

## MEMES, TRENDS, AND TROPES: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING LITERARY CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT :

This article delves into the significant impact of social media on contemporary literary culture, focusing on the roles of memes, trends, and tropes. By defining these concepts and providing historical context, the article illustrates how the digital age has reshaped the way literature is consumed and discussed. It highlights how literary memes make complex ideas more accessible, while social media trends such as viral book recommendations and reading challenges influence reader engagement and book sales. The analysis extends to how discussions of literary tropes on social media shape modern writing and audience expectations. Through case studies of effective social media campaigns and the direct interaction between authors and readers, the article showcases the profound influence of digital platforms on literary practices. Additionally, it addresses potential criticisms, including the oversimplification of literary works and the conflict between quality and popularity driven by social media trends. This comprehensive examination underscores the dynamic and evolving relationship between social media and literature, offering insights into the future of literary culture in the digital landscape.

**Keywords-** Memes, Trends, Tropes, Social media, Contemporary literature, Digital landscape

### Definition of Key Terms

“Content is fire, social media is gasoline.”

-Jay Baer

**Memes:** Memes are cultural elements, often in the form of images, videos, or text, that spread rapidly across the internet, typically with humorous or satirical intent. In the context of social media and literature, literary memes are adaptations of this concept, using recognizable elements from books, authors, or literary themes to create shareable content that resonates with readers. They often distil complex ideas into easily digestible formats, making literature more accessible and engaging, particularly to younger audiences.

**Trends:** Trends refer to widespread movements or patterns of behavior that gain popularity over time, often driven by social media platforms. In literary culture, trends can manifest as viral book challenges, themed reading lists, or popular hashtags that encourage users to discuss specific books or genres. These trends can significantly influence reading habits, book sales, and even publishing decisions, as the collective focus of social media users shifts toward particular literary works or themes.

**Tropes:** Tropes are recurring themes, motifs, or clichés that appear in literature and other forms of storytelling. They serve as familiar narrative devices that help shape the expectations and experiences of readers. On social media, discussions about literary tropes often involve analysing and critiquing their use in contemporary literature, providing a platform for readers to voice their opinions and engage in dialogue about the effectiveness or overuse of certain tropes. This discourse can influence how authors approach their writing, as they become more attuned to the preferences and criticisms of their audience.

### EVOLUTION OF LITERARY CULTURE :

“Social media has revolutionized the way we consume, discuss, and engage with literature, transforming reading from a solitary activity into a dynamic and interactive experience.” - Jane Smith  
Literary culture has undergone significant transformations over the centuries. Initially, literature was predominantly oral, with stories and poems passed down through generations by word

of mouth. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century revolutionized literature, making books more accessible and promoting literacy. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the rise of literary magazines, book clubs, and public libraries, further democratizing access to literature and fostering a culture of communal reading and discussion. With the advent of the internet in the late 20th century, literary culture experienced another major shift. Online forums and websites dedicated to book reviews, literary criticism, and author interactions emerged, allowing readers to engage with literature in new ways. This digital revolution set the stage for the profound impact that social media would soon have.

### **INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA:**

“Social media is about sociology and psychology more than technology.”

-Brian Solls

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more recently, TikTok, have deeply integrated into literary culture, transforming how readers discover, discuss, and engage with literature. These platforms facilitate instant communication and community-building, allowing readers from around the world to share their love for books and connect over common interests.

**Discovery and Promotion:**Social media has become a crucial tool for discovering new books and authors. Hashtags like [#Bookstagram](#) and [#BookTok](#) trend regularly, with users sharing recommendations, reviews, and reading experiences. Authors and publishers leverage social media for book promotions, virtual book tours, and direct engagement with their audience, making it easier to reach a global readership. **Community Building:**Online book clubs and reading communities thrive on platforms like Facebook and Goodreads, where members can participate in discussions, share insights, and connect with like-minded readers. Events such as read-a-thons, live author Q&A sessions, and book discussions create a sense of belonging and shared experience among readers.

**Influence and Interaction:**Social media has democratized literary criticism, allowing readers to voice their opinions and influence trends and tropes in contemporary literature. Popular reviews and reader feedback on platforms like Twitter and TikTok can significantly impact a book's success. Authors use social media to interact directly with their readers, receive instant feedback, and even crowdsource ideas, making the creative process more interactive and responsive to audience preferences. **Viral Trends and Movements:**Viral trends, such as the [#ReadingChallenge](#) or specific book-themed challenges, encourage readers to explore new genres, authors, and literary works, often boosting sales and readership for featured books. Social media movements like [#OwnVoices](#) and [#WeNeedDiverseBooks](#) have played pivotal roles in advocating for diversity and representation in literature, influencing publishing decisions and promoting a more inclusive literary landscape.

### **THE ROLE OF MEMES IN LITERARY CULTURE :**

Literary memes are a subset of internet memes that specifically reference and parody elements from literature, including books, authors, characters, and famous quotes. These memes use humour, satire, and cultural references to engage readers, often distilling complex ideas or themes into easily digestible and relatable content. They function as a form of commentary on literary works, bridging the gap between traditional literature and modern digital culture. Literary memes simplify complex literary concepts by distilling intricate themes and ideas into concise, relatable, and often humorous content. This brevity and wit make it easier for readers to grasp and engage with sophisticated notions that might otherwise seem daunting. For example, a meme summarizing the existential themes of a novel in a single, clever image and caption can convey the essence of the story without requiring an in-depth analysis. Memes also blend visual and textual elements to enhance comprehension. The combination of a well-chosen image and a succinct piece of text allows for quick and effective communication of ideas. This multimodal approach caters to the short attention spans typical of social media users, making complex literary concepts more approachable and memorable. By making literature more relatable, memes draw on shared experiences and emotions,

which helps demystify dense or classic works. When readers see their own thoughts and feelings reflected in a meme, they are more likely to feel a connection to the material. This relatability can attract new readers who might otherwise be intimidated by traditional literature. Memes encourage engagement and discussion among readers. The interactive nature of social media, where memes are primarily shared, allows users to comment, like, and share content, fostering a sense of community. This engagement can lead to deeper exploration of the referenced literary works, as readers become curious about the original context of the meme. Finally, memes serve as a cultural bridge between traditional literary culture and contemporary digital culture. They introduce classic literature to younger audiences who primarily consume content online, ensuring that these works remain relevant and appreciated. By making literature part of the digital conversation, memes help preserve literary heritage in a way that resonates with modern readers.

#### **EXAMPLES :**

1. “I can’t. I have plans with my book.”
  - This meme often features images of people reading in cozy settings, humorously highlighting the preference of book lovers to stay home and read instead of engaging in social activities. This meme resonates with readers who identify as introverts or book enthusiasts, creating a sense of community and shared identity.
2. “One does not simply walk into Mordor.”
  - Adapted from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, this meme uses the famous line spoken by Boromir to create humorous and exaggerated scenarios about tasks that seem deceptively simple but are actually quite challenging. This meme introduces elements of Tolkien’s work to a broader audience, including those who may not be familiar with the books, sparking interest and curiosity.
3. “Roses are red, Violets are blue” adaptations
  - These memes take the structure of the classic rhyme and insert humorous or literary twists, often referencing specific books or characters. By playing with familiar poetic forms, these memes make literary references more approachable and engaging, encouraging readers to appreciate the creativity involved.

#### **CURRENT TRENDS IN LITERARY CULTURE :**

Social media has given rise to several trends in literary culture, reshaping how readers discover, engage with, and discuss books. These trends include viral book challenges, curated reading lists, and popular book recommendations, particularly those that gain traction on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. Current trends in literary culture, driven by social media, are transforming the ways in which books are discovered, read, and discussed. These trends not only influence individual reading habits and book sales but also shape broader publishing strategies and market dynamics. Through challenges, curated lists, and viral recommendations, social media continues to play a pivotal role in the evolution of contemporary literary culture. Social media users often participate in reading challenges, such as the Goodreads Reading Challenge, where they set personal goals for the number of books to read in a year. Other themed challenges might focus on reading books from diverse authors, specific genres, or certain periods. These challenges encourage readers to explore new genres and authors, broadening their literary horizons and fostering a sense of achievement and community among participants. Influencers and celebrities frequently share their recommended reading lists on social media, highlighting their favourite books or must-reads for specific occasions or themes. Such lists can significantly influence readers’ choices, often leading to spikes in sales for the featured books and increased visibility for lesser-known authors. Social media trends can drive significant increases in book sales. Viral recommendations, particularly on platforms like TikTok, can turn obscure or older titles into bestsellers almost overnight. This phenomenon underscores the power of social media in shaping market dynamics and consumer behavior in the

literary world. Social media trends influence readers' habits by encouraging them to diversify their reading choices. Challenges and curated lists prompt readers to explore genres and authors they might not have considered otherwise, enriching their literary experience. The communal aspect of these trends fosters a culture of shared reading, where discussing and debating books becomes a social activity. Publishers are increasingly paying attention to social media trends when making decisions about which books to promote or acquire. The rise of BookTok, for example, has led publishers to collaborate with influencers to boost the visibility of their titles. Furthermore, understanding which themes or genres are trending can help publishers anticipate market demand and tailor their offerings accordingly. Social media trends can lead to the reissuance of older titles that gain newfound popularity. Publishers may release new editions with updated covers or additional content to capitalize on the trend.

### **LITERARY TROPES IN SHAPING CONTEMPORARY WRITING AND READER EXPECTATIONS :**

“We get to live in a time that we get to use social media as a tool.”

-Gigi Hadid

Social media discussions and critiques of literary tropes play a crucial role in shaping contemporary writing and reader expectations. By highlighting popular tropes, offering constructive criticism, and advocating for innovation, these conversations influence authors to create more nuanced, diverse, and satisfying narratives. Contemporary writers are increasingly aware of the critical discussions surrounding tropes on social media. This awareness influences them to handle tropes with greater sensitivity and nuance, avoiding clichéd or problematic portrayals. For example, they might be more careful with the ‘enemies to lovers’ trope to ensure it doesn’t glorify unhealthy relationships. These platforms provide a space for diverse voices to express their opinions, leading authors to consider a wider range of perspectives when incorporating tropes. This results in more inclusive and well-rounded storytelling. The critique of overused tropes encourages writers to innovate and subvert expectations. For example, instead of a straightforward ‘chosen one’ narrative, authors might explore how the protagonist struggles with the pressures and responsibilities of their destiny, or share the role with a group of characters. Discussions on social media can also give rise to new tropes or variations of existing ones. Authors who engage with these communities can draw inspiration from readers’ desires for fresh and unique storytelling elements. As readers express their preferences and frustrations with certain tropes, their expectations evolve. Writers who stay attuned to these conversations can better meet the desires of their audience, crafting stories that feel relevant and satisfying. Social media allows for direct communication between authors and readers. Writers can solicit feedback, gauge interest in certain tropes, and even involve their audience in the creative process, leading to more engaged and invested readership. Understanding the tropes that resonate with readers on social media helps publishers and authors tailor their marketing strategies. Books can be promoted based on the tropes they include, tapping into existing discussions and interest groups. Authors who actively participate in trope-related discussions can build strong communities of fans who share similar literary tastes, enhancing reader loyalty and engagement.

### **EXAMPLES :**

1. “Enemies to Lovers” Trope

Social media platforms like Twitter and TikTok are filled with users discussing the “enemies to lovers” trope. Readers often share their favourite examples, debate the best portrayals, and critique when the trope is executed poorly. Users might highlight how this trope can sometimes perpetuate problematic relationships if not handled sensitively, or praise it for its potential to develop deep, complex character arcs.

2. “The Chosen One” Trope

This trope, where a protagonist is singled out for a special destiny, is frequently debated on platforms like Reddit and Instagram. Users often compare different iterations of this trope across various books and genres. While some readers enjoy the classic hero narrative, others critique it for being overused and predictable. Discussions often focus on how authors can subvert or refresh this trope to make it feel new and engaging.

3. “Love Triangle” Trope

The love triangle trope is a popular topic on book blogs and YouTube channels, where readers analyse its presence in young adult literature and beyond. They discuss their favourite and least favourite love triangles, and how they impact the story. Readers frequently express fatigue over the predictability of love triangles and call for more diverse and realistic romantic plots. They also critique how this trope can sometimes reduce characters to mere plot devices.

**INTERACTION BETWEEN AUTHORS AND READERS :**

“Don’t use social media to impress people; use it to impact people.”

-Dave Willis

Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok enable real-time communication between authors and readers. Authors can post updates, share insights about their writing process, and respond to readers’ comments almost instantly. Readers can ask questions, share their thoughts, and engage in discussions directly with their favourite authors. This immediacy fosters a closer, more personal connection. Platforms like Instagram Live, Facebook Live, and YouTube allow authors to host live Q&A sessions, book readings, and discussions. These events provide a space for interactive communication where readers can participate actively. Especially during the pandemic, virtual book tours have become popular. Authors use social media to reach a global audience, conduct live interviews, and discuss their latest works with readers worldwide. Authors often create or participate in fan groups on platforms like Facebook or Reddit, where they can share exclusive content, answer questions, and engage with a dedicated community of readers. Authors use specific hashtags to create buzz around their books and participate in challenges that encourage reader interaction. For example, an author might create a hashtag for readers to share their favourite quotes or scenes from a new release.

**INFLUENCE OF FEEDBACK ON AUTHOR’S WORKS AND LITERARY TRENDS:**

“Social media is not a monologue, it’s a two-way conversation.”

- Amy-Jo Martin

Social media platforms provide authors with instant access to reader reviews and comments. This feedback can be valuable in understanding what aspects of their work resonate with readers and what might need improvement. Authors can analyse engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments to gauge reader interest and preferences. High engagement on certain posts or topics can indicate what readers are most excited about. Authors can use polls and open-ended questions on platforms like Twitter and Instagram to solicit ideas or preferences from their readers. This can be particularly useful for making decisions about plot directions, character development, or even book covers. Some authors use social media to recruit beta readers who provide early feedback on manuscripts. This feedback can help authors refine their work before publication. Social media discussions often highlight trending tropes and themes that resonate with readers. Authors who pay attention to these trends can incorporate them into their writing, ensuring their work aligns with current reader interests. Authors can adapt their writing in response to constructive criticism received through social media. For instance, if readers express dissatisfaction with a particular plot point or character arc, an author might consider revising these elements in future works. Social media has amplified calls for greater diversity and representation in literature. Authors can use social media to



build anticipation for upcoming releases by sharing teasers, behind-the-scenes content, and engaging with readers about their expectations and hopes for the new book.

### **SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION: AUTHORS AND LITERARY WORKS :**

#### **1. Colleen Hoover**

Colleen Hoover has effectively utilized TikTok's BookTok community and Instagram to promote her books. She frequently posts engaging content, including book teasers, behind-the-scenes looks at her writing process, and personal anecdotes, creating a strong connection with her readers. Hoover actively interacts with her fans by responding to comments, sharing fan art, and participating in live Q&A sessions, fostering a loyal and engaged readership. Her book *It Ends With Us* saw a resurgence in popularity and significant sales growth due to viral TikTok trends and recommendations. Hoover's active engagement has built a dedicated fan base that eagerly anticipates her new releases and spreads word-of-mouth recommendations.

#### **2. Angie Thomas**

Angie Thomas, author of *The Hate U Give*, uses social media platforms to discuss important social issues, share updates about her work, and engage in conversations with her readers. She leverages hashtags and participates in social justice movements, aligning her literary work with broader cultural conversations. Thomas's active presence and advocacy on social media have not only boosted her book sales but also heightened awareness about the themes of racial injustice and activism present in her work. The social media buzz contributed to the successful adaptation of her novel into a critically acclaimed film, further amplifying its impact.

#### **3. Neil Gaiman**

Neil Gaiman is known for his engaging and witty social media presence, particularly on Twitter and Tumblr. He regularly answers questions from fans, shares updates on his projects, and posts insights into his creative process. Gaiman uses polls, open-ended questions, and interactive content to engage with his followers, creating a dynamic and interactive online community. His approachable and personable online persona has cultivated a strong and loyal fan base, eager to support his work and share it within their networks. Gaiman's effective use of social media has supported the success of various adaptations of his work, including the TV series "Good Omens" and "American Gods."

#### **4. Madeline Miller**

Madeline Miller, author of *Circe* and *The Song of Achilles*, engages with readers on Instagram and Goodreads by sharing book recommendations, discussing her writing process, and participating in book club discussions. Miller often shares visually appealing content related to Greek mythology and her books, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of her social media profiles. Her active participation on these platforms has increased her visibility and attracted a broader audience to her works, especially among bookstagrammers and mythological fiction enthusiasts. By interacting with readers and participating in book discussions, Miller has created a dedicated community of fans who passionately promote her books.

### **IMPACTFUL CAMPAIGNS: SOCIAL MEDIA MOVEMENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON LITERARY CULTURE:**

These social media campaigns and movements have profoundly impacted literary culture by promoting diversity, increasing reader engagement, and influencing publishing practices. They have created dynamic and supportive communities that advocate for authentic representation and inclusive storytelling, shaping the future of literature.

#### **#BookTok on TikTok**

#BookTok is a community on TikTok where users create short videos discussing their favourite books, sharing reviews, and participating in book-related challenges. Videos range from emotional reactions to plot twists, book recommendations, bookshelf tours, and books that made me cry lists.

Many books have seen significant sales increases due to viral #BookTok videos. For instance, *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller and *We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart experienced renewed popularity and climbed bestseller lists years after their initial release. The community fosters a passionate and interactive environment where readers can discover new books and connect with like-minded individuals, making reading a shared, communal activity. Authors who engage with the #BookTok community can enhance their visibility and connect directly with a younger, more diverse audience, leading to broader recognition of their work.

### **#OwnVoices Movement**

The #OwnVoices hashtag is used to highlight books written by authors from marginalized or underrepresented groups about characters from those same groups.

It emphasizes authentic representation in literature. Readers, authors, and publishers use the hashtag to recommend books, share personal stories, and advocate for diversity in publishing. The movement has brought attention to the importance of diverse voices in literature, leading to increased publication and promotion of books by authors from marginalized communities. Publishers have taken note of the demand for diverse books, resulting in more inclusive publishing practices and a greater focus on acquiring and marketing #OwnVoices stories. The movement has raised awareness about the significance of representation in literature, encouraging readers to seek out and support diverse authors and stories.

### **#WeNeedDiverseBooks Campaign**

Initiated by a group of authors and activists, the #WeNeedDiverseBooks campaign advocates for diversity in children's and young adult literature. It highlights the lack of representation and calls for more inclusive books. The campaign uses social media to share statistics, promote diverse books, and organize events like the Diverse Books Festival. The campaign has led to tangible changes in the publishing industry, including the establishment of diversity initiatives and grants to support diverse authors and illustrators. It has significantly increased awareness about the lack of diversity in children's literature, prompting educators, librarians, and parents to prioritize diverse books in their collections. The movement has created a strong, supportive community of readers, authors, and advocates who continue to push for systemic change in publishing.

### **#ReadingWomen Challenge**

“There is a moment where you have to choose whether to be silent or stand up.”

-Malala Yousafzai

Organized by the Reading Women podcast, this challenge encourages readers to explore books by women from different backgrounds and genres. Each year, a list of prompts guides participants to read more diversely. Participants share their progress on social media using the hashtag, discussing the books they read and recommending titles to others. The challenge has spotlighted many women authors, particularly those from underrepresented groups, increasing their visibility and readership. It encourages readers to step out of their comfort zones and explore books they might not have otherwise considered, promoting a broader literary landscape. The challenge fosters a sense of community among participants, who share recommendations and insights, enhancing the collective reading experience.

### **#DiverseBookBlogger Community**

This community consists of book bloggers who focus on promoting diverse books. They use social media to share reviews, recommendations, and discussions about the importance of diversity in literature. Posts often include book reviews, reading lists, author interviews, and discussions about representation in literature. The community has raised significant awareness about the importance of diverse books and the need for inclusive representation in literature. Reviews and recommendations from the #DiverseBookBlogger community can influence publishers' marketing strategies and acquisition decisions, leading to more diverse books being published and promoted. By highlighting diverse authors and their works, the community provides crucial support and visibility, helping these authors reach a wider audience.

### **QUALITY VS. POPULARITY: THE CONFLICT DRIVEN BY SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS:**

Social media has a significant influence on literary culture, often driving the popularity of books and authors. However, this popularity does not always correlate with literary quality, leading to a potential conflict between what is critically acclaimed and what is widely popular. The users typically favor content that offers instant gratification and is easily relatable. Books that provide quick emotional payoffs or mirror current social issues and personal experiences are more likely to go viral. The straightforward, easily digestible nature of such books makes them appealing to a broad audience, especially among younger readers who dominate social media platforms. Books that achieve viral status often overshadow critically acclaimed works that may not lend themselves as readily to social media promotion. Complex, nuanced literature might struggle to gain traction in an environment that prioritizes quick engagement. Literary masterpieces that require deep contemplation, such as those by authors like Kazuo Ishiguro or Marilynne Robinson, may not achieve the same level of social media-driven popularity as more sensational or emotionally charged books. Books that achieve popularity through social media often have a short shelf life. Their fame may fade as quickly as it arose, leaving behind works that may not have lasting literary value. In contrast, books considered to have high literary quality often enjoy enduring relevance and continue to be studied and appreciated long after their initial publication. The interplay between literary quality and popularity driven by social media trends presents both challenges and opportunities. While social media can sometimes prioritize popularity over quality, it also offers a platform for promoting diverse and high-quality literature. By balancing popular appeal with literary merit and leveraging educational initiatives, the literary community can navigate these conflicts and foster a richer, more inclusive reading culture

### **CONCLUSION :**

“By giving people, the power to share, we’re making the world more transparent.”

-Mark Zuckerberg

The intersection of memes, trends, and tropes within social media has profoundly reshaped the landscape of literary culture. Social media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for authors and readers to engage directly, fostering vibrant communities and democratizing access to literary discussions. Memes simplify complex literary concepts, making literature more accessible and relatable, while trends driven by platforms like TikTok and Instagram can catapult books to viral fame, influencing reading habits and publishing priorities. However, this rapid surge in popularity can sometimes overshadow critically acclaimed works, leading to a potential conflict between literary quality and mass appeal. The pressure on authors and publishers to conform to trends risks homogenizing content and shortening the lifespan of viral books. Yet, amidst these challenges, there are pathways to balance. Hybrid approaches that combine literary quality with popular elements, educational initiatives to promote high-quality literature, and the curation of diverse recommendations by influencers all contribute to a richer literary culture. Ultimately, the role of social media in shaping literary culture is multifaceted. It holds the power to both elevate and diminish, to democratize and homogenize. As readers, authors, and publishers navigate this dynamic landscape, the goal should be to harness the best of what social media offers—its ability to connect, engage, and inspire—while championing the enduring value of literary quality. By doing so, we can ensure a vibrant, inclusive, and diverse literary future that honors both the immediacy of trends and the lasting impact of great literature.

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