

Undergraduate Thesis Assessment Rubric

Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

Thesis Author: Jan Vejvoda

Title: Evolution of the Zombie in a Post-colonial World:

From Day of the Triffids and 28 Days Later to The Walking Dead

Length: 32

Text Length: 35

<i>Assessment Criteria</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Introduction is well written, brief, interesting, and compelling. It motivates the work and provides a clear statement of the examined issue. It presents and overview of the thesis.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
2. The thesis shows the author's appropriate knowledge of the subject matter through the background/review of literature. The author presents information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources are included (if appropriate).	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	While there is a good variety of texts, there is a lack of academic texts, particularly postcolonial theory texts. Also, the text is overly descriptive and lacks argumentation. There is a fine line between enough context needed to make an argument and mere description where the author seems to be telling (himself) a story he already knows well.
3. The author carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence. Ideas are richly supported with accurate details that develop the main point. The author's voice is evident.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	This thesis is richly detailed, but the conclusion isn't coherent at times.
4. The thesis displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	The keen eye for observation shows critical thinking is going on, but again, there is a lack of argument and the connections are not fully elaborated.
5. Conclusion effectively restates the argument. It summarizes the main findings and follows logically from the analysis presented.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	The conclusion is well written but doesn't articulate the argumentation/conclusion that is lacking throughout the thesis.
6. The text is organized in a logical manner. It flows naturally and is easy to follow. Transitions, summaries and conclusions exist as appropriate. The	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient	

author uses standard spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Very deficient	
7. The language use is precise. The student makes proficient use of language in a way that is appropriate for the discipline and/or genre in which the student is writing.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	
8. The thesis meets the general requirements (formatting, chapters, length, division into sections, etc.). References are cited properly within the text and a complete reference list is provided.	Outstanding Very good Acceptable Somewhat deficient Very deficient	

Final Comments & Questions

The author is to be congratulated on his hard work and the detailed observations he has been able to bring to this discussion. As mentioned in consultation, there is a lack of postcolonial theory, and the author never seemed to be able to integrate more academic texts into his work. This is a pity because I feel if he had been able to do so, the thesis would have deserved a higher mark. The project should have been entitled, *Evolution of the Zombie in a Globalized World*. There would have been more truth in advertising with such a title, which may not have set up a series of false expectations for your readers. Colonialism began our modern notion of globalization in terms of dehumanizing capitalism that enriches the few at the expense of many (slavery) and pandemic diseases spread through many nations and cultures to become global plagues (smallpox/syphilis). The thesis correctly identifies that these two aspects of colonialism are the source of much anxiety today in the postcolonial world, which accounts for the popularity of the symbolic figure of the zombie. It seems reasonable that the zombie's success as a relatively new recognizable ghoul or monster has attained the favored status of vampire or werewolf, which have been popular favorites for at least a hundred years in their current Hollywood forms and much older in folklore. While the Hollywood figure of the zombie can be traced to the 30s, it gained widespread currency in the 60s and 70s with George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* series, which was often construed as a Marxist critique of American consumer culture. The heart of the argument is revealed when the author writes: "The notion of being forced to remain enslaved after death links post-colonialism and colonialism as it represents the legacy of slavery in Haitian culture. During this time, enslaved Africans were brought to Haiti to work in brutal conditions on plantations. Hence it can be seen as a reflection of this history and the continuation of forced slave labor. Furthermore, the idea that zombies are controlled by others and used for labor can be seen as a commentary on power dynamics in post-colonial societies" (13). All three narratives in your thesis ponder what it would mean for modern-day men and women to have their human rights stripped from them and be reduced to this pitiable state.

All three texts depict a formerly globalized world in which civilization crumbles through science fiction. The proto-zombies in *Day of the Triffids* are the result of both the East and the West's attempts to feed their respective empires; the food the scientists create, the Triffids, turn on humanity, and man becomes the food of the plants. The novel mirrors the cold war politics of the day, in which the *farm race* prefigured the *space race*. In *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead*, the science fiction catalyst takes the form of a virus, a pandemic, in which zombies replicate at a viral/geometric rate. I was fascinated to learn that the CDC found practical application to the Zombie Apocalypse scenario and was able to make use of this trope to educate the public on how to survive a real-world pandemic such as covid: "Kruvand and Bryant (2015) commented on the success of this project, which attracted thousands of people and eventually led to the crash of one of the CDC website servers: "A tongue-in-cheek blog post about what people should do to prepare for a zombie apocalypse and other emergencies attracted so many viewers that it crashed one of the agency's Web servers, went viral and generated extensive media coverage" (para. 5). Although the project was created to teach emergency preparedness, it was popular because of its sci-fi connections to zombies and therefore reached as many people as possible" (9).

The three texts in question not only have thematic similarities in common but also narrative structural elements, such as the protagonists waking up in the hospital to a world that looks more like the past than the present, though the crumbling edifices of modern-day Atlanta and or London are visible from the window. The theme of dehumanized slaves creates tension in all three narratives as we wonder if the men in the texts will be reduced to brutes and the women to concubines by the military in *Triffids* and *28 Days Later* and or The Governor's plantation manor Woodbury in *The Walking Dead*. Indeed, the main antagonists in each text are not the zombies, but the living men given an excuse to give in to their more primitive urges to dominate. Thus, through analogy, the thesis does ask questions about what it means to be human in a globalized world that seems intent on subjugating us, if not through chains and whips, through subtler means, consumerism, drugs, screens, dopamine, etc.

It is a pity the author had such a hard time making his argument, but his observations of the novel, film, and comic/TV show, do at least try to roll all of these disparate elements into some manageable ball.

Recommendation: 2 velmi dobře

Supervisor/Reviewer: Brad Vice, Ph.D.

Date: 28.08.2023

Signature: 