

Pop Culture Analysis of Garbage Pail Kids

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Abstract & Background

In this project, we underwent a pop-culture analysis of Garbage Pail Kids, a popular collectible in the 80s known most strongly for nationwide bans and vulgar content. It's commonly noted as a satire parody to Cabbage Patch Kids. Its recent resurgence in popularity post-covid sparked interest on how the content depicted reflects on the creators who gestated these cards. In order to dive deeper, we used a mix of the Hermeneutic Method and Qualitative Coding to provide deeper insight. After sifting through unique markers on each card and repeatedly surveying each card to sift them, we didn't accept data unless we hit 80% in researcher agreement. This unique analysis on a piece of American culture hopes to give a more thorough understanding of both the creators and the circumstances in which the media portrayed has thrived leading to a deeper understanding of this anachronism in modern day.

Methodology

Card Criterion:

- Card presentation: horizontal, vertical
- What is the main background color of the card?
- Is the background a scene: Yes, No
- Color of logo, nameplate?
- Name of card featured on the card?
- # of words are in the name?
- First letter of each name on the featured card?
- Which characters are presented: letters/words, numbers, punctuation marks, other symbols, letters & numbers
- Type of word play in the card names: rhyme, alliteration, double meaning
- Gender of kid on the card presented: female, male, undeterminable
- What type of character is the kid featured on this card: human, animal, monster, physical, inanimate object, other
- What race/ethnicity is the kid based on visual representation(not name)?
- Based on depiction, what is the kid's age: infant, kid (non-baby), teenager, adult, elderly, not applicable
- Is violence present or evidenced on the card?
- Does the card feature gore?
- What role does the kid play in the violence: victim, perpetrator, bystander, N/A
- Level of Violence: low (poking, prodding, pushing, slapping, hitting with a stick, biting), high (shooting, burning, torture, stabbing)
- Element making it "garbage": Body fluids, illness, dirt/dirtiness, body contortion
- Condition of garbage classification: Garbage because of kid, application to kid, kid applying to others
- Social element: arts/culture, music, sports, television, education, politics, healthcare, violence, historical events, holidays, news, food, everyday life.

Discussion

Due to extenuating circumstances, the original data set was inaccessible. From working with the data set however, we can draw various aspects of the project into the discourse surrounding the topic. For instance, focusing on the exceptions in the list of cards, you'll notice that they represent a demographic of pop culture references and play on words regarding topics that come with a lot of discourse beyond what is occurring in the image presented. For example, the first exception listed is called Guillotina, but it's other name is "cindy lopper". Considering the time of release of both the card, and when the singer Cyndi Lauper, it's obvious that this is a reference to her. What's strange is that it presents an extremely gruesome image. It is important to note however that the garbage aspect of the card is less overtly pronounced than a standard like Ray Decay.

Conclusion

Right now, it's impossible to tell of a conclusion due to an unfortunate set of circumstances. The only trend available with this deficit of information is that the exceptions in the card series tend to have a lot more context around the card as a whole. This makes the card more interesting with the potential for emphasis on certain topics or potential political points.

References

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