Modern Connections in Alexander Pope’s The Rape of the Lock

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Pope’s Version

Alexander Pope’s 1712 mock-epic The Rape of the Lock satirizes 18th century high society. Belinda, consumed with vanity, is overcome with grief when a lock of her hair is stolen. All the characters value trivial concerns like appearance over important matters like religion and morality. Pope uses the mock-epic format to put a relatively insignificant event—the loss of a lock of hair—on the scale of a great, tragic battle.

A Modern Retelling

Pope’s criticism of high society remains relevant, even in twenty-first-century society. The issues of vanity and materialism still persist and have only been exacerbated by the explosion of social media. Modern-day Belindas have the same inverted values, placing follower counts and likes on the same level of importance as family and moral values. One’s social media identity has become central to how we view them, making it a part of our daily lives. Vanity has become more prevalent than ever, as we present ourselves on the global stage of social media. Influencers have become the most similar to a modern-day Belinda. Their job is to do well on social media, which is entirely centered around appearances and not reality.

Up next, baristas serve their soothing drink, which tempts the Baron to begin to think of stealing young Belinda’s braid, so fair, the golden lock of her most precious hair. Clarissa, Baron’s friend, is well prepared, and hands him scissors with enticing dare. He reaches out to steal what he must own, but Sylphs then light up young Belinda’s phone. She turns her head at just the right second, to look down and see why the Sylphs beckon. Once more, he tries, defeated by the same, and bites his lip so he conceals his pain. A third attempt he knows that he must do, and on this turn, the braid is cut in two. Belinda’s screams begin to slice the air, so much that guests think violence happened there.