find the following problems of contemporary society:

1. partial disbelief in God;
2. belief in supernatural and fantastic things;
3. disappointment of the nations;
4. inequality;
5. corruption;
6. terror;
7. genocide;
8. violence (Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska and Kowalski, 2003).

It should be mentioned that the readers of fiction like to read something written on contemporary problems and life as it seems familiar and close to their own way of life and problems. Consequently, they associate themselves with the characters of contemporary literature appealing to them as if they read about their personal life or participate in the events depicted in the literary work. They expect or even need to find something familiar and unfamiliar in literature in order to learn something new and entertaining.

According to Jones, contemporary writers recognize issues of adolescent identity formation to which both sexual orientation and religious faith are integral, and many

contemporary adolescent readers seek nuanced and complex texts, as evidenced by the popularity of authors like John Green, David Levithan, and Sarah Dessen. Authors who depict organized religion as non-dogmatic, multivalent, and open to questions are more likely to engage young readers willing to wrestle with a variety of theological ideas. Issues of sexual orientation can be similarly nuanced and potentially problematic for some readers, especially when encountered in a Christian context (Jones, 2012: 224). As a result, the scholar suggests that in the 21st century the categorical roles of both “Christianity and sexual orientation in English-language adolescent literature may be becoming less didactic and more reflective” (Jones, 2012: 224).

Singh (2003) adds to the list represented above such problems of contemporary society, as abortion, pornography, capital punishment, gay rights, religious and drug issues that make the world much more complicated. As a result, these issues and values have been much studied not only by scholars, including David Brake (2012), but by writers as well. The latter tries to address them in their writing in order to pay attention to the target audience the importance of both general development and self-development. In most cases, literary works written by contemporary writers are aimed at meeting wishes and desires of the readers, such as belief in supernatural and fantastic things (“The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey” by J.R.R. Tolkien, “The Twilight Saga White Collection” by Stephenie Meyer, “Divergent” by Veronica Roth and “The Hunger Games” (Hunger Games Trilogy) by Suzanne Collins).

1.2 The popularity of romance genre

Romance genre is popular due to the fact that in such literary works as the novel “Hunger Games” the reader is attracted by the relationship and romantic love between the characters having emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending or happy end, so to say (Online 2).

Romance genre is popular in the United States (accounting for 55% of all paperback books sold in 2004 year), Europe and Australia. According to the survey conducted in 2014, 13% of respondents choose to romantic novels due to their emotional charge and happy ends (Online 2). However, despite the popularity and strong sales of the novel belonging to romance genre, they are also frequently criticized and ridiculed. But it does not prevent people from reading and enjoying them. The novel “Hunger Games” is no exception.

According to the definition of RWA, the main intrigue of the novel belonging to romance genre is connected with the beginning and development of romantic love story between two people working trying to build relationships with each other (Online 2). The conflict and the climax of the novel should be directly related to the main theme (the development of romantic relationships), although the novel can also contain side story lines, not directly related to the relationship of the main characters.

In addition, the novel belonging to romance genre must have an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending or happy end necessary for making it readable and adorable by the readers worldwide.

Leslie Gelban, the President of Berkley Group, also approaches to the definition of romance genre and considers that a romantic relationship between the hero and heroine must play “a key role” in the plot (Online 3). In general, in the works of this genre positive characters are often rewarded and the negative ones are punished. The couple that fights for love believes in the future of their relations and is likely to be rewarded with the happy end.

According to Nora Roberts, the novel belonging to romance genre represents “a book about the glorification of love, emotion, and fidelity, and all those things that we really want” (Gray, 2000: 4). In such novels the heroine’s relationship with family or friends may be no less important than the relationship with the hero.

Thus, romance genre is considered to be one of the most popular due to the fact that it provides emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending or happy end, such as the Cinderella story meeting Prince Charming. They are both fighting for their love and happiness which is quite similar to the problems the readers have to face in their real life, so it makes them closer to the characters and the novel itself.

The romance genre in the present paper is represented by the novel “Twilight” that is thought to be popular due to many reasons, including its romantic and emotional charge that can be traced while reading the novel under analysis.

1.3 The popularity of dystopian literature to the audience

In her article “No wonder teens love stories about dystopian futures – they feel like they’re heading for one” (2014: 19), Penny mentions a Nasa-funded paper, accepted for publication in

the journal *Ecological Economics*, according to which “resource depletion, climate change, escalating inequality and the unstoppable greed of the elite are all cited as reasons to imagine why democracy as we know it is time-limited”. So, the scholar analyses the contemporary book “*Divergent*” by Veronica Roth as “a wildly popular dystopian young adult novel” (Penny, 2014: 19).

According to Chipman, “perhaps reflecting the unease in every society that something darker lurks beneath the veneer of civilization, a growing body of dystopian literature has recently dominated the YA science-fiction and fantasy genres” (Chipman, 2009: 50). Chipman (2009: 50) states that

the popularity of dystopian literature to the audience is due to the following factors: they offer excellent escapist fare rife with survivalist adventure; they provide the audience with grim imaginings of future worlds; they give an opportunity to reflect on how the issues in their own lives and societies are mirrored in these worlds gone horribly wrong (Chipman, 2009: 50).

Dystopian literature, which involves a future under strict societal control, has been around for years. “*The Hunger Games*” by Suzanne Collins is considered to be one of such dystopian writings offering the above opportunities for teens to make them interested in it (Hopkinson, 2009: 102). According to Posten, “same with Stephenie Meyer (author of the “*Twilight*” series) and paranormal romance and “*Harry Potter*” with magic. These are books that have begun movements, in a way” (Henderson, 2012).

Penny argues that sparkly chauvinist vampires from “*Twilight*” by Stephenie Meyer are finally falling out of fashion, with “supernatural romance” giving way to “horrific post-apocalypse dictatorship” as the main refrain of young adult literature (Penny, 2014: 19).

There is no doubt that contemporary society adores stories about dystopia and has “plenty of appetite for more” (Penny, 2014: 19). According to Penny (2014: 19), these stories become part of a relatively new genre and they “speak to the young adult inside us all, the part whose identity is yet unformed, full of rage and fear and longing”. Perhaps the popularity of dystopian literature to the audience is caused by profound anxiety for the protagonist’s and one’s own siblings, parents and friends, their profoundly romantic and adventurous character, the presence of doomed crushes and broody heroes in tight athletic suits, as well as resistance of portraying love as the answer to the heroine’s problems. It is due to the fact that readers care for the protagonist, because they care for themselves and their relatives.

According to Penny (2014: 19), the following appealing features of dystopian literature to the audience are as follows:

- the complete collapse of the narrative of what a secure future looks like;
- the grim messages about teenagers;
- the job market stutters;
- pension provision;
- overmighty state power fighting (Penny, 2014: 19).

Although dystopian literature usually involves themes of propaganda and government control, Melson admits that “teen books tend to be plot-driven” (Henderson, 2012).

Such contemporary novels as “The Twilight Saga White Collection” by Stephenie Meyer, “Divergent” by Veronica Roth and “The Hunger Games” (Hunger Games Trilogy) by Suzanne Collins function both as manifesto and pressure release valve. According to Penny, they are “escapist only in that they allow for the possibility of resistance” (Penny, 2014: 19).

The popularity of fiction has been studied by many scholars throughout the world who try to approach the main features that make such literary works attractive for the target audience, including adults and adolescents.

The “General Preface” to Oxford University Press's 'Popular Classics' series, for example, suggests that “popular” works “have often articulated the collective aspirations and anxieties of their time more directly than so-called serious literature” (Keating, 1998). As an example, Simon J. James (2013: 134) suggests studying “The Sorrows of Satan” (1895) by Marie Corelli that is considered to be “the 19th-century’s best-selling work of fiction (which was reprinted in the Oxford series), successfully manages to articulate such “aspirations and anxieties”, not through the exclusion of what are now thought of as the dominant themes of the literature of the 1890s, but by letting them populate the narrative”. However, “Corelli’s success in the literary market in her lifetime and failure in literary history since makes her, as Annette Federico puts it, both “a model case for theories of the popular’ and “a case to crack, a riddle, a puzzle”” (James, 2013: 135).

There is no doubt that such novels as “Hunger Games”, “Twilight” and “Divergent” are popular, because their readers find these works “pleasurable to read” (Dominus, 2011: 13). Simon J. James points out that “the effect of reading that literary theory finds hardest to theorize is that of pleasure: the discipline has always struggled with the anxiety that, as Terry Eagleton wryly puts it, “since English was no more than idle gossip about literary taste it was difficult to know how to make it unpleasant enough to qualify it as a proper academic pursuit”” (James, 2013: 137). Consequently, Simon J. James suggests approaching such

novels “in relation to particular literary aesthetics of pleasure. Such an approach might in turn suggest that critical reading has something to learn about the ways in which it accords different types of value to canonical and uncanonical fiction” (James, 2013: 137).

According to Simon J. James, “the pleasure, then, that the text generates, historically in the nineteenth century, and guiltily in the twenty-first, is twofold” (James, 2013: 138). First, as Roland Barthes suggests, the reader experiences the text as pleasurable with the recognition of its excess and paradox:

“The pleasure of the text does not prefer one ideology to another. However: this impertinence does not proceed from liberalism but from perversion: the text, its reading, are split. What is overcome, split, is the moral unity that society demands of every human product. We read a text (of pleasure) the way a fly buzzes around a room: with sudden, deceptive turns, fervent and futile: ideology passes over the text and its reading like the blush over a face” (Barthes, 1976: 31)

According to Simon J. James, “the popularity of literary decadence is for her the uncontested proof that society as a whole has indeed fallen into historical decadence” (James, 2013: 140). He also argues that “consumers who choose to gratify their debased appetites by consuming “gross material pleasures” that are harmful to them, such as “poisonous” books rather than healthier matter, do so because they lack the correct “taste”” (James, 2013: 145). However, some part of the reader may suffer from lack of the correct “taste” expressed by James (2013), but there are a lot of other people who have the correct “taste”, but still like to read such literature. So James’s argument is quite doubtful.

Simon J. James mentions the fact that “the reader might indulge their vicarious fantasies in reading the novel, but for the author it is a part of the writer’s educative responsibility towards the reader to make him or her reflect at the same time on the moral consequences of these fantasies” (James, 2013: 147). It must be mentioned that the novel “Hunger games” deals with the issues studied by Simon J. James as the author involves the reader into the world full of cruelty and selfishness, so it is up for the reader to decide whether the character’s actions can be approved or reproached.

Speaking about young adult literature, Mary Hilton and Maria Nikolajeva (2012: 1) argue that

“through sympathetically portraying the alienated pains and pleasures of adolescence, through enacting adolescence with all its turmoil, writers bring young readers face to face with different forms of cultural alienation itself: the legacy of colonialism, political injustice, environmental desecration, sexual stereotyping, consumerism, madness, and death. ”

In the article written by Mary Hilton and Maria Nikolajeva (2012: 1) there is the following opinion of Roberta Trites on contemporary adolescent literature:

“Twenty-first century critics take it as a given that novels for youth often rely on adolescents’ growth and imply hope in the future. What we often fail to recognize, however, is how frequently these texts create a parallel between the individual’s need to grow and the society’s need to improve itself. In focusing on the growth of an individual character, we often miss the metaphorical use to which the individual’s growth has been put.”

In some time teenagers grow up and become adults, so they get a balance between social harmony and independent agency for achieving success in society and finding their place in it. It leads to certain consequences in their reading preferences, such as “the implications of cross-species performance in the recent upsurge in Young Adult literature featuring werewolves, vampires, shape shifters, and faeries” (Hilton, Nikolajeva, 2012: 91). In addition, “heroes and heroines construct a unique identity, enacting that integral process of self-creation that all teenagers” (Hilton, Nikolajeva, 2012: 91).

Thus, the research of the features that make dystopian literature popular gives an opportunity to list them as follows:

- the articulation of the collective aspirations and anxieties;
- provision of pleasure for the reader;
- the opportunity to reflect at the same time on the moral consequences of the fantasies;
- sympathetic portraying the alienated pains and pleasures of adolescence;
- ability to face different forms of cultural alienation, including the legacy of colonialism, political injustice, environmental desecration, sexual stereotyping, consumerism, madness, and death;
- stress on the adolescents’ growth;
- implication of hope in the future;
- creation of a parallel between the individual’s need to grow and the society’s need to improve itself;
- ability of heroes and heroines to construct a unique identity, enacting that integral process of self-creation that all teenagers.

Thus, it is necessary to conclude that popularity of dystopian literature to the audience is due a wide range of reasons making such novels as “Hunger Games” and “Divergent”

attractive for the target audience. All of them should be treated and investigated carefully in order to learn more about the readers' tastes and preference in literature.

1.4 The popularity of fantasy

Fantasy represents a genre of contemporary literature that is also popular due to a number of reasons that are connected with the use of fantastic assumptions of something extraordinary and unbelievable, the violation of the borders of reality and taken conventions.

Fantasy is regarded as literature enriched with fantastic assumptions, such as fantastic travelling and utopia.

It is possible to suggest that fantasy appeals to the reader who does not only "understand his or her philosophical and ideological anchors, but also understand the possible flaws in his moored way of thinking" (Baratta, 2012: 3).

The fantasy genre serves as a specific reflection of a possible reality (Kelleghan, 2002: 36). In such a way, contemporary literature has "a unique ability to show an individual what he or she cannot see, even if it is right in front of his or her nose" (Baratta, 2012: 3). Consequently, fantasy brings the readers to "new worlds where they meet new creatures, new heroes and new villains" (Baratta, 2012: 3). According to Chris Baratta, the readers are introduced to "new mythologies, and we witness new atrocities and new wars" (2012: 3).

In Chris Baratta's opinion,

"Fantasy literature has an ability to bring reader's out of their comfort zone—away from the daily intrusions of the media, jobs, political dysfunction—and into a world where the landscapes and characters are unfamiliar, thereby placing them within a world outside of their current modes of knowledge" (2012: 3).

Thus, it is possible to say that fantasy is popular due to the fact that the novels belonging to this genre, such as "Twilight" give an opportunity for the reader to enter new worlds and meet new people and creatures making them believe that everything is possible. It makes their imagination fly.

1.5 The appeal of contemporary literature

Based on the information represented in the previous chapter, it can be said that such novels as "Hunger Games", "Twilight" and "Divergent" belong to contemporary literature aimed at both adolescents and adults. However, specific target audience of these novels is still viewed

as teenagers who are interested in “werewolves, vampires, shape shifters, and faeries” (Hilton, Nikolajeva, 2012: 91).

Popular contemporary literature “*Fifty Shades of Grey*” hit the New York Times Best-Seller List. Stanley (2012) argues that “James’s protagonist not only idealizes the submissive sexual role but also perpetuates the Cinderella fantasy of an alluring Prince Charming who comes to a maiden’s rescue” (Denzin, 2013: 7). People prefer reading stories about Cinderella, as they want to believe that something similar can happen with them in their real life. They look for miracles and dream about happiness and “happy ends”. In such a way, they assure themselves that they can meet such Prince Charming who will love and adore them. It gives the readers some sort of hope necessary for moving further.

According to John Schwartz (2012: 9), the novel “*Blueprints of the Afterlife*” is criticized as follows:

“It is an apocalypse of synergistic losses: of species, of environmental balance, then of whole cities, large disasters extrapolating inevitably from smaller ones. “There was a time when we lived on streets where we knew our neighbors’ names,” one character recalls, “but now we were all strangers isolated in our condos late at night, speaking across distances to our lonely, electronic communities...” It’s already started, in other words, and the enemy is us. ”

As a result, John Schwartz (2012: 9) argues that “this apocalypse, which goes by a name that cannot be repeated here, is described as a time when roving bands of cyborg ‘newmen’ slaughtered people and were slaughtered by humans in corporate armies”. The fear the reader feels makes him or her read such literature in order to see how fictional characters can solve the same problems.

Popular novel “*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*” “offers an interpretation of how, in a morally complex universe, lifelong learning and increased knowledge and power are used by individuals, communities, and social groups [...] offers its viewers a powerful lesson on the critical need for lifelong learning” (Wright, Sandlin, 2009: 123). As the power relationship always has been significant, the readers are attracted by literature that addresses the problem.

“Hunger Games” as a new contemporary novel is thought to be popular due to the author’s character representation, such as Katniss Everdeen who

“seems the most real [...] She is oxymoronic with her uncertain impulsivity and her role as a leader and a pawn. She is strong and brave, features I observe daily in my students, but fragile to the point of breaking. Her black and white sense of right and wrong, betrayal and loyalty, is a trait of youth; as she matures, she is introduced to the

ambiguity—the gray—of human nature. Considering her similarities to today’s teens, does Katniss Everdeen, the “girl on fire”” (Simmons, 2012: 22).

It is necessary to say that the elements of Bildungsroman are also appealing. Both “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” focus on a narrower time span than usual Bildungsroman. They still describe an important phase in one’s development.

According to Anne Morey (2012: 15), the popular contemporary novel “Twilight” can be compared to “Jane Eyre”:

“The heroines of both texts are, in Jane’s words, both “plain Quakeress[es]” in dress and general affect who morph into figures capable of exciting erotically a more powerful man; each heroine must engage in acts of investigation to discover both the threat that the lover represents and the depth and constancy of his feeling, revealed after a painful separation; each prefers the dangerous man to a more socially acceptable but ultimately less sexually exciting suitor; each is menaced by a powerful woman who represents loss of control of some appetite (Bertha Mason is, of course, famously described as a vampire, while Bella is stalked by Victoria); each is saved by the disembodied voice of her lover; each dreams of a child who must be protected and who represents a great responsibility. Meyer even continues the temperature trope used to characterize the male rivals (Rochester hot, Rivers cold), although she reverses Bella’s preferences. The most significant difference, of course, is that the “Twilight”. ”

So, according to Schaub, Gupta, Penny, Small, Chipman, James, Hilton, Nikolajeva, Stanley, Schwartz, Morey, Henderson, Zamorano, Hansen, Nordin, Skąpska, Orla-Bukowska and Kowalski, the main features that make contemporary literature appealing to the audience are as follows:

- the relevance and reflection of the issues in the audience’s own life and society in the world;
- innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it;
- opportunity to escape from the reality;
- the image of the future world;
- anxiety for protagonist’s and one’s own siblings, parents and friends;
- romantic nature of the character;
- forbidden love;
- love triangle;
- star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny;
- the Cinderella story;

- resistance of portraying love as the answer to all heroine’s problems;
- opposition to the presence and fear for the future;
- teenager orientation of the content;
- power relationship;
- dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events;
- search for pleasure.

The practical part of the present research is dedicated to the analysis of the novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” based on the following features:

- innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it;
- opportunity to escape from the reality;
- the image of the future world;
- anxiety for protagonist’s and one’s own siblings, parents and friends;
- romantic nature of the character;
- forbidden love;
- love triangle;
- star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny;
- the Cinderella story;
- opposition to the presence and fear for the future;
- teenager orientation of the content;
- power relationship;
- dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events;
- search for pleasure.

Thus, it is necessary to conclude that romance, fantasy and dystopian literature represent a great interest for the scholars studying the appeal of contemporary literature. Each of the stated genres has its own features, however, some of them can coincide with the features of other genres. It is necessary to admit that their features attract the audience based on various reasons, including personal as well. That is why it is possible to speak about audience-oriented contemporary literature aimed at increasing the readers interest in the represented stories. The critical review of contemporary literature encourages further analysis of the

appeal of popular literature to the target audience, including such novels as “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” taking into account the features stated above.

2 The analysis of the features that make “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” popular

2.1 Romance genre

2.1.1 Anxiety for protagonist’s and one’s own siblings, parents and friends

Stephenie Meyer creates the atmosphere that makes the reader feel anxiety and empathize with protagonist’s and one’s own siblings, parents and friends. In such a way, there are many situations when the reader carefully treats each event happening to Isabella “Bella” Swan and her father, as well as to the family of the Cullens:

"Don't leave me," I begged in a broken voice.

"I won't," he promised. "Now relax before I call the nurse back to sedate you." But my heart couldn't slow.

"Bella." He stroked my face anxiously. "I'm not going anywhere. I'll be right here as long as you need me." (Meyer, 2005: 222)

Bella is afraid that something can happen with her father and friends, so she asks her new friends to take care of him in order to protect from other vampires that are even more severe and bloodthirsty than the Cullens:

"Carlisle wanted to lead the tracker as far north as possible, wait for him to get close, and then turn and ambush him. Esme and Rosalie were supposed to head west as long as they could keep the female behind them. If she turned around, they were to head back to Forks and keep an eye on your dad. So I imagine things are going well if they can't call. It means the tracker is close enough that they don't want him to overhear." (Meyer, 2005: 195)

Bella proves to be quite an anxious girl who respects her parents and tries to make everyone happy, though it is difficult as they live separately. Besides, while living with her father, she realises that he needs her badly, so she asks her mother to understand that and let her stay at her father’s place a bit longer. Besides, there is a new friend of her whom she also wants to see:

"Mom." I hesitated, wondering how best to be diplomatic about this. "I want to live in Forks. I'm already settled in at school, and I have a couple of girlfriends" — she glanced toward Edward again when I reminded her of friends, so I tried another direction — "and Charlie needs me. He's just all alone up there, and he can't cook at all." (Meyer, 2005: 220)

So, anxiety for protagonist's and one's own siblings, parents and friends is an important appealing feature of romance genre as it shows the character's emotions and feeling making the readers empathize with the character's fate and situations in which it is necessary to make some serious decisions that can influence the character's life.

2.1.2 Romantic nature of the character

In some way, the characters of the novel "Twilight" appeal to the reader as they are depicted as good characters, in spite of being vampires and werewolves and are trying to protect the main heroine of the story and make her happy:

"I glanced sideways at the beautiful boy, who was looking at his tray now, picking a bagel to pieces with long, pale fingers. His mouth was moving very quickly, his perfect lips barely opening. The other three still looked away, and yet I felt he was speaking quietly to them" (Meyer, 2005: 195)

The main character of the novel, Bella is portrayed as a simple girl wearing ordinary clothes and leading an ordinary life till she meets Edward. However, such image of the female character makes her closer to the reader and his realities except for meeting supernatural creatures. Thus, she looks like a girl one can meet every day while walking to the school or some other place:

"I was wearing my favorite shirt — sleeveless, white eyelet lace; I was wearing it as a farewell gesture. My carry-on item was a parka" (Meyer, 2005: 4)

So, romantic nature of the character is also an important feature that makes contemporary romance genre represented by the novel "Twilight" popular, because the readers approach the inner world of the character and learn more about his feelings and actions which makes them judge the character's personality.

2.1.3 The Cinderella story

It should be noted that in some way the love story of Edward and Bella resembles the Cinderella story and her meeting with Prince Charming. Edward is as beautiful and attractive as the image of Prince Charming represented in the Cinderella story portrayed as "*a man who is handsome, brave, polite, etc., and would be a perfect husband or boyfriend*" (Online 4) (Fig. 2.1) and depicting a story of romantic love with a happy ending:

"I love you," I whispered.

"You are my life now," he answered simply.

There was nothing more to say for the moment. He rocked us back and forth as the room grew lighter. (Meyer, 2005: 195)

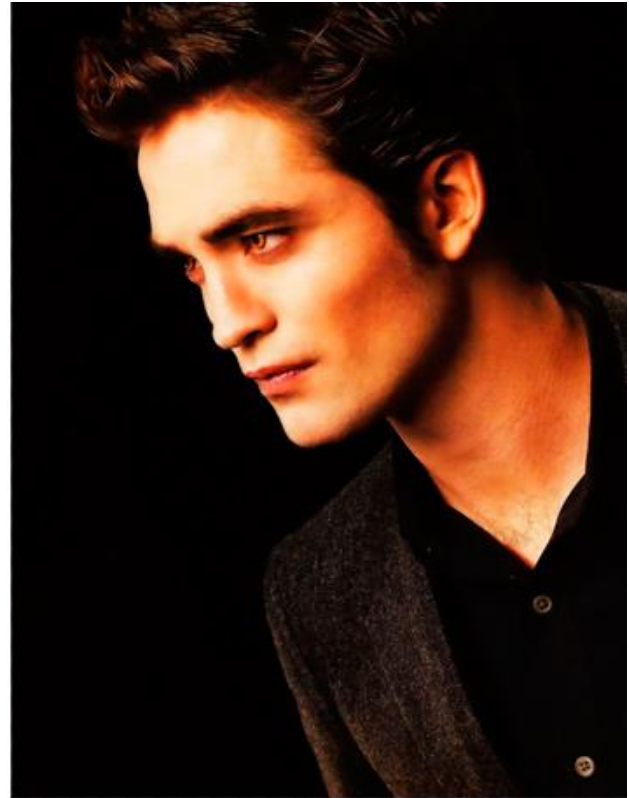


Fig.2.1. The Prince Charming and Edwards' appearance

As well as the character observed in the Cinderella story, in the novel under analysis, Edward and Bella have a happy ending declaring their love to each other and making her believe that everything will be well and he will manage to protect her from all the calamities of the world they are living in and the creatures they can meet:

"Bella." His fingers lightly traced the shape of my lips. "I will stay with you — isn't that enough?"

I smiled under his fingertips. "Enough for now."

He frowned at my tenacity. No one was going to surrender tonight. He exhaled, and the sound was practically a growl.

I touched his face. "Look," I said. "I love you more than everything else in the world combined. Isn't that enough?"

"Yes, it is enough," he answered, smiling. "Enough for forever."

And he leaned down to press his cold lips once more to my throat. (Meyer, 2005: 235)

So, it is necessary to conclude that many readers are looking for the happy endings having much in common with the Cinderella story where the protagonists are happy and live together after overcoming all the obstacles. The character of Bella in the novel “Twilight” is similar to Cinderella as both of them have to come through various trials in order to be happy with the people they love. Both of them are good-hearted girls attracting the readers with their inner world and actions.

2.1.4 Love triangle

As stated by Schaub, Gupta, Penny, Small, Chipman, James, Hilton, Nikolajeva, Stanley, Schwartz, Morey, Henderson, Zamorano, Hansen, Nordin, Skapska, Orla-Bukowska and Kowalski, love triangles are a very important feature making literature appealing to public, including adolescents.

The love triangle theme of the novel “Twilight” is connected with Edward and Bella and Jacob, her non-vampire friend who later becomes a werewolf (Fig. 2.2). The latter loves Bella, but does it quite touchingly and sincerely:

“After the first shock of recognition, I couldn't help but feel bad for Jacob. He was clearly uncomfortable — excruciatingly so. His face was apologetic as his eyes met mine. Edward snarled very quietly” (Meyer, 2005: 230)

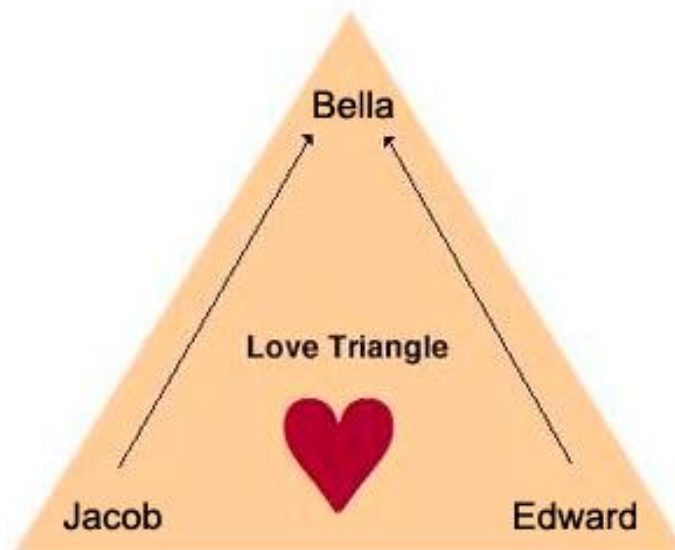


Fig.2.2 Twilight love triangle

The situation gets even worse when Bella finds out the true nature of her friend Jacob and his hatred for vampires based on long-term tradition due to the fight for the territory and food.

From the very beginning of the novel, the attitude of Jacob towards Bella can be observed. He is slightly jealous when he sees her reaction after meeting Mike, so he decides to ask whether they are dating. It should be mentioned that when he finds out that she is not interested in Mike, it seems he sighs with relief as he dares to believe that she can consider him as a possible boyfriend:

"Is that your boyfriend?" Jacob asked, alerted by the jealous edge in Mike's voice. I was surprised it was so obvious.

"No, definitely not," I whispered. I was tremendously grateful to Jacob, and eager to make him as happy as possible. I winked at him, carefully turning away from Mike to do so. He smiled, elated by my inept flirting (Meyer, 2005: 230)

So, the love triangle theme is appealing to the readers as it has much in common with real-life situations when pairs face the problem of choosing between the people they are dear to them. The novel under analysis shows the relationships of the characters, namely Bella who is in the center of the love triangle as Jacob and Edward fight for her love and devotions. In such a way, the contemporary novel attracts the readers due to its realism and an opportunity to learn the way the character of Bella makes her choice and tries to retain friendship with Jacob whom she loves like her own brother.

2.1.5 Forbidden love

While analysing the novel "Twilight" it becomes evident that the characters of Edward and Bella represent different natures, as she is a human being and he is a vampire drinking human blood. Consequently, it seems obvious that their love is forbidden, because they cannot live together. Everyone understands that it is impossible to remain a human being while leaving with the vampire, though they give them an opportunity to try:

"Only two options seemed practical. The first was to take his advice: to be smart, to avoid him as much as possible. To cancel our plans, to go back to ignoring him as far as I was able. To pretend there was an impenetrably thick glass wall between us in the one class where we were forced together. To tell him to leave me alone — and mean it this time. I was gripped in a sudden agony of despair as I considered that alternative. My mind rejected the pain, quickly skipping on to the next option." (Meyer, 2005: 67)

Thus, the analysis of the novel “Twilight” proves that it is attractive to the audience due to the main features making romance genre so popular (Fig. 2.3):

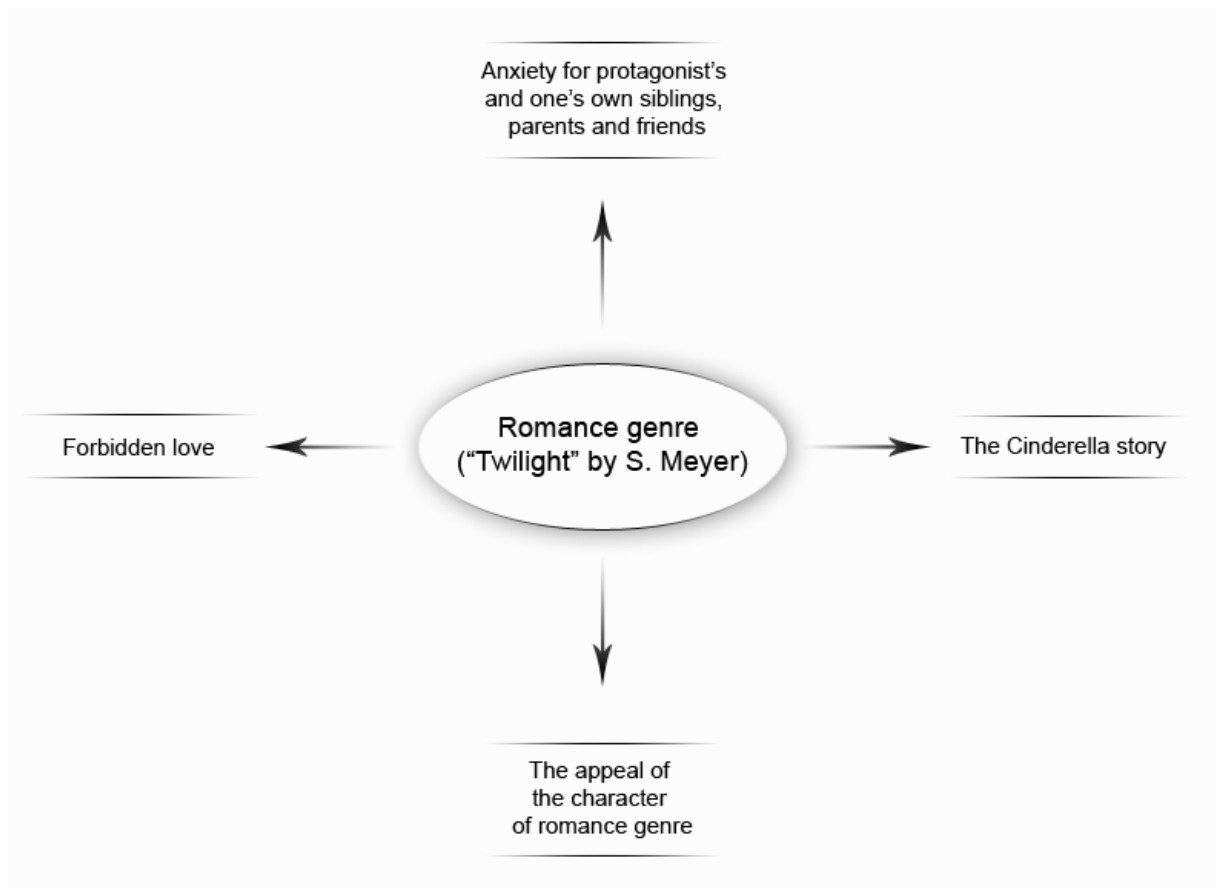


Fig.2.3. The features of the novel “Twilight” related to Romance genre

2.2 Dystopian literature

In terms of the present paper the novel “The Hunger Games” belongs to the dystopian literature, while the novel “Twilight” represents a romantic vampire story written by a famous writer Stephenie Meyer. It should be specified that the novel “Hunger Games” belongs to the dystopian literature due to the fact that it is narrated by Katniss Everdeen living in the dystopian and post-apocalyptic Panem in North America. The present chapter deals with the analysis of the following feature of the dystopian novel “The Hunger Games”:

- the image of the future world;
- forbidden love;

- star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny;
- power relationship;
- search for pleasure;
- dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events.

It is necessary to research the above stated features of novel “The Hunger Games” as they give an opportunity to study the appeal of the novel and prove its popularity among both adults and adolescents.

2.2.1 Star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny

First of all, it is necessary to mention the first and the most striking feature of dystopian literature that is known as star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny. As it is stated in New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy by Houghton Mifflin Company, the notion “star-crossed lovers” is understood as follows:

“Lovers whose relationship is doomed to fail are said to be “star-crossed” (frustrated by the stars), because those who believe in astrology claim that the stars control human destiny. William Shakespeare used the phrase to describe the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*” (Online 5).

In the center of the reader’s attention there are two characters – Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. They represent the image of star-crossed lovers who are able to change the rules set by the Capitol. As a result, two tributes belonging to the same district are allowed to win the Hunger Games as a couple. When Katniss learns about it, she starts looking for Peeta. Finally, she finds him wounded and hiding in some place. She takes care of him trying to heal, thus showing to the audience that she falls in love with him. It is due to the fact that she knows that the audience like it and will influence on the result of the game. Seeing no way out, she takes poisonous berries and offers him to eat together with her as she knows that she cannot kill him. As a result, it saves their lives:

“I spread out my fingers, and the dark berries glisten in the sun. I give Peeta’s hand one last squeeze as a signal, as a good-bye, and we begin counting. “One.” Maybe I’m wrong. “Two.” Maybe they don’t care if we both die. “Three!” It’s too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare” (Collins, 2008: 330)

So, star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny is one of the appealing features of dystopian literature as the readers are involved in various situations dealing with the fate of the protagonists and their efforts to become happy.

2.2.2 Forbidden love

In the process of Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark's training they start contacting more often, thus they start paying more attention to each other. Perhaps, they feel something in common, which is due to the fact they come from the same region. However, when they have to unite in order to win, the decision is taken quickly. Knowing that only one participant is going to win, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark kiss at the end of the novel, thus winning respect and love of the audience and making the organizers in the Capitol to revise their policy and allow them both to win:

“Trust me,” I whisper. He holds my gaze for a long moment then lets me go. I loosen the top of the pouch and pour a few spoonfuls of berries into his palm. Then I fill my own. “On the count of three?”

Peeta leans down and kisses me once, very gently.

“The count of three,” he says. We stand, our backs pressed together, our empty hands locked tight.

“Hold them out. I want everyone to see,” he says (Collins, 2008: 330)

Collins portrays Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark as if they pretend to be in love, thought think that they do it just for the audience, while actually Collins makes it clear that, like typical adolescents, they do feel something, but they are too scared to understand it right away. There are some cases, when Katniss Everdeen dreams about Peeta Mellark and represents him approaching her and kissing:

“He rights himself and we just cling to each other while the audience goes insane. He's kissing me and all the time I'm thinking, Do you know? Do you know how much danger we're in? After about ten minutes of this, Caesar Flickerman taps on his shoulder to continue the show, and Peeta just pushes him aside without even glancing at him. The audience goes berserk. Whether he knows or not, Peeta is, as usual, playing the crowd exactly right” (Collins, 2008: 330)

Collins depicts Katniss Everdeen who thinks that Peeta Mellark plays greatly, it seems necessary the author makes the readers suppose that he does not play so much, but feels. It seems he does love Katniss Everdeen, though it is difficult to admit taking into account the situation they are in. Thus, Collins makes the characters do everything with some reason. It is

necessary to admit that she is achieving her goals. So, forbidden love theme is attractive to the public due to the thrilling and exciting depiction of a love story.

2.2.3 Power relationship

The power relationship is an important feature of the dystopian literature due to the fact that it interests the readers because they also face the influence of the power and the governments on other life and behaviour.

The power plays an important role in the novel “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins as she manages to draw the reader’s attention to the might of the Capitol as a highly advanced metropolis. It fulfils political control over the rest of the dystopian and post-apocalyptic nation of Panem located in North America:

“When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol. Eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble” (Collins, 2008: 6)

The omniscient presence of the Capitol and its “rulers” is observed in every detail and the residents understand it perfectly well. They are afraid of fighting with it as its power seems to be immense and revenge quick and severe:

“Not impossible, but slim. And even though the rules were set up by the Capitol, not the districts, certainly not Madge’s family, it’s hard not to resent those who don’t have to sign up for tesserae” (Collins, 2008: 13)

The total control of the population and its age is also conducted by the authorities of the Capitol that seem to do everything they want with the people living in the nation Panem in North America:

“People file in silently and sign in. The reaping is a good opportunity for the Capitol to keep tabs on the population as well. Twelve- through eighteen-year-olds are herded into roped areas marked off by ages, the oldest in the front, the young ones, like Prim, toward the back. Family members line up around the perimeter, holding tightly to one another’s hands. But there are others, too, who have no one they love at stake, or who no longer care, who slip among the crowd, taking bets on the two kids whose names will be drawn. Odds are given on their ages, whether they’re Seam or merchant, if they will break down and weep. Most refuse dealing with the racketeers but carefully, carefully. These same people tend to be informers, and who hasn’t broken the law? I could be shot on a daily basis for hunting, but the appetites of those in charge protect me. Not everyone can claim the same” (Collins, 2008: 16)

It seems that the Capitol serves as the eye of the Omniscience, so it is almost impossible to do anything without being noticed or caught. That is why Katniss Everdeen hides while hunting in the forest as she knows the punishment for such actions. However, she needs food, so she has to search for it even when it can lead to some serious consequences.

The spirit of rebellion in the Capitol can be easily crushed with the help of special animals and birds used as a weapon against those people are cannot put up with the regime of the local authorities and still believe that they can change the situation for better using their knowledge and bravery:

“They’re funny birds and something of a slap in the face to the Capitol. During the rebellion, the Capitol bred a series of genetically altered animals as weapons. The common term for them was muttations, or sometimes mutts for short. One was a special bird called a jabberjay that had the ability to memorize and repeat whole human conversations. They were homing birds, exclusively male, that were released into regions where the Capitol’s enemies were known to be hiding. After the birds gathered words, they’d fly back to centers to be recorded. It took people awhile to realize what was going on in the districts, how private conversations were being transmitted. Then, of course, the rebels fed the Capitol endless lies, and the joke was on it. So the centers were shut down and the birds were abandoned to die off in the wild” (Collins, 2008: 16)

Thus, it is necessary to note that the Capital authorities bred birds that serve them and trick ordinary people who are ignorant of innovations introduced by the eye of the Omniscience to have an overall control over the territory belong to it.

So, the theme of power relationship attracts the public due to its connection with their real life and the governments forcing them acting in a specific way that sometimes may differ from their original orientation.

2.2.4 Dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events

Dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events is one of the specific features making the dystopian literature attractive and popular among moth adults and adolescents due to a wide range of reasons, including the fast changing situations that are thrilling and unexpected at the same time.

Taking into account the situation the main characters are in, it is possible to evaluate the plot of the novel and its development. As deals with the games aimed at choosing the one to win, its plot can be characterized as fast-moving and dynamic creating a literary needed

tension and drawing the reader's attention to a single movement and action that can either save some of the heroes or kill them:

“The hovercraft appeared out of nowhere,” I continue to Peeta. “I mean, one moment the sky was empty and the next it was there. It didn't make a sound, but they saw it. A net dropped down on the girl and carried her up, fast, so fast like the elevator. They shot some sort of spear through the boy. It was attached to a cable and they hauled him up as well. But I'm certain he was dead. We heard the girl scream once. The boy's name, I think. Then it was gone, the hovercraft. Vanished into thin air. And the birds began to sing again, as if nothing had happened.” (Collins, 2008: 78)

So, dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events is the feature of dystopian literature that makes readers continue reading the novel up to the end in order to quickly learn about the ending of the story and the character's future.

2.2.5 The image of the future world

As it has been already said, the novel “The Hunger Games” depicts the dystopian and post-apocalyptic world where people can die for a simple desire of the powerful ruler settled in the Capitol to have fun and entertain his guests and citizens. Thus, the reader faces the cruelty of the world and its moral degradation, as they enjoy the process of killing and dying of the people taking part in the Hunger Games:

“How I wish I could be first and get the whole thing out of the way! Now I'll have to listen to how witty, funny, humble, fierce, and charming everybody else is before I go up. Plus, the audience will start to get bored, just as the Gamemakers did. And I can't exactly shoot an arrow into the crowd to get their attention” (Collins, 2008: 78)

The boredom of the new dystopian and post-apocalyptic world can be solved with the help of campfires indicating the death of one of the tributes. In such a way, the audience in the Capitol entertains itself because it seems that people have forgotten about some religious or moral issues that have to be part of any society in order to prevent from useless killing of people without any reason:

“This was no tribute's campfire gone out of control, no accidental occurrence. The flames that bear down on me have an unnatural height, a uniformity that marks them as human-made, machine-made, Gamemaker-made. Things have been too quiet today. No deaths, perhaps no fights at all. The audience in the Capitol will be getting bored, claiming that these Games are verging on dullness. This is the one thing the Games must not do. ” (Collins, 2008: 166)

Thus, the new world lacks morality, so the Hunger Games are thought to be regarded as a festivity and some sort of a holiday, national event that requires special clothes and treatment:

“To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others. The last tribute alive receives a life of ease back home, and their district will be showered with prizes, largely consisting of food. All year, the Capitol will show the winning district gifts of grain and oil and even delicacies like sugar while the rest of us battle starvation” (Collins, 2008: 166)

Trying to understand the image of the new world, Katniss Everdeen tries to understand the way people live in the Capitol. She is not used to getting food by clicking the button and seems strange for her. She knows that she has to fight to get something to eat or at least hunt in the forests. Moreover, she cannot understand the people living in this place whose only problem is to make a decision what to wear:

“What must it be like, I wonder, to live in a world where food appears at the press of a button? How would I spend the hours I now commit to combing the woods for sustenance if it were so easy to come by? What do they do all day, these people in the Capitol, besides decorating their bodies and waiting around for a new shipment of tributes to roll in and die for their entertainment? ” (Collins, 2008: 61)

It seems that Collins does not just ask a question, but addresses all the readers in order to draw their attention to some more important issues and make them understand the necessity to avoid such understanding of the future world and combat careless way of life as there are many problems that still exist, including poverty and starvation faced not only by the people in the novel, but also by the people living in the contemporary real world.

2.2.6 Search for pleasure

Continuing the above mentioned ideas, it is necessary to specify one more feature of the dystopian literature as a genre of contemporary popular literature – search for pleasure. So based on the analysis of the novel “The Hunger Games”, it should be mentioned that the audience depicted lacks the moral values that seem to be necessary for every society as it provides its spiritual development:

“I know the audience will enjoy our having fun at Haymitch’s expense. He has been around so long, he’s practically an old friend to some of them. And after his head-dive off the stage at the reaping, everybody knows him. By this time, they’ll have dragged him out of the control room for interviews about us. No telling what sort of lies he’s

made up. He's at something of a disadvantage because most mentors have a partner, another victor to help them whereas Haymitch has to be ready to go into action at any moment. Kind of like me when I was alone in the arena. I wonder how he's holding up, with the drinking, the attention, and the stress of trying to keep us alive" (Collins, 2008: 166)

The audience in the Capitol is constantly searching for pleasure and entertainment as it has nothing to do and is afraid of getting bored. As a result, the Hunger Games have been created and organized. Perhaps, it is due to the organizers' wish to draw their attention from some important issues, such as severe poverty, starvation, oppression, and the effects of war among etc.

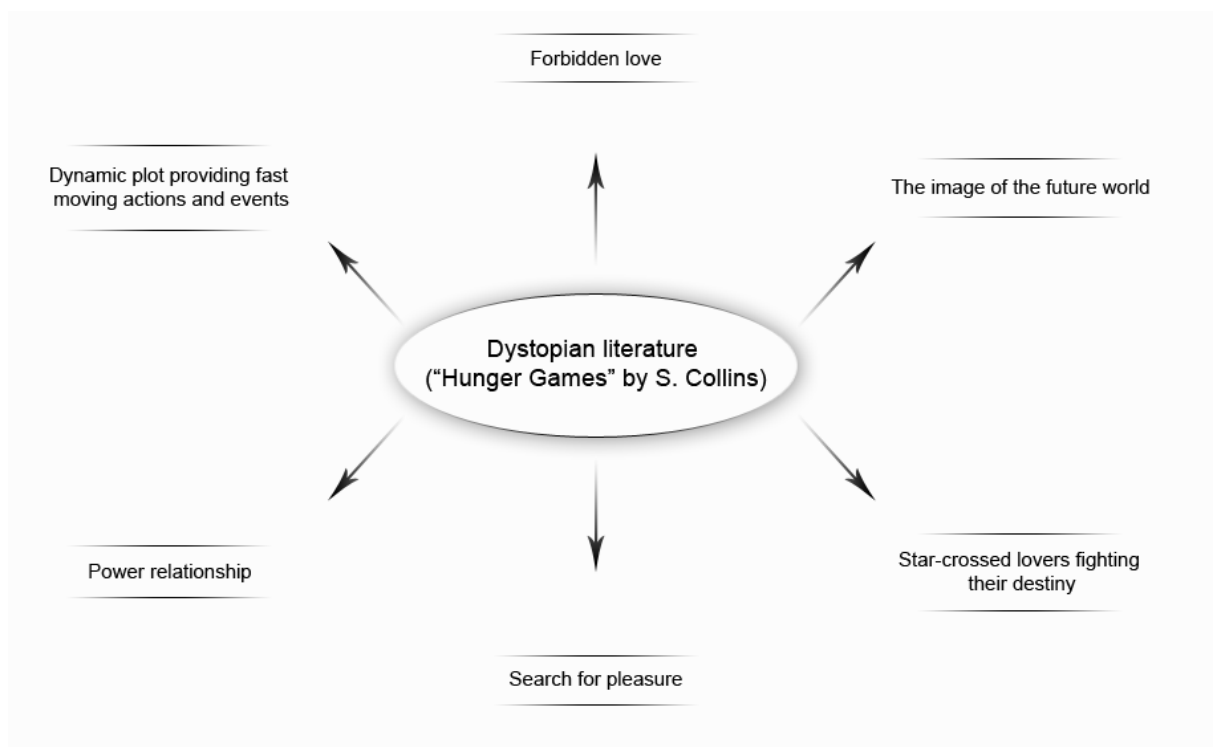


Fig.2.4. The features of the novel “Hunger Games” typical to Dystopian literature

Thus, it is necessary to come to conclusion that the dystopian literature represented by the novel “Hunger Games” is characterized by the following features specific for this genre of contemporary popular literature (Fig. 2.4):

- the image of the future world;
- forbidden love;
- star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny;
- power relationship;

- search for pleasure;
- dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events.

2.3 Fantasy

Considering both novels “The Hunger Games” and “Twilight” from the point of view of the presence of fantastic features, it is necessary to say that the latter seems to be more mystical and fantastic, while the former is considered to be rather fictional. Consequently, it is necessary to analyse “Twilight” and its characteristics of fantasy alongside with its romantic theme.

2.3.1 Opportunity to escape from the reality

In some way, the novel “Twilight” provides the reader with an opportunity to enter a well-known world, though having slightly different features, as it is aimed at the audience looking for a love story with a happy end. Consequently, the reader meets mystical features belonging to the world of vampires and werewolves living among ordinary people and fighting with each other:

"Blood drinkers," he replied in a chilling voice. "Your people call them vampires." I stared out at the rough surf after he answered, not sure what my face was exposing.

"You have goose bumps," he laughed delightedly.

"You're a good storyteller," I complimented him, still staring into the waves (Meyer, 2005: 61)

Stephenie Meyer has made the vampires in “Twilight” that differ from the standard views about vampires: they cannot be harmed either by garlic or holy water, nor silver, nor religious symbols. Sunlight makes their skin glow only that is quite unusual for those readers who are used to vampires being afraid of sunlight as it can kill them. They also reflect in the mirrors and photos unlike traditional representations of such creatures. It is noteworthy that Stephenie Meyer has made the vampires whose eyes color depends on the food they eat: those who drink human blood have bright red eyes, but those who prefer drinking animal’s blood have yellow eyes. Regardless of preference in food their eyes can darken, until they become completely black. This is only a small list of traits of the vampire world represented by Stephenie Meyer:

“But Edward Cullen's back stiffened, and he turned slowly to glare at me — his face was absurdly handsome — with piercing, hate-filled eyes. For an instant, I felt a thrill of genuine fear, raising the hair on my arms. The look only lasted a second, but it chilled me more than the freezing wind. He turned back to the receptionist” (Meyer, 2005: 14)

In such a way, Stephenie Meyer draws a picture of a handsome vampire whose image suits to the audience and makes them like the supernatural characters even if they are thought to drink human blood.

2.3.2 Opposition to the presence and fear for the future

One of appealing features of contemporary literature, including the novel “Twilight” by Stephenie Meyer is the opposition to the presence and fear for the future.

Taking into account the possible consequences of Edward and Bella’s love, the characters are fearful of the future that is awaiting them. They do understand all the difficulties they have to overcome in order to become really happy:

“I was mortified. First, because I'd missed the obvious. And also because the vague suspicions — expectations, really — that I'd been forming all day, as Alice tried to transform me into a beauty queen, were so far wide of the mark. My half-fearful hopes seemed very silly now” (Meyer, 2005: 228)

When Bella starts thinking about Edward and his family as something that cannot be called a human being, she drops this ideas as it seems ridiculous. In such a way, she opposes the reality and does not want to believe that there is something more mystical and unknown that can be both dangerous and beautiful at the same time:

“If Edward was a vampire — I could hardly make myself think the words — then what should I do? Involving someone else was definitely out. I couldn't even believe myself; anyone I told would have me committed” (Meyer, 2005: 67)

In such a way, Stephenie Meyer manages to draw the readers’ attention to the dystopian novel due to the fact that it depicts some readers’ fears for the future and desires to change it for better.

2.3.3 Teenager-oriented content

The novel “Twilight” is also characterised by the description of common teenage emotional states dealing with rebellion and alienation. So this is one of the reasons young people like to read the novel. Besides, it also concerns the issues interested for teenagers, because nowadays

the theme of vampires and werewolves, as well as some other creates fascinates them and make search for something new and unexpected, for example for vampires that are not afraid of sun and can easily be met in the afternoon in the streets or going to school notwithstanding the fact that have already got dozens of certificates. So the vampires acquire human traits, basically those typical for the teenagers as they are the target audience of the novel under analysis:

“And then his fingers flowed swiftly across the ivory, and the room was filled with a composition so complex, so luxuriant, it was impossible to believe only one set of hands played. I felt my chin drop, my mouth open in astonishment, and heard low chuckles behind me at my reaction” (Meyer, 2005: 67)

So, teenager-oriented content is one of the most important features attracting the public and making the novel “Twilight” popular as it is aimed at adolescents predominantly who like to read stories about vampires and various love stories having happy ends. Here they can learn something new about interpersonal communications and relationships between people.

2.3.4 Innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it

Innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it is also an important feature of the novel under analysis, taking into account its popularity all over the world.

When Bella learns about her feelings towards Edward and finds out that he is a vampire, she has a serious decision to make which forces her to reconsider her own place in the world and her destiny. She faces something that she never experience before, so it makes her doubtless, however, she wants to learn more about vampires in order to decide what she is going to do next. Sometimes she uses the Internet and sometimes asks her new vampire friends to find out the truth about their nature and way of life in terms of the existing circumstances:

"Tell me then... how do you become a vampire?"

My question caught her off guard. She was quiet. I rolled over to look at her, and her expression seemed ambivalent.

"Edward doesn't want me to tell you that," she said firmly, but I sensed she didn't agree.

"That's not fair. I think I have a right to know." (Meyer, 2005: 67)

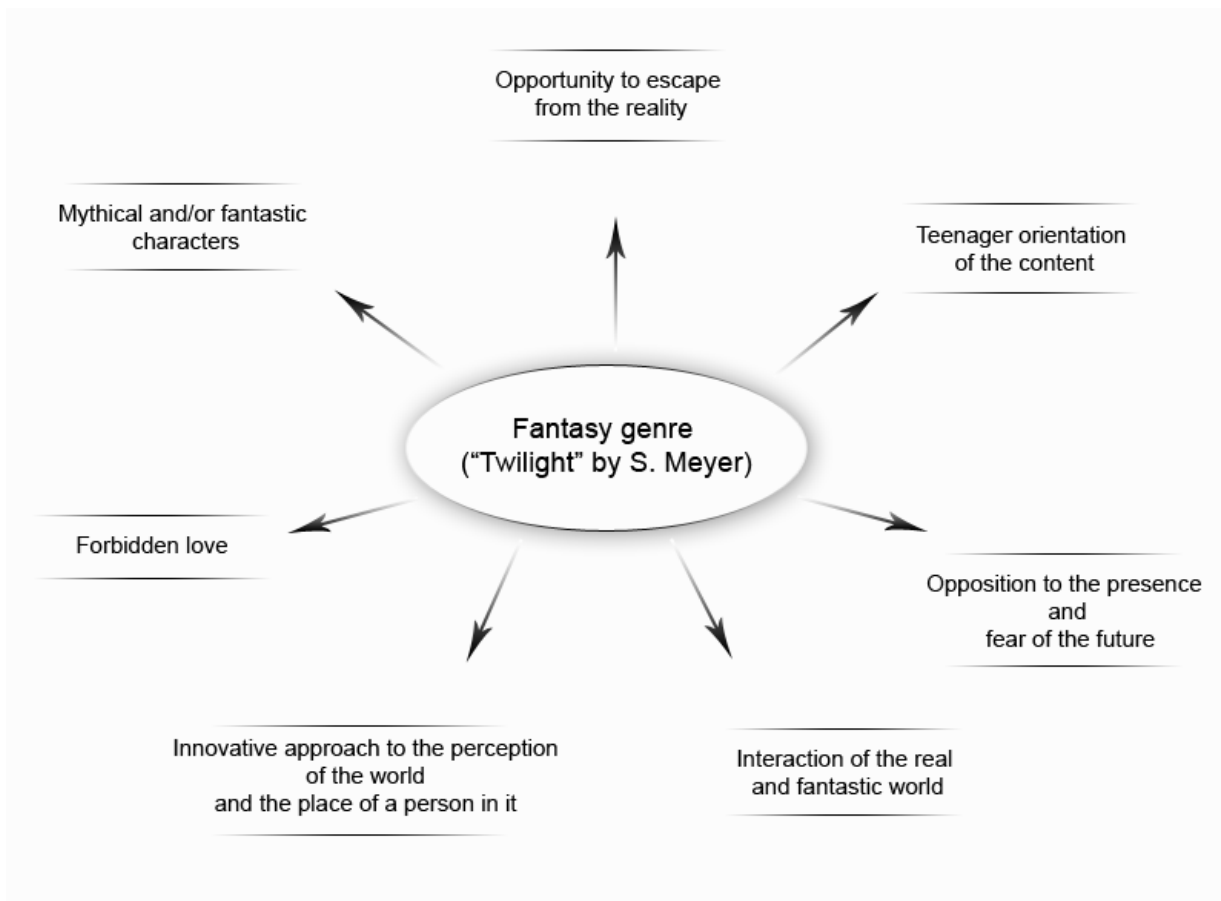


Fig.2.5. The features of the novel “Twilight” related to Fantasy genre

Thus, the analysis of the novel “Twilight” as a fantasy genre gives an opportunity to specify the features that make this genre of contemporary literature popular and readable all over the world (Fig. 2.5):

- opportunity to escape from the reality;
- opposition to the presence and fear for the future;
- teenager-oriented content;
- innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it;
- mythical and/or fantastic characters;
- interaction of the real and fantastic world
- forbidden love

Taking into account the generalized features of the novel “Twilight” and “Hunger Games” that make these contemporary literary works so popular among young readers and

adults, it is necessary to admit they have some common traits, including the following (Fig.2.6):

- opportunity to escape from the reality;
- forbidden love;
- opposition to the presence and fear for the future;
- appealing, positive protagonist
- individualistic, isolated teenage character
- necessity to fight against the evil
- presence of mortal danger

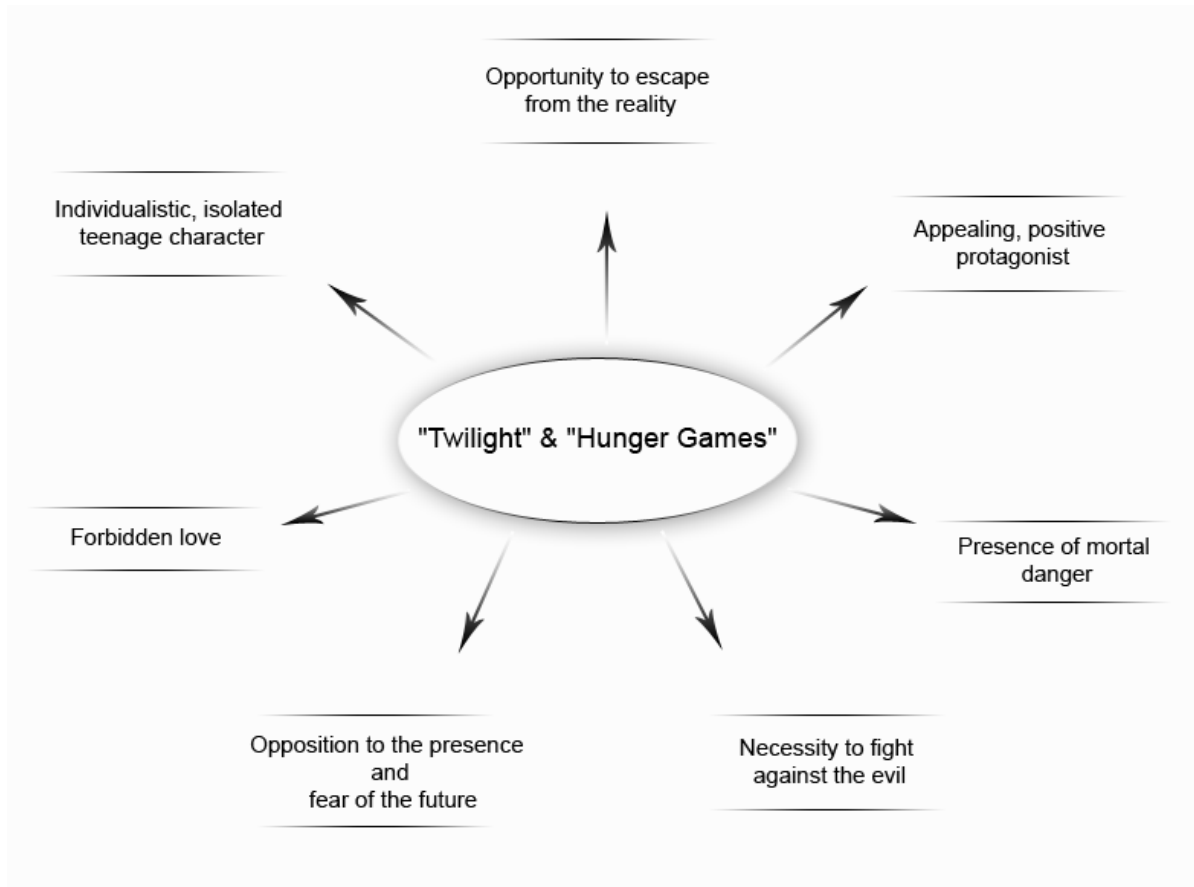


Fig.2.6. The common features of the novel “Twilight” and “Hunger Games” making them popular

So, the above stated features obviously increase the appeal of these novels under analysis, namely the novels “Twilight” and “Hunger Games” written by modern American

writers who try to approach the public needs and preferences in contemporary literature. With the help of these features Stephenie Meyer and Suzanne Collins manage to attract a wide range of reader from various countries, taking into account the number of translations of their novels in various languages. By depicting the atmosphere of fear Stephenie Meyer and Suzanne Collins make the plot dynamic, while the events depicted in the novels can be considered fast moving and thrilling, making the reader enthusiastic about the consequences and the future life of the characters appealing to the audience due to various reasons, including appearance, thoughts, actions, etc.

Conclusions

The present paper is dedicated to the analysis of the popularity of contemporary literature that has already found its niche in the world literature. Nowadays many scholars focus on the reasons and features that make literature popular and readable worldwide. Among them it is necessary to mention the following: Beck, Bernard (2013), Epstein, David G.; Gershowitz, Elissa (2013), James, Simon J. (2013), Lucey, Thomas A. (2013), Morey, Anne (2012), Pennington, David (2010), Penny, Laurie (2014), Rafferty, Pauline (2008), Rainey, Lawrence (2010), Regenia, Gagnier (2013), Šesek, Lara; Pušnik, Maruša (2014), Simmons, Amber M. (2012), Van Reenen, Dionne (2014), Wherry, Maryan (2013), Sandlin, Jennifer A. (2009) and others. All of them approach the features that make contemporary literature so popular.

In terms of the present paper, contemporary literature is connected with literary works written during the last fifteen or twelve years and depicting characters and situations characteristic to this period of time and readers' preferences.

One of the features that makes popular literature appealing to the public is the fact that it reflects the existing situation of the society, namely its problems, fears, beliefs and values. On the basis of the conducted analysis of theoretical materials, it is possible to define the following values of contemporary society: morality; moral courage; integrity; duty and conduct relating to making the right decisions

The main problems of contemporary society are as follows: partial disbelief in God; belief in supernatural and fantastic things; disappointment of the nations; inequality; corruption; terror; genocide; violence.

The knowledge of the values and problems of contemporary society gives an opportunity to learn the main features of modern literature that make it so popular, the novels "Hunger Games" and "Twilight" in particular. It is necessary to point out that the novel "Twilight" belongs to contemporary romance genre and fantasy, while the novel "Hunger Games" belongs to the dystopian genre.

The analysis of the features that make "Hunger Games" and "Twilight" popular shows that romance genre represented by the novel "Twilight" written by Stephenie Meyer enjoys a wide popularity due to the presence of the following features:

- anxiety for protagonist's and one's own siblings, parents and friends;

- the appeal of the character of romance genre;
- the Cinderella story;
- forbidden love.

However, the novel “Twilight” also belongs to the fantasy genre and is popular due to the fact that has the following features appealing to the audience in various countries:

- opportunity to escape from the reality;
- opposition to the present and fear for the future;
- teenager-oriented content;
- innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it;
- search for pleasure.

The dystopian elements represented in the novel “Hunger Games” is characterized by the following features that make it popular all over the world:

- the image of the future world;
- forbidden love;
- star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny;
- power relationship;
- search for pleasure;
- dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events.

The generalized features of the novels “Twilight” and “Hunger Games” that make these contemporary literary works so popular are as follows: opportunity to escape from the reality; forbidden love; opposition to the present and fear for the future; search for pleasure.

Theses

1. The research deals with the study of contemporary literature and the values and problems of contemporary society in order to approach reasons of the popularity of dystopian literature, romance and fantasy genres to the audience.
2. Contemporary literature is regarded as literary works written during the last fifteen or twelve years and depicting characters and situations characteristic of this period of time.
3. The novels “Hunger Games” and “Twilight” belong to popular contemporary literature as they have been written during last ten years and enjoy a wide popularity among both adolescents and adults.
4. In terms of the present research, the novel “Twilight” by S. Meyer belongs both to fantasy and contemporary romance genre, while the novel “Hunger Games” by S. Collins belongs to the dystopian literature.
5. As a romance genre, the novel “Twilight” by S. Meyer is characterized by anxiety for protagonist’s and one’s own siblings, parents and friends; the appeal of the romantic character; the Cinderella’s story and forbidden love.
6. Being a fantastic story, the novel “Twilight” has the following features: opportunity to escape from the reality; opposition to the presence and fear for the future; teenager-oriented content; innovative approach to the perception of the world and the place of a person in it.
7. As an example of the dystopian literature, the novel “Hunger Games” by S. Collins is characterized by the following features that make it popular: the image of the future world; forbidden love; star-crossed lovers fighting their destiny; power relationship; search for pleasure; dynamic plot providing fast moving actions and events.
8. Both novels provide the reader with an opportunity to escape from the reality as they depict the world that has some unbelievable and unreal traits, such as vampires and werewolves in “Twilight” and scientifically developed birds and animals in “Hunger Games”.

9. In addition, in both novels the readers have an opportunity to learn more about forbidden love and the way the protagonists of the novels try to overcome the obstacles in order to live happily together.
10. Opposition to the present and fear for the future is also a specific feature of the novels under analysis as they depict situations forcing the protagonists to dwell on their existence and the image of the future world and their life in it which interests readers greatly as they are also inclined to think about their future and worry about it.
11. Search for pleasure is perhaps one of the main features that attracts readers and makes these novels so popular. They serve as a means for meeting reading preferences of the target audience and making it involved in the events described in contemporary literature.

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