My Research Plan

Problem: How do stories affect people's opinions?

Topics related to the problem:

1) How do humans come up with opinions?
2) What is a story?
3) What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?
4) Why do humans enjoy stories?
5) Why do people write stories?

The Actual Facts

ONE MAIN IDEA I SHOULD RESEARCH IS…
How do humans come up with opinions?

- Forming opinions can be viewed as the task of specialized brain regions.
- Different opinions pave way for healthy discussions and arguments, which can pave the way to a better understanding. Opinions are also ways to understand an individual's psyche towards a particular topic.
- We typically form opinions based on our beliefs, judgements, and biases on the topic without understanding the truth.

Website Address (copy exactly):

- https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/common-sense-science/202506/the-ancestral-mind-how-evolution-shapes-our-opinions
- https://www.planetspark.in/elements/how-do-you-form-an-opinion-is-it-formed-quickly-or-slowly-over-time

A SECOND MAIN IDEA I SHOULD RESEARCH IS…
Why do humans enjoy stories?

- The average adult is still thought to spend at least 6% of the waking day engrossed in fictional stories on our various screens.
- Storytelling is a form of cognitive play that hones our minds, allowing us to simulate the world around us and imagine different strategies, particularly in social situations.
- Brain scans have shown that reading or hearing stories activates various areas of the cortex that are known to be involved in social and emotional processing, and the more people read fiction, the easier they find it to empathise with other people.
- Our capacity for storytelling – and the tales we tell – may have therefore also evolved as a way of communicating the right social norms.
- The concept of metaphor might offer a compelling answer to our attraction to imaginary worlds.

Website Address (copy exactly):

- https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20180503-our-fiction-addiction-why-humans-need-stories
- https://www.prosocial.world/posts/why-do-humans-enjoy-fictional-stories

A THIRD MAIN IDEA I SHOULD RESEARCH IS…
Why do people write stories?

- To Be Alive

- To Make a Name for Ourselves
- To Change The World
- To Discover Meaning

Website Address (copy exactly):

- https://thewritepractice.com/why-we-write/

Vocabulary

FIVE WORDS I NEED TO KNOW FROM MY RESEARCH ARE… Opinion, Fact, Story, Cerebrum, & Author
1)Word: Opinion Definition: A belief or attitude about something that isn't necessarily based in fact
Website Address (copy URL from definition website exactly – No 'Google Search'): https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/opinion
2)Word: Fact Definition: Something proven to be true
Website Address (copy URL from definition website exactly – No 'Google Search'): https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/fact
3)Word: Story Definition: A piece of fiction that narrates a chain of related events
Website Address (copy URL from definition website exactly – No 'Google Search'): https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/story
4)Word: Cerebrum Definition: The part of the brain that enables you to think, feel, and speak
Website Address (copy URL from definition website exactly – No 'Google Search'): https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/cerebrum
5)Word: Author Definition: A person who writes books and stories
Website Address (copy URL from definition website exactly – No 'Google Search'): https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/author

Paper Outline

Do not use the words I, me, we, you, they, them or any other pronouns!!!!

**** Underlined portions are where you put the information that is specific to your project*****
***Doing this will get you a "2" on the SF/EDP Paper, to get a "3" you need to have 2 pieces of information per paragraph, and to get a "4" you need to have 3 pieces of information per paragraph)

Intro (paragraph #1)

Plants are important in a human's everyday life. They play a critical part in our ecosystem. Because growing plants is so important to human existence, research on what type of water helps plants grow is crucial. Plants need water so determining if plants using bottled water, tap water and sparkling water is a valid research topic.

Detail #1 (paragraph #2)

(Research Questions #1) Tap water can be used to grow plants. According to ____. This is important because ___.

Detail #2 (paragraph #3)

(Research Questions #2) Sparkling water has benefits. As stated in the article _____. This shows that ____.

Detail #2 (paragraph #3)

Detail #3 (paragraph #4)

(Research Questions #3) Plants need water in order to grow. Based on the information from the website ____. This is important because _____.

Conclusion (paragraph #5)

Three facts learned are _____, _____, and _____.

Everyone alive today has heard or read a story. A good story makes the reader empathize with the characters and feel differently about the world. But stories don't come from nothing. Authors spend their time creating worlds and characters for readers to enjoy. The purpose of fiction, as is widely known, is to entertain. But a subtle message can also be there, influencing whoever reads it to think like the author. But does it work? Are human opinions really influenced by the fictional tales that flood their minds? If so, then it opens up a world of possibilities for books and stories. But how do humans really come up with these opinions? Why will they read a story in the first place? And why do authors even spend their time writing stories?

Human beings come up with opinions to make sense of the world. According to Dr. Sam Goldstein, "We didn't evolve alone in a vacuum but grew up in buzzing, story-rich communities. The ideas we hold come to us both through our genes and through the tales, customs, and habits we inherit from those around us." This shows that human opinions can come from a number of places. Dr. Goldstein also states that "Beliefs are shaped by evolved biases, rather than solely by logic or evidence." This means that most people don't research facts *before* coming up with an opinion, instead making assumptions. Famous Greek philosopher Plato had this to say about opinions: "Opinion is the medium between knowledge and ignorance." His idea was that opinions are based on a little bit of prior knowledge, but mostly assumptions and judgements on things like appearance. PlanetSpark says that "[W]e typically form opinions based on our beliefs, judgements, and biases on the topic without understanding the truth." This supports Plato's thinking, that an opinion is between knowledge and ignorance. Opinions are not always accurate, instead based on human ideas, assumptions, and stereotypes.

Human beings enjoy fictional stories. According to BBC, "[T]he average adult is still thought to spend at least 6% of the waking day engrossed in fictional stories…" Even though we don't have times where we gather around campfires like early humans, we are still spending time reading stories. BBC also says that "The more people read fiction, the easier they find it to empathise with other people." So fictional stories have benefits in everyday life? No wonder this tradition of storytelling has been going on for thousands of years! BBC also tells us that "The cave paintings in sites like Chauvet and Lascaux in France from 30,000 years ago appear to depict dramatic scenes that were probably accompanied by oral storytelling." Humans have craved tales for 30,000 years, creating them, developing them, even listening to them. Another possible reason for storytelling that BBC offers is that "Our capacity for storytelling – and the tales we tell – may have therefore also evolved as a way of communicating the right social norms." Perhaps like one of Aesop's fables then, storytelling conveys a clear sense of right and wrong to the readers of these tales. According to ProSocial World, "The concept of metaphor might offer a compelling answer to our attraction to imaginary worlds." So perhaps something in a story could reflect a problem in the world today. The solution to said problem could be found in the story, so it could be that we enjoy stories for their answers. As stated in *Unstoppable Us: How Humans Took Over The World* by Yuval Noah Harari, "[T]he useful thing about stories is that no matter how ridiculous they are, they help large numbers of people cooperate." This shows that storytelling enables humans to work together if they all believe in the same story. Though there are plenty of reasons that humans read fiction, there is no doubt that the tales we tell shape how we are today.

Humans write stories for a number of reasons. According to Sir Ken Robinson, "The arts especially address the idea of aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience is one in which your senses are operating at their peak; when you're present in the current moment; when you're resonating with the excitement of this thing that you're experiencing; when you are fully alive." So some people write to be fully alive. An idea presented by George Orwell for a motivation to write is that we have the "desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on the grown-ups who snubbed you in childhood, etc." But it could be so much more than that. Authors could want a legacy, for their stories to span generations, to make a mark on the world. Joe Bunting suggests that "Writing gives us a chance to turn the tides on consumerism. Rather than consume more, we can make something. Instead of fueling destruction, we empower creation." For some authors, they want to change the world, to make a mark, synonymous with George Orwell's idea that we want a legacy. Victor Frankl's view is that "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." Writing can help authors discover their place in the world. This is why stories come to be. An author has an idea and decides to write it down, because of any and all of the reasons listed above.

Three facts learned is that humans form opinions as a way to make sense of the world, humans are

attracted to fictional stories, and authors write these tales for a number of reasons. Humans can form opinions from past experiences and biases, and these opinions typically are not based in reason or fact. Humans are drawn to fictional stories because they help humans empathize with others, communicate social norms, and understand everyday life. This tradition of storytelling has been going on for thousands of years. Authors write to feel alive, to make a name for themselves, to change the world, and to discover meaning. These stories, these *necessary parts of society*, are one of the most important parts of civilization. Humans can only cooperate because they can believe in made-up stories. Therefore, determining if stories can impact the opinions of modern-day humans is crucial for the evolution of human civilization.

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Yuval Noah Harari. *Unstoppable Us, Volume 1: How Humans Took over the World*. Bright Matter Books, 18 Oct. 2022.