The Unlikely Importance of Teen Dramas

We all know them. Some people love them. Some people hate them. But no matter where you fall, you can't deny that teen dramas are everywhere. Shows like The Summer I Turned Pretty, Gilmore Girls, or Euphoria are practically unavoidable. However, when locked in on the twists and turns of these shows, you may not realize it, but there is a sum of benefits you reap while watching. We have the potential to learn things about ourselves, or even subconsciously gain positive traits from our favorite characters. Teen dramas are not just mindless entertainment, they are pieces that speak to our experiences and emotions. They matter because at our age, we are figuring out who we are, and seeing characters navigate similar struggles makes that process a little less confusing. Many of us started watching them years ago, maybe because of peer pressure or maybe because there was nothing else on, and they stick with a lot of us because they are relatable, comforting, and sometimes a little addictive.

One thing that makes teen dramas especially important for our age group is that we're literally watching people who are supposed to be just like us. Even if we don't mean to, we pick up on their behaviors, their style, and even how they deal with problems. Think about it, when watching anything quite frankly, whether it's a documentary or a soap opera, we often tend to put ourselves in the characters' shoes and judge their actions from a distance. At first, we might say, "Why would she do that, that's so dumb," and brush it off. But that strong opinion can slowly turn into, "Oh I don't like the way she handled that," and that can spark real reflection. We start to notice how we handle problems differently, how we might respond better, or even how we can avoid making the same mistakes. Watching

these characters make decisions, succeed, fail, and learn from their experiences is almost like getting a practice run for real life and we watch and learn without the consequences.

Surprisingly, it's not just teens who enjoy these shows, adults watch them too. When asked about her thoughts on teen dramas, Mrs. Taha said, "I watched them as a teen myself.... and of course I watch the brainrot like The Summer I Turned Pretty." It only makes sense that many enjoy these shows to distract themselves from the everyday

dramas and stress in their life. "It's kind of like white noise sometimes, it's fun to not worry about your own problems and then laugh about it because it doesn't affect you," she explained. It only makes sense that many enjoy these shows to distract themselves from the everyday dramas and stress in their life.

When asked if there are any characters she resonated with, a student said, "Watching Gilmore Girls made me want to study more, because Rory was such a good role model for me." [Sharika Rogers,12] This highlights another important aspect of teen dramas: inspiration. Students and viewers often find traits in characters that they admire or want to develop within themselves. Whether it's Rory's dedication to her education, the way she handles friendships, or even the humor and wit of characters like Lorelai Gilmore, viewers pick up behaviors and attitudes that can influence their own lives. Teen dramas give us examples of people navigating challenges similar to ours, and seeing those challenges overcome, or even just dealt with, can be motivating.

There's also a huge variety out there, which means everyone can find something that speaks to them. At our age, our brains are still developing and super easy to influence, so the shows we watch can actually change the way we see things. This can be seen especially through social media, where people post edits or clips of their favorite characters and talk about how much they relate. Characters like Rory Gilmore are inspirations for their intelligence and discipline, and a lot of students look up to them for that reason. According to Psychology Today, Hal McDonald explains, "Identifying with a

character in a work of fiction can make us think like that character, even after we've closed the book or turned off the TV." Dramas with more diverse casts and storylines also create a kind of safe space. For teens who might feel out of place or unsure of who they are, seeing themselves represented on screen can make a huge difference. Representation is important because it validates experiences and shows viewers that they are not alone.

In the end, teen dramas are more than just shows for passing time. They provide a mirror for our own experiences, and a source of inspiration and representation. They remind us that growing up is unpredictable and above all something everyone goes through.

Cites referenced-

"Mind-Melding with Our Favorite Fictional Characters | Psychology Today." *Www.psychologytoday.com*, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/time-travelling-apollo/202104/mind-melding-our-favorite-fictional-characters.