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Comprehension Assignment Reading Guide: Helen Young, "Whitewashing the 'Real' Middle Ages in Popular Media" in *Whose Middle Ages*, pp. 233-242.

Please type your responses below under each question and save this file as a Word document (**NOT .PAGES AS I CANNOT OPEN IT**). Graded for effort and completion.

Fill out the worksheet below, citing page numbers where you find evidence in the reading, and then submit to Oaks as a Word file.

1-How does Young explain why some people have a negative response to the inclusion of people of color in medieval fiction and popular entertainment? What are the three different historical examples she gives as evidence that people of color were in or interacted with medieval Europe?

Some People have negative responses to the inclusion of people of color in medieval fiction because It challenges the idea of pure white European homeland. Some examples Young uses to prove people of color were in Europe are, African Muslims forming kingdoms on the Iberian peninsula in the 8th century (234), The depiction of people of color in art like the Saint Maurice in Magdeburg Cathedral in the 13th century (234-234), and the "mass migration and fusion of cultures in medieval Europe" (234)

2-Use an example from the reading or one you have found on your own and explain how it demonstrates this phenomenon of creating a homogenous Middle Ages. Can you also think of or find one that does not?

I have played lots of medieval inspired games, and I do not think one of them did not whitewash the period. Games like Mount and Blade BannerLord, Chivalry, The Witcher 3, and so on. All of these games portray the medieval period as a white one with limited inclusion of people of color into the world even though these games range from fantasy to trying to be a more realistic vestige of the past. I cannot think of an example that does not go against the grain. I was thinking maybe the Disc World series by Terry Pratchet, but I think it falls to the same stereotype as other works of media.

3-What explanation does Young give for why many people expect medieval Europe to be white? When and where did this idea develop? How was this idea used to justify European colonialism and imperialism?

Many people expect medieval Europe to be white because since we were young kids we have consumed various forms of media that only depict medieval Europe as being white. We consume all this media before we would ever take a history class. This idea of a white Europe comes from the 18th and 19th centuries where the people stopped thinking in terms of ancient Rome and Greece to the medieval period as the origin of Europe. This was because people of Europe could easily claim heritage to medieval Europe. This idea of a white medieval Europe was to justify colonialism and imperialism because the idea implied that white people were different and superior to everyone else (236-237)

4-How does Young explain the power of popular culture in our understanding of history? Why is this example of race in the Middle Ages so powerful?

Pop culture is so powerful to our understanding of the past because we see lots of it before we would ever read a historical source or do our own research on the topic. We take what we see and even if it is fantasy it appeals to us so we take it for a general idea of what that time period looked like. This is powerful because it can go so easily unchallenged for years if not our whole life.

5-What was your initial reaction to this essay? Did you identify any of your own ideas about the Middle Ages? Were you surprised to experience some sort of attachment to the idea of a certain image of the European Middle Ages? Why or why not?

I would say this essay did not surprise me. I remember the Kingdom com Deliverance example mentioned in the beginning of the essay from back in the day, but If I had read this when I was 16-17 I would probably find it shocking. Growing up I didn't realize this bias I had. I never understood why I felt like a fantasy game had to be "historically" accurate. I think what opened my mind is in reference to another time period, but I feel is relevant. It was that the game Battlefield 1 would include black and female soldiers in WWI. I remember feeling like they shouldn't do that at the time, but the more I thought about and saw some peoples unhinged reactions to it; more than just "no" but meltdowns. I realized that this notion in my head was not

right. I was surprised I felt so attached to this image I have of the past in my head because I think of myself as being open minded, and to have that image in my head feels wrong.

6- *The medievalpoc Twitter [X] feed may not be up anymore, but you can see the same images here: <https://medievalpoc.tumblr.com/>] NOTE: These are real historical images, they are not 'faked' or fabricated. Art historians have vetted the images.*

Please go to this site and scroll through the images until you find images from the Middle Ages (500-1600 CE). What do you find? Do any of these images surprise you? Choose one image to describe here with (if relevant) the date, artist, place, etc. What do you think of this image? How can you relate this to the Young essay?

I see pictures of art that feature people of color. I would this images surprise me because I do not think I have ever seen people of color represented in the medieval period. One image that sticks out to me is the Altarpiece with the Virgin Mary and Saint Maurice by an anonymous German Artist in 1490. This stands out to me because it's a statue of Saint Maurice next to the Virgin Mary, and to me even though now I know of the diversity of medieval Europe I still feel that medieval Europeans were deeply racist since modern white nationalism is based off that time. This relates to the essay because not only were my thoughts on the racial landscape of medieval Europe based on media, but even though I have learned that to be false. My idea of what medieval Europeans thought like is based off modern movements that use the false medieval history as a basis.