Task: Compare this article to the previous week’s.

How do the writers convey their different attitudes to “geekdom”?

You could:

* Compare their attitudes
* Compare the methods they use to convey their attitudes
* Support your ideas with references to both texts.

In defence of geek culture

Simon Pegg suggested that fandom was infantilising society – but people have always enjoyed discussing popular culture, and it’s healthy to do so

Few things hurt more than being called childish, which is why last week was an upsetting one for fans of [Simon Pegg](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/simonpegg). The actor and film-maker’s claims that geek culture has dumbed down society left many people feeling hurt and betrayed. I mean, isn’t escapism the whole point of cinema – especially the kind he often makes?

“Obviously I’m a very much a self-confessed fan of science fiction and genre cinema, but part of me looks at society as it is now and just thinks we’ve been infantilised by our own taste,” [he said to the Radio Times](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/may/19/simon-pegg-criticises-dumbing-down-of-cinema). “Now we’re essentially all consuming very childish things – comic books, superheroes. Adults are watching this stuff, and taking it seriously.”

“Sometimes [I] feel like I miss grownup things,” he continued. “And I honestly thought the other day that I’m gonna retire from geekdom.”

He didn’t (and so far hasn’t). And in response to the outcry, [Pegg took to his own blog](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/may/20/simon-pegg-still-a-nerd-and-proud-after-dumbing-down-of-cinema-comments) to clarify his sentiments and to stress the importance of prioritising real life over fantasy.

“As a society, we are kept in a state of arrested development by dominant forces in order to keep us more pliant,” he explained. “We are made passionate about the things that occupied us as children as a means of drawing our attentions away from the things we really should be invested in: inequality, corruption, economic injustice, etc.”

Which is a legitimate concern to have. It’s easy to look at the success of movies like [Avengers: Age of Ultron](https://www.theguardian.com/film/avengers-the-age-of-ultron) or [Mad Max: Fury Road](https://www.theguardian.com/film/mad-max-fury-road) and assume our collective enthusiasm for a genre once reserved for kids and teens alludes to our inability to grow up. In fact, [even Pegg himself sang the praises of Tomorrowland](http://simonpegg.net/2015/05/19/big-mouth-strikes-again/) – a movie that shares the name of a Disney theme park (and is also [influenced by Disney’s vision of utopia](http://variety.com/2015/film/news/tomorrowland-disney-ant-man-cinemacon-1201477444/)). Pegg isn’t wrong about our zest for “geek culture” or for the franchises of our youths or even our misplaced priorities in terms of pop culture over social awareness. (That’s something we all need to work on.) What Pegg is wrong about is the importance of fandoms – for everyone.

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Geek culture has spread and engulfed us all. In a subculture once (seemingly) reserved for sci-fi, it now encompasses shows as diverse as [The Walking Dead](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/the-walking-dead), [Game of Thrones](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/series/game-of-thrones-episode-by-episode) and [The Simpsons](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/the-simpsons). Once a specialist event, [Comic-Con](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/comic-con) now draws personalities from all walks of film, television and music. Last week, the internet was collectively obsessed with [the finale of Mad Men](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2015/may/21/mad-men-11-things-matthew-weiner-revealed) - a show that regularly tackled such heavy adult themes as sexism, alcoholism and death. And yet, like some fans cling to Batman, many of us clung to Don Draper, effectively proving that pop culture obsessions have less to do with genre than they do with our own need to escape reality.

Because escapism, by definition, isn’t a bad thing. It’s bad when you bury your head in the sand and seek solace only in fictional words, but to escape for an hour a week (or a couple more, by talking about said TV show or movie with friends, co-workers, or family) isn’t just a way to decompress, it’s a way to create community.

As children, we discover ourselves through our imaginations. My schoolfriends and I would watch [Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles](https://www.theguardian.com/film/teenage-mutant-ninja-turtles) or Power Rangers and act them out, using them as a jumping off point to create new worlds or to articulate thoughts and feelings we may not have otherwise been able to. As adults, we approach series and movies in much the same way, using them to stimulate conversations.

We might begin to talk to someone by asking “Do you watch Game of Thrones?” or by quoting a few lines from a movie, to gauge the tastes of another person, and suss out whether or not they’d make good friends. It’s the same way we asked new pals about their favourite bands in high school, or how our parents would discuss the latest plot twist in Dallas.

Because that’s the thing: geek culture itself isn’t new. It has always existed in various forms before we saw fit to name and define it. For some of us, escapism through pop culture provides an outlet that we need to keep our brains healthy and functioning. For others, it creates a sense of community. For most, it stimulates the last remnants of imagination left over from our years convinced we too could live off pizza in a sewer, fighting a giant rat. (Even though that giant rat is now the folks at [McCann-Erickson](http://blogs.wsj.com/cmo/2015/04/06/mccann-mad-men-portrayal/).)

But regardless, there’s nothing wrong with an inclusive geek culture – or even an extended adolescence. Without it, we wouldn’t have anybody to write movies and TV in the first place.