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Mass media has had a profound effect on society over the ages. We create and shape media but it also shapes us. “Most of us have symbiotic dependence on mass media. We depend on media for information, and media industries are dependent on us as consumers” (Vivian, 2017). Mass media producers will tailor their content to reach a wide audience. With how omnipresent the internet has become, it is hard not to be a part of the audience. Internet content and ads can become highly targeted towards a specific audience. Sometimes the types of content that is recommended towards us reminds us of our niche interests. Mass media continues to shape our daily lives, and the way we interact with it helps connect us to others.



Figure 1

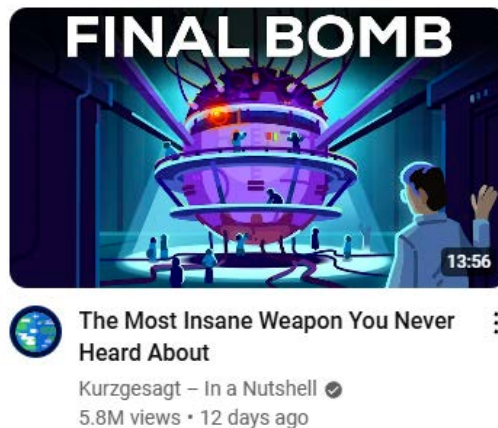


Figure 2

My YouTube homepage is full of video recommendations related to my very specific interests. My YouTube algorithm probably knows me better than most people. As you can see in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*, I enjoy watching videos about gaming and

history. A quick glance at my recommendations sometimes reminds me of how varied my personal interests are. YouTube, like other social media platforms, has a “trending” page. This gives an overview of what the rest of the world is interested in.

Social media helps us stay in touch with people far away from us. Most of my family lives on the other side of the country so staying connected over text and Instagram has helped me feel closer to them. “These digital platforms provide a sense of continuity and connection as we manage the complexity of modern life” (Bell, 2024). Sharing photos on instagram makes it easy to keep my friends and family up to date on my life, see *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Media has the power to be very emotionally moving. Books, movies and TV shows can have impactful stories. *Figures 5-7* are some of my favorite movies. *Moulin Rouge* is a tragic love story, *Coco* is a heartwarming story about family and honoring loved ones, and *Spirited Away* is a unique coming of age story. Movies and books can deal with heavy topics we can all relate to and help us process emotions or think of things in a new way.



Figure 5

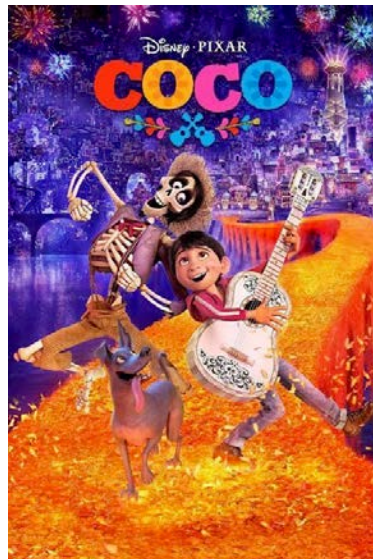


Figure 6

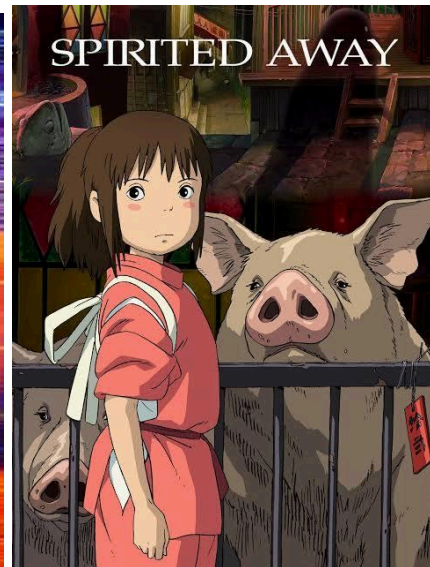


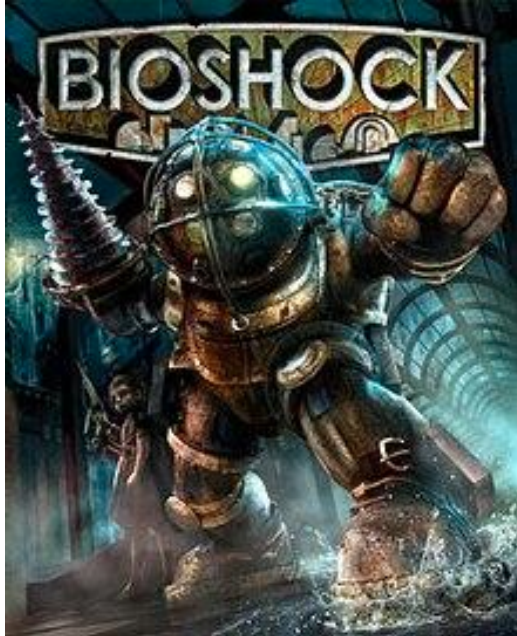
Figure 7

When I was 10 I received a Nintendo DS for Christmas, and shortly after that I got a Playstation 2. Since then, video games have been a big part of my life. I spent countless hours playing *Animal Crossing* as a kid. My best friend also loved the game. We have continued our love of this cute whimsical game even into adulthood. During the early pandemic days in 2020 we visited each other in our *Animal Crossing* worlds

when we couldn't meet face to face. A few years later we even went to the *Animal Crossing* collaboration with the Seattle Aquarium (*Figure 8*).

Another video game that is important to me is *Baldur's Gate 3* (*Figure 9*). This game also helped me connect with others during the pandemic. While the game was in early release, my husband and I would play it. He lived in another state at the time, so playing games was a big part of us spending time together. Video games have also helped me with my personal growth. I've been able to use them as an escape or just a comforting activity. Games like *Bioshock* (*Figure 10*), *The Last of Us* (*Figure 11*), *The Witcher 3* and *Horizon: Zero Dawn* also have great stories and immersive worlds. They play a big part in experiencing emotional storytelling. It also allows us to gain new perspectives by playing as a character in the game. You can make choices you wouldn't normally make in real life and reflect on the kind of effect that has.



*Figure 8**Figure 9**Figure 10**Figure 11*

When I consider all the ways media can impact us I keep thinking back to social media. It is hard not to, because of how ubiquitous it can be. There are downsides to social media. It can be addictive and cause people to compare themselves unfairly with others. Plenty of people have warned that it will be detrimental to the attention spans of young people. This is a story as old as time. "Socrates famously warned against writing because it would 'create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use

their memories” (Bell, 2010). Just like anything, when used in moderation it is fine. It actually comes with so many benefits.

Social media has allowed for many first hand reports of newsworthy events to be shared publicly. People are seeing in real time the effects of war in Ukraine (*Figure 12*) and Palestine. These posts are much more emotionally charged than what is reported on TV. Despite many news outlets adopting meaningful context from the Hutchinson model (Vivian, 2017), nothing can compare to seeing all these first hand accounts from real people. It has allowed for new perspectives on world events. It has definitely helped me stay informed.

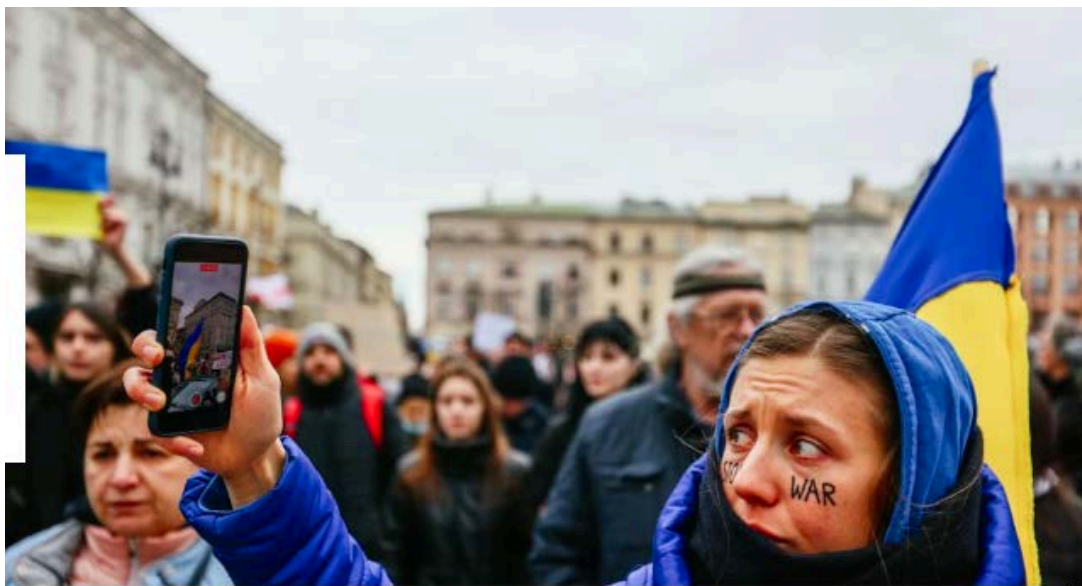


Figure 12

I have to give credit to social media for helping me to develop personally with my interests. It has inspired me to pick up many crafts and helped me creatively with my art. Instagram has given me a space to post my photography, see *Figure 13-16*.



Figure 13



Figure 14

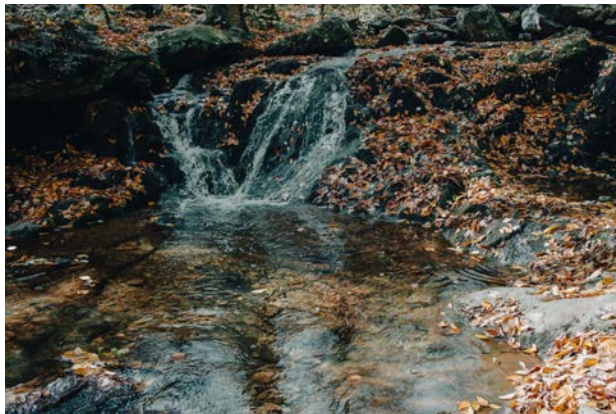


Figure 15



Figure 16

It has also helped me discover my love of 3D modeling. Almost all of my knowledge of using software like Blender and Maya has come from YouTube. I've followed several tutorials and gained valuable knowledge from experts for free. As shown in *Figure 17-19*, I've created many different 3D models. All of this is possible because of the mass media I've discovered.



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

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