

Sample Literature Review

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This is the sort of literature review that might be incorporated into an analytical essay. In this case, it is a sample literature review written for an essay on Lee Silver's *Remaking Eden: How Genetic Engineering and Cloning Will Transform the American Family*. This essay examines Silver's claims that the advance of genetic engineering is inevitable, due to consumer demand for it as a technology and the unrelenting curiosity of scientists. The writer of this essay places consumer demand within the larger context of public opinion and surveys contemporary cloning films, as well as the literature on those films, to determine the degree to which popular attitudes toward reprobogenetics support scientific advancement in this field.

In the first paragraph, the writer posits and narrows the research question, and relates it to the essay's overall purpose. Paragraphs 2-4 comprise **the review of the literature** in which the writer summarizes, compares, and evaluates the various sources used in the essay's overall analysis. Following the sample literature review is the Works Cited list of sources as it would follow the complete essay.

If scientific advancement depends upon both consumer demand and scientific curiosity, then the attitude consumers have toward genetic engineering and cloning must be weighed and examined. Therefore, the question arises, "How do consumers form their opinions about cloning?" As a Communications major, I am aware that popular culture is one powerful way that ideas about controversial topics are communicated. Therefore this question becomes more specifically: What can popular movies (like Jurassic Park) tell us about people's attitudes toward

cloning and the forces shaping those attitudes? Once this question is answered, we may be able to judge more accurately Silver's claim that consumer demand for genetic engineering will inevitably support scientific advancement in the field.

Cloning has long been a topic of the popular media, including print fiction and especially film. Recent examples include 1997's *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, 1999's *Austin Powers II: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, 2001's *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, 2002's *Spider-Man*, and, most recently, last summer's *The Island*. These films—with their stories of dinosaurs gone wild, people as slaves, and clones for profit—have been box-office hits (Battaglia; Briggs and Kelber-Kaye; Lemonick; Vergano and Wloszczyna). Each one carries a similar message to our society and about our culture. As Dan Vergano and Susan Wloszczyna state on USAToday.com, "Movies always have reflected our changing fears and obsession with things scientific." In turn, films like these all serve to perpetuate such fears and obsessions, warning the public about the out-of-control implications of a science "gone haywire" (Lemonick).

All these sources, found in academic journals as well as on commercial websites, highlight the warnings conveyed in popular media about what scientific progress might mean for our society. While some sources present these warnings simply as reflections of sentiments prevalent throughout society (Lemonick; Vergano and Wloszczyna), other researchers provide more complicated discussions about the cultural and political impulses behind them. Briggs and Kelber-Kaye state that these warnings reflect conservative beliefs about the politics of cloning: "Those stories that become consumable by a large popular audience provide a good guide to the more conservative cultural narratives of the present" (93). Examples of these "conservative cultural narratives" prove easy to find. A website for family.org not only examines the message films communicate but expresses its own similarly dire predictions. Beginning with a discussion

of cloning in films, it ends with a warning to its visitors about “killing human embryos,” “severe, life-threatening abnormalities,” and general “biological and moral disaster” (Earll).

Interestingly, even those writers and researchers who find in cloning films more optimistic visions for society’s future attribute the optimism not to a trust in science but to faith in science’s limitations and the uniqueness of each individual (Battaglia; Briggs and Kelber-Kaye; Kakmi). As film scholar Dmetri Kakmi, for example, suggests, some films convey the hopeful message that not everything is under scientific control: “The system [cloning] does not take into account the unquantifiable, mysterious aspects of what it means to be fully a human being” (90).

Works Cited

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