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Digital Demonstrations: Examinations of Protests and Politics in Cory Doctorow's Young Adult Fiction

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Ray Browne Conference

Digital Demonstrations:

Examinations of Protests and Politics in Cory Doctorow's Young Adult Fiction

Within this paper, I intend to examine the manner by which author and blogger Cory Doctorow utilizes complex themes of digital labor exploitation and intellectual property law within his young adult fiction in order to bring about positive social change, with particular attention paid to the 2008 novel *Little Brother* and its 2013 sequel *Homeland*, the 2010 novel *For the Win*, the 2012 novel *Pirate Cinema*, and 2014's *In Real Life*, a graphic novel written by Doctorow and illustrated by Jen Wang. Throughout Doctorow's realistic depictions of slightly-fictionalized versions of contemporary life and embellishments of near-future settings, readers are drawn into examinations of the realities of major issues, including gold farming, digital labor unionization, governmental monitoring of citizen activities, and creative leveraging of copyright law by multinational corporations. Although Doctorow himself has been a vocal proponent of these sorts of issues for some time, his utilization of these themes within works aimed at a young adult audience often suggests more concrete personal solutions to these issues than his own advocacy. By incorporating practicable information into his writings aimed at this audience, Doctorow has created a sort of manual for digital activism and piracy between the lines of a number of engrossing narratives. Throughout these works, representation of real-life organizations like Britain's anti-kettling group Sukey occurs, as do descriptions of strategies and materials important for a protestor to avoid arrest or abuse at the hands of law enforcement. At the same time, moral quandaries about digital information and labor rights are presented to readers to contemplate, leading to a better-informed populace of young digital consumers that will be prepared to both articulate their opinions and defend their rights in uncertain times.