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MONOGRAPH

**“HOW HAS STEPHEN HILLENBURG INFLUENCED THE ANIMATION PROCESS
OF TV PROGRAMS?”**

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Gratitude

I want to thank my family for always being there for me, understanding me and supporting me with the things I want to do in the future, I'd also like to thank to this school for all the people in it who has helped me go through tough times and teaching me a lot of things that will surely get me very far in the future, making this monograph will be something I won't forget when I grow up because it is my first mark on showing my passion for the career I want to pursue in the future. I also want to thank Stephen Hillenburg for being a huge influence on me and motivating me to pursue what I love the most doing which is drawing and making animations, and this monograph is to show my respect for him and for myself to learn more about him and what he did. Art and animation has always been my passion for a long time and this monograph shows how much I care about it.

Summary

My topic is about Stephen Hillenburg and his most popular cartoon show SpongeBob SquarePants and how his creation made a huge change to modern cartoons and how it has impacted society. In the first chapter titled “Stephen Hillenburg” We talk about Hillenburg’s early life and his interests in Marine Biology and art, how it led him to pursue cartoon animation as a career for the rest of his life, and how he came up with a world of characters through his love for Marine Biology and the ocean that would turn to be very charming for the show because of their personalities and designs in the show. In the second chapter titled “Influence” We talk about how successful his cartoon SpongeBob SquarePants turned out to be, how it became one of the most unique cartoon shows for its time, how it impacted many people both children and adults and how it changed the way cartoons were made in the future. In the third chapter titled “Legacy” We talk about Hillenburg finally passing away, how he left a legacy after his death because of his cartoon show, how much people showed respect and praise for his dedication on creating SpongeBob SquarePants, how much people started to realize how much SpongeBob has impacted to them as a person, and the life lessons that you can learn from SpongeBob SquarePants.

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Introduction

My topic will be about *Stephen Hillenburg and how his work has influenced the animation process of tv programs*. Hillenburg created something that has impacted a lot of people in our society which is the cartoon tv show SpongeBob SquarePants. Cartoons on tv that have children as the target audience became different because of SpongeBob, the goal of this monograph is to show who was Stephen Hillenburg and how he came up with the idea of creating a cartoon show that would have a significant impact in society and people around the world, and if it was his intention or not to give that kind of message to the people watching the show. A lot of people see this show as a funny cartoon for children to watch but it has some things to learn from it that you could apply in your daily life, there is also as many adults as children who enjoy watching Spongebob. The first chapter of this monograph is about how Stephen Hillenburg started his career in animation and what hobbies he had as a kid, we show what he did in life that would lead him to become successful in just doing what he enjoys the most.

In the second chapter we talk about his creation that reached and impacted a lot of people in society which is SpongeBob Squarepants, we show how it did a good job and how unique it was compared to many other cartoons at the time and how it shaped modern cartoons today. Finally, in the third and last chapter, We talk about Hillenburg's death and how he left a legacy because of SpongeBob SquarePants, we show how people have honored and praised him for creating SpongeBob SquarePants and bringing smiles to many people's faces

Chapter I

Stephen Hillenburg

1.1 Biography

Stephen Hillenburg was an Animator, Writer and Marine Biologist born in August 21, 1961 and died in November 26, 2018. He's mostly known as the creator of the cartoon TV show called "Spongebob Squarepants", which would turn out to be one of the most well-known cartoon shows in recent times and making a big influence to newly growing creators like myself due to how he came up with it and how he went on about creating it for everyone to see. Hillenburg as a child loved to draw and going to the beach. According to Abbey (2004): "When an interviewer asked him to describe himself as a child, for example, he replied that he was "probably well-meaning and naïve like all kids."" (p.122). Stephen Hillenburg developed a passion for sea life in his childhood when he'd watch films about the ocean life by Jacques Cousteau, the films introduced to him the nature of the sea life he never knew existed and became inspired by it. He also developed an interest in art. When he was in third grade, his teachers would appreciate his drawings like a drawing of a group of army men hugging each other instead of fighting.

1.1.1 Marine Biology.

When Stephen Hillenburg was 15, he took the chance to go snorkeling for the first time and this led to his decision to study Marine Biology in college, while he also had an interest in making art, he didn't think about having it as a career yet and just liked making art as a hobby, he thought going to an art school wouldn't get him able to make a living so he just focused on majoring in Marine Biology.

Although Hillenburg enjoyed marine biology, he longed to find a way to express his creative side in his work. "I've always been interested in art and making things, but I

chose not to go to art school because I thought I needed to do something else. Art was a tough way to make a living” he explained. (Abbey, 2004, p.122)

He didn’t have big goals in his life at that time and would just go with plans that he thought it would easily suite him for the rest of his life, but his decision to study Marine Biology would later end up being his main inspiration for going on to create his own tv cartoon show Spongebob Squarepants

1.1.2 Interest in Cartoons.

Stephen Hillenburg always had interest in art when he was young even before he decided to study Marine Biology, Stephen Hillenburg was inspired by his maternal grandmother who was a great painter which would lead him to be interested in making art, This was around the same time when he took scuba diving lessons. Once he had majored in Marine Biology in college, he started teaching Marine Biology at the Orange County Marine Institute for 3 years, after this he realized he was more interested in art than teaching Marine Biology. He created a comic called “The Intertidal Zone”, he used it for teaching Marine Biology to his students which featured art of anthropomorphic sea creatures drawn by himself. “Hillenburg returned to school to pursue a graduate degree in animation. “Changing careers like that is scary,” he admitted. “But the irony is that animation is a pretty healthy career right now and science education is more of a struggle.”” (Abbey, 2004, p.123).

1.1.3 Creating Cartoons.

Stephen Hillenburg started attending in CalArts Animation Programs and made some animated films, His films “The green beret” and “Wormholes” was shown in many film festivals in 1991, his success of making films in CalArts showed that pursuing this career would be worthwhile for him. After that, he started working as a director on the tv cartoon show “Rocko’s Modern Life” with Joe Murray as his first professional job. ““After watching

Joe tear his hair out a lot, dealing with all the problems that came up,” Hillenburg said, “I thought I would never want to produce a show of my own.”” (Abbey, 2004, p.125). He went on to develop his own cartoon show which would turn out to be “Spongebob Squarepants”, Stephen Hillenburg came up with the idea of the show as he was driving to the beach on the Santa Monica Freeway, he thought about the times when he was teaching Marine Biology to his students and remembered how fascinated the children seemed learning about it, so he decided to make his show take place underwater and would feature cartoon sea creatures as characters that have a civilization similar to our lifestyle in reality. According to Abbey (2004) Stephen Hillenburg said: ““I wanted to create a small town underwater where the characters were more like us than the fish,” he explained. “They have fire. They take walks. They drive. They have pets and Holidays.”” (p.125). Stephen Hillenburg started with creating the main character which would be Spongebob, the character went through many different designs when he was first creating him.

Hillenburg knew that he wanted his main character to be a sponge, “at first I drew a few natural sponges which was the correct thing to do biologically as a marine science teacher,” he recalled. “Then I drew a square sponge, and it looked so funny. (Abbey, 2004)

This show would eventually come to fruition and become the most well known tv cartoon show that it is in recent times that has brought influence and a positive effect on our society

I think as far as cartoon language goes he was easier to recognize. He seemed to fit the character type I was looking for, a somewhat nerdy, squeaky clean oddball.” In the end the character looked more like a kitchen sponge. (Abbey, 2004)

There’s a lot about the show to analyze that makes it clear how it gives us an example about different aspects of our society.

Chapter II

Influence

2.1 Impact on society

Stephen Hillenburg's cartoon show *Spongebob Squarepants* has impacted a large part of society with its unique charm, and humorous representation of our society. The setting and characters have adult characteristics, but it still comes off as a show for kids, which is why the show appeals to anyone at any age

We don't concentrate on morality during the show, but viewers know when something is wrong. When *Spongebob* lies, he gets it. He is a creative, open-minded being, and kids should feel free to be creative and know it is OK to be a nerd. (Abbey, 2004, p.131)

The show has mostly impacted on Children and it impacts them in a way that makes a big part of their lives memorable and something sweet to always remember.

According to Abbey (2004) Hillenburg said: "The main thing about *Spongebob* is that he celebrates innocence. His outlook on life is very optimistic and earnest, and I think kids relate to that. He has a creative spark, in the same way, children are very creative from an open and naive perspective." (p. 128)

Spongebob brought a lot of families together to have a great time watching something humorous with their children. The special thing about *Spongebob* and why it impacted so much on society, is because it is the first tv cartoon show for children to not only be about slapstick comedy, but rather having it mostly be about funny, humorous interactions and dialogue between characters. This kind of comedy at the time would only be found in tv shows made for adults like "*The Simpsons*" for example, but *Spongebob* was the first cartoon show to take that concept of comedy and make it more appealing to children with a very

charming setting and characters that just makes you think about the good times in life. There weren't any other cartoon show for kids that was like this at the time which is what really made it stand out.

2.1.1 Impact on Modern Cartoons.

Spongebob would not only make an impact to society, but also shape how modern cartoon comedies would become. "Fans note that SpongeBob SquarePants is simple and funny, without the vulgarity and violence seen in many contemporary cartoons." (Abbey, 2004, p.129). Most of cartoons made for children before Spongebob would just consist of having slapstick humour or just characters hurting themselves that's only visually funny in cartoons like "Looney Tunes" or "Tom and Jerry". Ever since Spongebob first came out with its unique take on a cartoon comedy for children, a lot of future cartoons took that formula and started doing the same. The great thing about this style of humour in cartoons is that both adults and children can enjoy it if it has good jokes. Spongebob even has some jokes in it that only an adult would understand, but it is portrayed in a way that seems innocent without context to children. A lot of modern cartoon shows started doing this ever since SpongeBob was aired and it is very clear because of how well SpongeBob did and how much it has impacted to society.

2.1.2 Influence and motivation.

Most people that likes watching cartoons and aspires to become an animator when they grow up will agree that Spongebob SquarePants is one of their big inspirations for pursuing a career in the animation industry. Mainly because of the unique charm and style it has throughout the show and there isn't a lot out there like it, I've met a lot of people that consider SpongeBob to be the cartoon show that changed modern cartoons, most people

consider the first three seasons to be the best the show has been because it is where Stephen Hillenburg worked the most on. After the first seasons of Spongebob, Hillenburg made a SpongeBob SquarePants movie in 2004 which was when he decided to leave the series marking it as the end for the SpongeBob show

In April 2002, he had produced 60 episodes. A few months later, Hillenburg began working on a feature-length SpongeBob movie that is scheduled to be released in late 2004. "I don't want to try and do a movie and the series at the same time," he explained. (Abbey, 2004, p.134)

But Nickelodeon decided to keep making more episodes, Hillenburg worked for a small period of time for the show after the movie before he left the series completely.

We have 60 episodes and that is probably as many Nick really needs. It is a standard number for a show like this. I have done a little research and people say it is just crazy doing a series and movie at the same time. I would rather concentrate on doing a good job on the movie. (Abbey, 2004, p.134)

Chapter III

Legacy

3.1 Joy

Stephen Hillenburg was remembered by many people after his death and a lot of people got together to take a moment to realize and appreciate how much SpongeBob impacted many people. Hillenburg brought a lot of joy to people with SpongeBob SquarePants and left a legacy to the cartoon industry and society. Part of why people appreciate SpongeBob so much, is because of how much smiles it brought to many people around the world, SpongeBob had many memorable moments in the show, and it brings good memories to everyone. The funny thing about this is that Hillenburg never thought the show would reach to adult audiences.

Hillenburg is surprised by the popularity of the show, and particularly by its strong appeal to adult audiences. "I can tell you that we hoped it would be liked by adults. But we really thought the best we could hope for was a college audience" (Abbey, 2004, p.132)

Hillenburg never meant for the show to reach to a lot of people, he just tried to have fun making his own cartoon show. "We just try to make ourselves laugh, then ask if it's appropriate for children" (Abbey, 2004, p.132). A big part of why people still talk about this show is because of the memorable quotes and funny jokes in the show, it is one of the main reasons why the show brings a lot of joy to people, and stands out from most cartoons

Many parents began watching the show on their own after being exposed to it through their children. "It seems like we're aiming at a child audience, but everyone can laugh

at the basic human traits that are funny. It's playful, the humor is playful, the world is playful" (Abbey, 2004, p.129)

3.2 Worldwide Recognition

SpongeBob is recognized around the whole world and it's no doubt the show received a lot more recognition after Hillenburg's death. People started to make a petition for the song "Sweet Victory" from SpongeBob SquarePants to play on the half time show of the Super Bowl in honor of Hillenburg's death and to pay tribute to him, and they managed to do it because SpongeBob meant that much to a lot of people. One thing that still makes SpongeBob recognizable to this day is because of the social media and internet, memes have always been a part of the internet and social media culture and it's one of the big reasons why SpongeBob is very recognized to this day. SpongeBob has won many awards during its time

Golden Reel Award (Motion Picture Sound Editors): 2000, for best sound editing in television animation

Television Critics Association Award: 2002, for top children's show

Walk the Talk Award (Heal the Bay environmental public interest group): 2001, for elevating marine life awareness through the SpongeBob SquarePants cartoon

Reuben Awards (National Cartoonists Society): 2003 (Abbey, 2004, p.135)

3.3 Message

Stephen Hillenburg made SpongeBob SquarePants with fun in mind and didn't take it very seriously but intentional or not, it has some life lessons that should be considered to learn that are just about doing the right things. "He always manages to get into trouble, but he never lets it get him down. His happy-go-lucky attitude often annoys Squidward and Mr. Krabs, but

they both tolerate him because he is so likeable” (Abbey, 2004, p.128). SpongeBob’s personality is an example of how a good kid should be, being themselves and not thinking if the way you are makes you unlikable, and always looking on the bright side and knowing that better days will come. SpongeBob SquarePants also shows a lot about friendship, Squidward dislikes SpongeBob a lot and he finds him annoying, but if you look at enough episodes you can clearly tell that Squidward cares for SpongeBob and he wouldn’t be happy to have him gone. This shows that having an annoying and unlikable friend is the opposite when they are a friend that look out for you and are honest with you. Owning up to your mistakes is something SpongeBob does in the show, and it is a good example of being honest not only for others but for yourself as well. Stephen Hillenburg had a really big passion for the Ocean life and art and he wanted to express his passion by creating something that can represent all of that, and SpongeBob SquarePants is just that.

Hillenburg kept thinking about SpongeBob and his friends until he had created what he called “a whole world in my head.” He turned this world into what is known in the field of animation as a “Bible” a book full of characters, descriptions, settings and situations that forms the basis of a cartoon series.” (Abbey, 2004, p.128)

Hillenburg expressed his passion to the whole world by making a cartoon show that can inspire others to do the same; To think about what you enjoy the most doing in life and try to pursue that into something that can not only change the world, but to prove to yourself that you can make your passion into reality

Conclusions

At the end of the following monographic work it is concluded that:

- Stephen Hillenburg was a marine biologist that had a passion for the ocean life and art
- People can make a success out of anything they enjoy doing the most if they really put a lot of care to it be
- cause that's what Stephen Hillenburg did
- Hillenburg's animated series reflects a lot about his personality and what he personally likes, represented in a cartoon.
- Spongebob SquarePants impacted many people in society because of how unique it was compared to other cartoon shows at the time.
- SpongeBob SquarePants shaped up modern cartoons and changed how comedy would be handled in future cartoons
- Stephen Hillenburg stopped working for SpongeBob SquarePants after he made a movie for it in 2004 but Nickelodeon kept making more episodes for the show with Hillenburg involved
- Many people started to appreciate Spongebob more after Stephen Hillenburg's death
- The Super Bowl paid tribute to Stephen Hillenburg by making a performance about SpongeBob in the Super Bowl Half time.

Recommendations

At the end of this work it is recommended:

- People could learn from Stephen Hillenburg and just focus on what they enjoy the most doing in their life and try to pursue it.
- That you take SpongeBob SquarePants as something more than just a kids show
- To notice how much joy and happiness brought to a lot of people in society and made people learn appreciate good things in life.
- Appreciate the time and effort someone puts into creating something for the public to see
- Understand the passion that goes behind someone's hard work of art and how much they care about it to express themselves

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Qr Code

