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The Impact of Social Media on the Publishing Industry:

A Case Study of Author Colleen Hoover

By

Chloe Grace Foster

An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment

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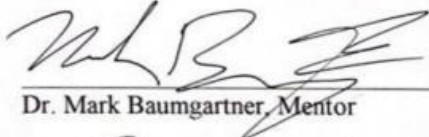
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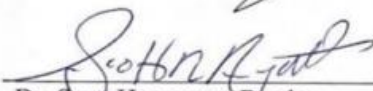
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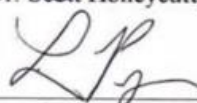
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Introduction

Within the past ten years, social media has taken the world by storm. Users of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can find communities that have similar interests as them, while interacting with one another. This can involve beauty, sports, video games, reading, and more. Recently, thanks to platform the TikTok, the growth in interest of people desiring to read and find others who share the same interest in reading has grown exponentially. Users on TikTok who specialize in books are known as “BookTokers.” These users are known for dissecting their favorite literary tropes, recommend favorite authors, share their own trailers for certain books, and give one another book recommendations that they think their followers should add to their “To be Read” lists, also often abbreviated as TBR. On Instagram, users create what are known as “Bookstagram” pages, where users can share their current reads alongside an aesthetically pleasing photos that are often taken at local coffee shops, next to a lit candle, or in a fluffy bed, all to make the book look more appealing to an audience’s mind and eye. YouTube users that create content based on book content are known as “BookTubers,” and they film videos in the same manner as TikTok creators do, just in a longer format. Each of these platforms have helped to create an online space for all reading lovers to come together, while also inviting newcomers in to join in on the fun as well.

A popular app that has excelled recently due to other social media sites is Goodreads. Goodreads was created in order to review books, share thoughts, and set goals for the number of books one would like to read within a year. Goodreads can even be seen as a form of “positive peer pressure,” seeing what one’s friends are reading and how many books they are finishing in a certain span of time, which can lead a person to want to read as well. The app’s form of logging how many books are read in a year can lead people to want to read more and challenge

themselves, and they can even create virtual reading groups or book clubs and create discussions and make challenges on who can read the most books in a year. Goodreads was created in order to have a sole purpose of discussing books, and it has therefore grown in popularity since reading has become more popular social media as a whole.

One social media site in particular has helped authors grow in success, often before they themselves become active on the app: TikTok. This site has helped many authors become much more popular than they were before, but it has helped author Colleen Hoover grow at an exponential rate. Anyone that has had access to TikTok within the past year has probably had a Colleen Hoover book appear in video on their “For You Page,” the page on TikTok where users can scroll through content that follows an algorithm which learns about the user’s specific interests. However, Hoover has been writing and publishing novels since 2012. She had already published more than a dozen novels by 2020, yet her popularity has only grown since she made her appearance on social media. Hoover is a case that will be studied by authors for years to come for the ways she markets herself and interacts with her audience by meeting them where they are. She continues to have daily interactions with her fan base and constantly listen to what they have to say, and also take actions on the advice they give to her involving her writing and more. Hoover understands that the audience can make or break an author, so by listening to what they have to say, she continues to grow her audience daily and sell more books than any other author on the market as of now.

Colleen Hoover and Her Success

Colleen Hoover is an American author best known for her romance novels. She is also the number one New York Times bestselling author of twenty-two novels, all in the new adult and young adult romance categories, with the exception on one psychological thriller, *Verity*

(Hoover). According to *Texas Highways*, a monthly guide in the state of Texas, “Like some of her protagonists, Hoover comes from a humble background: Born in Sulphur Springs, and still living in a nearby small town, Hoover married her boyfriend soon after she graduated from Saltillo High School and gave birth to three sons before the age of 26. Later, she earned a degree in social work from Texas A&M University-Commerce, worked in various social work positions, returned to school for another degree in infant nutrition, and held a job with the federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program while taking up fiction writing as a hobby” (Walsh). Then, she started writing as a hobby, self-publishing her first novel, *Slammed*. That novel then went on to hit the bestseller list, and then she went on to write more than 20 more novels since then, now selling millions of copies of each.

Across her social media platforms, Colleen Hoover has millions of followers. In fact, across all platforms, Hoover has over 4 million followers, with 1.9 million Instagram followers, 1.1 million TikTok followers, 180,300 Twitter followers, and 876,000 Facebook followers. Hoover is also the second most followed author on Goodreads, behind the legendary Stephen King (Rizer). Atria, Hoover’s publisher, has confirmed that her most popular books that have been featured on TikTok have spent “a combined 151 weeks on The New York Times bestseller list” (Rizer). Hoover’s mass number of followers on her social media accounts can contribute to the large amount of book sales, seeing the numbers of people who follow her who can also, and do also, spread the love of her books by word of mouth to their friends and family.

Recently, Hoover published a sequel to her hit novel, *It Ends with Us*, entitled *It Starts with Us*. Hoover and her marketing team keep up to date with the most popular social media trends happening at the time of release, so they used the brilliant idea of promoting the title of the book through a new social media platform called “BeReal.” BeReal is an app where all users

are prompted once each day to snap a photo that uses both the front and back camera at the same time, taking a selfie of the user and a photo of what they are currently doing. Hoover's marketing manager claims that by keeping up with social media trends, "[this] indicates a continual interest to remain ahead of social media trends," and therefore staying connected and relevant to their audience (Davies et al.). Also, when prompted on Hoover's social media success involving her latest novel, "It Starts with Us, marketing manager Sarah Jeffcoate told the Bookseller, "It might start with us, but it certainly won't end for some time!" (Davies et al.). Colleen Hoover's social media success is an impressive feat that authors will be attempting to replicate for years to come.

Hoover is selling mass amounts of her novels at an exponential rate, especially compared to her competition. Per The New York Times, "Colleen Hoover has sold more books this year than Dr. Seuss. She's sold more books than James Patterson and John Grisham — combined" (Alter). The size of her audience is massive in comparison to other authors on the best seller list. Colleen Hoover has held over half of the top ten spots on the New York Times Bestseller list for paperback fiction books and "has sold 8.6 million print books this year alone — more copies than the Bible" (Alter). Hoover attests that much of her success comes from her social media presence. Across all platforms, she has 3.9 million followers, where she posts real, authentic, and goofy videos of herself. This showed her fans that she was a real person and marketed herself as "relatable." However, while she began her social media presence in earlier years of her career, her sales began to rise during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. On TikTok alone, as of January 2023, the hashtag #colleenhoover has amassed over 3.1 billion views. While other authors have now started to follow in Hoover's footsteps, no one has managed to copy her style and be as successful as she.

It Ends with Us is seen as her most popular book thus far. As of July 2022, *It Ends with Us* “has been on the list for 58 weeks, hit the No. 1 spot earlier [2022], and has sold over 3 million copies, according to its publisher, Atria (the title also spent two weeks on the list in 2016 after its initial publication)” (McNeal). According to Atria Publishing Group, a division of publishing group Simon & Schuster, “Hoover’s most popular books on TikTok have spent 151 weeks on the list combined, with no signs of dropping off, even though the most recent title currently in the top 15 was published four years ago, in 2018” (McNeal). By Colleen Hoover dominating the charts currently, this proves that the BookTok community is not only a large portion of the TikTok community now (with the hashtag #booktok being used on more than 60 billion videos per BuzzFeed), but that communities this large can have a great impact on the sales of any book, no matter the author.

Colleen Hoover’s Controversial Topics in her Writing

One thing that Hoover is known for is the controversial and hard-hitting topics in her writing. In Hoover’s *It Ends with Us*, the topic of domestic abuse comes up quite frequently. While the book does fall into the romance category, following the love story of main character Lily, her boyfriend Ryle, and Lily’s childhood boyfriend Atlas, the overall theme of domestic abuse is present. Four months after its release in 2016, *It Ends with Us* was awarded the Best Romance Goodreads Choice Award (Dwiastuti). This caused great controversy around the novel, some people believing that the book sometimes caused a romanticizing of abuse.

The plot of this novel revolves around Lily Bloom, a woman ready to start her life after college. Lily meets a man on top of a building one night, a man by the name of Ryle Kincaid. He was a neurosurgeon in the city. Lily met Ryle on the day of her father’s funeral, the father who abused her mother for the entirety of Lily’s childhood. As the book moves along, Lily and Ryle

find one another in their lives again, and Ryle decides to tell Lily that he cannot live without her in his life. While this is the best news to Lily, who feels the same about Ryle, the readers know that their love cannot be simple this early on in the novel, otherwise the book would end much too quickly.

Main character Lily grew up in a domestic abuse household, her father Andrew constantly abusing her mother, Jenny. Her father also abused Lily's first love, Atlas, a homeless boy in Lily's neighborhood living in an abandoned home. Lily vowed that the cycle of abuse would end with her, unfortunately the abuse continued when she is with Ryle. Ryle shows red flags of abuse throughout the novel, even from the beginning. Ryle hits Lily while they are intoxicated on one of their first dates as a reaction to being burnt by a hot dish, and Lily chooses to let it slide. He proceeds to tell Lily it will never happen again, and that he would never hurt her on purpose.

Ryle and Lily decide to eat at a new restaurant in town, but unfortunately for Lily, her first love Atlas is the chef at the restaurant. He notices the cut on her face from where Ryle had hit her, and immediately gives her his number and urges her to call him if something happens. Lily feels the need to hide this from Ryle, knowing it will only make him jealous. They leave the restaurant and Lily chooses to keep the number just in case. Not long after the dinner at the restaurant, Lily and Ryle get married, thinking it would solve their problems. After a bit of time, Ryle finds the phone number for Atlas in the back of Lily's phone case. He accuses Lily of lying to him about knowing Atlas and storms out of the apartment. When Lily follows him out of the apartment, Ryle proceeds to push her down the stairs, yet again another example of abuse from Ryle. Lily decides she has had enough, kicks him out, and calls Atlas to take her to the hospital. They find out there that she is pregnant with Ryle's child. She lets Ryle know about the

pregnancy but tells him to leave her be in fear he would hurt her again. She talked to her mother concerning the abuse, especially since she had been through it herself. Lily's mother gave her advice concerning the abuse she had endured for years:

We all have a limit. What we're willing to put up with before we break. When I married your father, I knew exactly what my limit was. But slowly . . . with every incident . . . my limit was pushed a little more. And a little more. The first time your father hit me, he was immediately sorry. He swore it would never happen again. The second time he hit me, he was even more sorry. The third time it happened, it was more than a hit. It was a beating. And every single time, I took him back. But the fourth time, it was only a slap. And when that happened, I felt relieved. I remember thinking, 'At least he didn't beat me this time. This wasn't so bad' (*It Ends with Us*, pg. 391).

Lily decided, in that moment, that the cycle of abuse would end with her and her baby girl.

Cycles exist because they are excruciating to break. It takes an astronomical amount of pain and courage to disrupt a familiar pattern. Sometimes it seems easier to just keep running in the same familiar circles, rather than facing the fear of jumping and possibly not landing on your feet. My mother went through it. I went through it. I'll be damned if I allow my daughter to go through it. I kiss her on the forehead and make her a promise. "It stops here. With me and you. It ends with us" (Hoover, pg. 360).

The cycle of abuse is a tough topic for many people, mainly being a topic that most people avoid. Many authors will only talk about verbal abuse with little physical abuse, but Hoover takes abuse to the extent of heavy details of each abuse circumstance, even with the instance of rape. This caused this novel to face backlash, some people claiming it is too graphic

to read. However, some people first heard of the novel based on its backlash, then causing the book to regain popularity and find a new fanbase. This novel is set to become a movie in 2024.

Colleen Hoover is known for pulling from her personal life experiences in her life and inserting them into her novels. Finding ways to turn her hardships in life into life lessons to share with her audience has helped her success grow and prosper. *It Ends with Us* depicts a woman who was abused by her husband after having witnessed the abuse of her mother by her father. The experiences that Lily suffered through within the novel were taken from examples of the abuse that Hoover's mother went through at the hands of her husband. In the author's notes of the novel, she writes her own experience with witnessing her mother's abuse:

My earliest memory in life was from the age two and a half years old. My bedroom didn't have a door and was covered by a sheet nailed to the top of the door frame. I remember hearing my father yelling, so I peeked out from the other side of the sheet just as my father picked up our television and threw it at my mother, knocking her down...I asked my father about the abuse once. He was very candid about their relationship. He was an alcoholic during the years he was married to my mother and he was the first to admit he didn't treat her well. In fact, he told me he had two knuckles replaced in his hand because he had hit her so hard, they broke against her skull (Hoover, *It Ends with Us*).

Hoover stated that her mother filed for divorce when she was three years old. She described her mother as independent, Hoover never understanding how her mother could stay with her abusive husband for so long. This is seen with Hoover's character Lily never understanding how her mother could stay with her abusive father for so long, yet Lily found herself in the same position in her adult life. This book has trigger warnings for the audience, letting them know that the

topics in this novel are sensitive and can be triggering to people that have witnessed or been involved in the same type of abusive situation. Hoover's writing can help people to realize their situations, as well as relating to people who have been in the same situation in their lives, letting them know that they are not alone in their problems.

Hoover's literature is popular because it often meets people in real-life situations where they are, whether it be the good, bad, or ugly parts of life. Her writing often focuses on the hard parts of life, such as domestic abuse, divorce, and even hard love. People also love romance literature, especially if the character goes through some trials and tribulations along the way in order to work for their happy ending. While the average romantic book tropes are in her literature, such as sex and love triangles, she goes out of her way in order to create ways for the audience to fall in love with the abusers and cheaters along the way as well, just like the main characters. In fact, sometimes it is hard for the reader to find the negativity in the antagonist because they are often a charming character. Colleen Hoover has a magical way of creating human relationships and intimacy that feel familiar to the audience, explaining much of her popularity with people looking for a casual read. People want to read about situations that are familiar to themselves often, and Hoover is fantastic at creating those worlds for her audience.

Social Media and Literature

While TikTok may have begun as an app where the younger generation could post content to share with their friends, it has developed into much more. Just like social media site Instagram, TikTok quickly expanded into the realm of influencers and the influencer lifestyle. A social media influencer is often an average person who makes content that is relatable to everyday life. This can involve clothing, movies, mundane tasks, exercise, and reading. When an influencer takes it upon their self to promote a product, or in this case book, it often becomes a

trend that other people or influencers decide to copy and do as well. This leads to the upsurge in book sales, just like what happened to Colleen Hoover. In March of 2022, content-creator Aliisha Keens posted a simple video of her holding up Colleen Hoover's book *Reminders of Him*. According to BuzzFeed, "All [Keens] does is show the cover of a book, but the 10-second clip has now been viewed nearly 700,000 times and is one of the highest-performing videos she's ever posted" (McNeal). Now, seeing as the video has been viewed at least 700,000 times, this demonstrates that one video can reach a large mass of people. If the book is made to appear interesting within that short video, more people would be likely to travel to their local bookstore and pick up a copy, all thanks to a ten-second video they watched earlier while relaxing in their home. This proves that while TikTok was once made to be quite the simplistic app, it now has a hold on millions of peoples' lives, their interactions with one another, and often the styles in which they live their day-to-day life.

Book accounts on social media are becoming so popular that the people that are in charge of the accounts can sometimes find themselves becoming extremely popular as well. An example of two book lovers that have found themselves with a large following thanks to their creative posts are James Trevino and Elizabeth Sagan. As of January 2023, James Trevino has 123,700 TikTok followers and 286,000 Instagram followers, and Elizabeth Sagan has 85,500 TikTok followers and 201,000 Instagram followers. Together, the pair runs an account by the name of @MyBookFeatures, an account that only features other Bookstagram accounts to help promote other accounts while also giving inspiration to other accounts as well. This account alone has 239,000 followers. Sagan and Trevino are known for their creative photos using physical copies of books. Sagan often uses her collection of books to create scenes from a book she is currently reading, such as creating a book crown if the book is based off of a royal storyline. Trevino often

does the same as well, and also shows off his love of pop culture with book tributes that can be seen on his Instagram feed, such as showing off tributes to *Iron Man*, *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, and more. Having such popular accounts based off of other books is a remarkable feat, considering Trevino and Sagan are not authors themselves.

There may be famous book accounts, but that does not discourage people from sharing their love of books on a smaller, more personal level. Instagram users @BookishBiologist shares pictures of her amazing book collection while also giving book recommendations to her followers. One author she chooses to promote often is none other than Colleen Hoover herself. In May of 2022, @BookishBiologist owner Jess shares a video of her Hoover book collection, also showing that the books are in the exact order of publication on her shelf as they are listed on Hoover's website. In the caption, she states that she has been a "#cohort since 2012 and going strong" (Jess). The definition of the word "cohort" means a shared group of people that have something in common. Many Colleen Hoover fans call themselves "CoHorts," seeing as that is a play on words and a clever play on her name as well. Many book accounts across all forms of social media love to share their love for the author, and due to the number of videos and photo posts being launched across social media at all times, Colleen Hoover's success and book sales go up on a daily basis.

Another form of social media that has been around for the longest amount of time is BookTube, YouTube's own "book club." One user is known as the "pioneer" of BookTube, dating all the way back to 2010: Christine Riccio. Her YouTube channel is under the name polandbananasBOOKS, and her first BookTube video involved Riccio discussing *The Hunger Games*. She found much inspiration in a channel called Vlogbrothers consisting of two brothers, Hank and John Green, as they talk about books, pop culture, and other forms of media. While the

Vlogbrothers created their channel in 2007 and take much pride in being “nerds” about books and education, Riccio was one of the first channels to center their focus around reading and books. Her channel has almost 77 million views and more than 420,000 subscribers, and thanks to the success of her YouTube channel, she began writing books of her own. In 2019, she published her first novel *Again, but Better* through publishing company Wednesday Books (Alum). Then, in 2021, she released her second novel *Better Together*. Now, thanks to her YouTube and writing successes, Riccio is a New York Times Best Selling author. While some people may believe that social media success can just be a flash in the pan, the successes of authors and creators such as Christine Riccio prove that these successes can turn into successes that can last a lifetime.

A very famous example of a BookTuber is John Green, one of the Vlogbrothers. John Green is a New York Times bestselling author of several books, such as *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Looking for Alaska*, *Paper Towns*, and more. While he and his brother Hank Green often talk about books on their channel, they also have a channel called *Crash Course*. John Green created a sense of community and family within his channel, many people calling him and his brother the founders of BookTube itself. His works, such as Colleen Hoover's, have been the discussion for many videos created on YouTube and other social media sites. The channel he shares with his brother, entitled “vlogbrothers” has amassed 3.54 million subscribers, and together they have published over 2.1 thousand videos on that channel alone.

While Colleen Hoover may not have a YouTube channel of her own, she is the topic of many BookTube videos. By just entering her name into YouTube’s search engine, thousands of videos BookTubers reading and reviewing her novels come up. Their topics range from “reading the 5 most popular Colleen Hoover books so you never have to” to fans ranking all of Hoover’s

books and telling their audience why they should read certain books over others. There are people with strong negative opinions towards Hoover, such as user Alizee, a book and videogame reviewer from the United Kingdom. She makes claims in her videos that Hoover “hates women” and is a “joke,” while users like Isabella Gerli makes videos stating why she loves each of Hoover’s books and ranks them in order from her most to least liked novels, but saying she struggled to choose because she loved them all too much. While the BookTube community seems to be more opinionated than the BookTok community, Hoover still remains a hot topic on both social media sites.

All across social media and news sites, people continue to share their gushing opinions of Hoover’s work. Popular news sites such as The Guardian, BuzzFeed, and The New York Times share articles often about Hoover’s novels and fanbase. The Guardian had several people from the public share their opinions on the Colleen Hoover phenomenon. The first came from a manager at a bookstore in South Carolina.

It’s a steady burn that has mystified Angelica Manglona, the manager at Buxton Books in Charleston, South Carolina. “The longevity is what stands out the most,” she said. “We have books that fly off the shelves when they come out – like *Crying at H Mart*, or *The Summer I Turned Pretty* – but it will generally last a week, or a month, and then sales peter out. The Colleen Hoover books keep selling.” (Mechling).

Bookstore owners have firsthand experience with the exponential rate at which Hoover’s novels are currently selling, making them quite the firsthand expert at the high sales. The next public opinion came from an English professor in Youngstown, Ohio.

Courtney Poullas, 36, who lives in Youngstown, Ohio, read *Verity*, her “gateway” Hoover book, last year, and has blown through half a dozen since. “I used to read

highbrow literature,” said Poullas, an English professor who once considered William Shakespeare her favorite author. “Colleen Hoover has a way of making you relate to the characters, and her language choices tug at my heartstrings. She makes me feel so much.” (Mechling).

English professors are professionals in the reading department, often reading more books than the average person in their lifetime. For a modern literature expert to compare their favorite author from William Shakespeare to Colleen Hoover is quite a feat. While social media opinions and news articles can make or break a person’s career, Colleen Hoover continues to bring in raving reviews and grow her success on a daily basis.

Using Social Media to Promote Books and Reading

As shown by Hoover, having a social media presence can help create successes far beyond only having a publisher to do promotions for the authors. With persistence and presence on social media sites, authors can see their social media following, shares, and book sales all grow as one. Colleen Hoover often shares videos and hosts live videos as well on Instagram. As Hoover shared with Publishers Weekly, “People really like the videos, I think because I’m kind of ridiculous in them,” she says. “But I basically just use that as my main form of social media because it’s so easy to hit the button, and it shares” (Social Media and the Publishing Industry). Hoover works with Sarah Jeffcoate, a Marketing Manager at Simon & Schuster UK, helping to promote titles on TikTok. She spoke on how TikTok has played a role in Colleen Hoover’s success.

TikTok feels much more real and community driven than other platforms – it’s creative in a way that’s a lot less polished than Instagram for example (although I do love Instagram), and I think the excitement and the immediacy to share books that content

creators are loving has given a huge boost to authors who weren't getting the space via more traditional means, not just for Colleen Hoover, but for lots of authors. Also, the demographic there is hugely into romance and very vocal about it, which is so wonderful given the dismissive attitude some in the industry have towards a genre that's literally selling millions! This is a sweeping generalization, but it feels like the platform that harnesses the power of the fangirl, and we know how incredible that can be (Grace).

Traditional media promotion does work, but in a modern world, using social media to an author's advantage is one of the best decisions they can make.

Not only is Hoover sharing videos on her social media, but she is also quite interactive with her fans. On Facebook, there is a reader group called CoHorts. Hoover is in the group, along with 171,000 other members. The group is dedicated to fans having a love for Hoover's writing, discussing her works, and meeting people with similar interests. The group was created in 2016, and the large number of members is only a small drop in the bucket compared to Hoover's all-around presence on social media and her book sales in total. However, if someone asks Hoover on how she became a TikTok success, she will be completely honest with them:

The secret to my TikTok success? I have none. Any success of mine that came from TikTok did not come from me, it came from the readers who have made videos about my books and shared them on the app. I rarely post there, and when I do, it's not always about my books. I've had the app for several years and haven't done anything new or different in the past year or two that would change the trajectory of my success. That credit all goes to the lovely people of BookTok (Jeunesse).

While much of TikTok has decided to promote Hoover and create much of her success for her on the app, Hoover finds her own ways to promote herself within her other social sites such as her Instagram and Facebook group.

Social media is an important aspect in today's world, and it is crucial that authors, especially up-and-coming authors, create a social media presence. This allows the author to portray themselves as a real person, therefore allowing the author to create more relationships with their audience and engage with other authors as well. According to *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, "Social media offers the creative writer multiple opportunities to engage with readers, other writers, and the world in general. Whether you are published or trying to get published or self-published, a creative use of social networking can turn the general public into your public" (Treleaven 414). While many authors may assume that the only forms of social media are the popular "Big-Tech" sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, there are many other forms of social media that authors can benefit from as well.

One popular way that authors can engage with their audience is by beginning a blog. If an author already has a website, it is quite simple to add a blog section to the website and update it with daily life attributes, writing tips and tricks, and announcements about upcoming events. There are also blogging sites that authors can join in attempts to reach out to others and prevent the audience from having to seek out the author on their own. According to *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, "Well-known free blogging platforms include WordPress.com, Blogger and Tumblr. A blog is an attractive tool for a writer for obvious reasons and an ideal starting point for social media interaction...Regular blogging is an excellent way to show off your writing skills" (Treleaven 415). Blogs and being engaged on social media can offer the author many more opportunities, rather than hoping that their book will become popular on its own.

Authors having involvement in their social media pages and interacting with their fans can be crucial to their success. There are three main reasons that an author should engage on social media: promotion, creativity, and support and advice. As all authors know, promotion is a large part of getting sales on their literature. Published authors take a part in promoting their writing, but self-published writers have to market themselves in order to make sales. By finding creative ways to engage on social media and promote their books, authors can find that their engagement on social media will go up, therefore leading to an increase in sales. One creative way that an author can promote their book is making a book trailer. A book trailer is similar to a movie trailer and shows the main premise of the book just as a movie trailer does. This can be accomplished on a low budget, having friends and family help to act out the general storyline of the book without giving away too many spoilers. Uploading a book trailer to YouTube and adding the link to the author's website or blog can help create traction to the website and YouTube at the same time.

Creativity is also a huge part of social media. Finding inspiration in others can be quite helpful to prevent writer's block from occurring. It also gives the author an opportunity to show their audience how creative they can be on a casual basis, rather than only in published literature. Websites such as Twitter can be seen as micro-blogs, allowing the author to "tweet" creative tidbits throughout their day. Finding challenges in writing short stories in 280 characters can help to spark creativity and show off the author's skills on a much smaller stage. Lastly, finding support and advice from other authors and writers can allow the author to find moral support and inspiration from social media. Joining groups on Facebook dedicated to writers and critiquing one another's writing can be quite helpful to the author, as long as the group is supportive and not negative to one another. As long as the author always remember to keep their social media

professional, positive, and realistic to their own personality, social media can be quite beneficial, and often necessary, for the author.

Social media can lead to authors sharing their success and wealth with others as well. Colleen Hoover and her sisters began an autographed book subscription service in 2015 called The Bookworm Box. This subscription box is an autographed book subscription that gives back to those in need. This box also helps indie authors gain exposure, send out recommended books to the audience, and donate profits to charity. According to the subscription box's website, "The Bookworm Box donates 100% of profits to charities in need. Many authors and volunteers have donated their books and/or their time to make sure each of our boxes come with an autographed novel. We are so proud of our volunteers and they are truly what makes our world go round!" (*The Bookworm Box*). The Bookworm Box also has a physical storefront in Sulphur Springs, Texas. "All books on the store shelves are donated and signed by the author" (Hoover, *About Me*). So far, The Bookworm Box has donated over 1 million dollars, donated to over 400 charities, and promoted over 500 authors thus far. Thanks to Hoover's success and her social media presence, her popularity is growing, therefore meaning that the success of the subscription box will continue, allowing Hoover, her sisters, and the staff of the subscription box to continue to serve and donate to people in need.

As digital media becomes more and more prevalent in today's society, many people believe that reading books was becoming less relevant to today's society. However, thanks to social media, reading has become "cool" again. Social media is known to hinder one's attention span, according to a study conducted by Dante Caloia of The Queen's University Journal. According to the research, Generation Z's attention span is becoming shorter at a quicker rate than any other generation. According to Caloia, "Young people used to eat up books, but now,

the amount of children who read for fun has declined from 35 per cent to a meagre 17 per cent. The reason for this is simple and unsurprising: social media and our increased electronic device usage” (Caloia). While reading is only a part of the overall issue involving attention span, it does raise a question: if attention spans are shortening due to social media, why is reading becoming more popular on social media sites?

In recent years, the COVID-19 Pandemic greatly affected people all around the world. While COVID-19 had more negative effects than positive, the pandemic did force people to stay home and spend more time with their hobbies due to the fact that they were not allowed to leave their homes. This encouraged people to take up the hobby of reading once again. According to Kristin Hassel, an Information Systems Specialist that specializes in online security and following trends on how people are interacting online, “In the second half of 2020, Americans read 25% more than the previous year. People began joining virtual book clubs, and audiobooks provided a break from the constant news updates on TV. Social media book influencers, celebrities like Emma Watson and Reese Witherspoon, and even daytime talk shows began to promote reading. Books prompted conversations and brought us together during a time we felt total isolation” (Hassel). Using e-readers, such as Kindles and iPads, are also affecting the amount of people reading. Hassel goes on to explain more. “...books are making a strong comeback, and one of the primary reasons is social media. Book influencers are paving the way for an entirely new generation of reading enthusiasts – eBook sales alone were over \$1 billion in 2020. Even celebrities like Emma Watson and Jimmy Fallon use social media to showcase their love of reading and encourage others to take part” (Hassel). According to research, reading is now on an uphill rise thanks to social media influencers and also in part to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Colleen Hoover Scandals

In recent months, Hoover has been in the news for a controversial shutdown of a popular pirated book website. Z-Library, a beloved website to college students in need of free textbooks, was taken down by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in November of 2022. Users and readers of the website found themselves in mourning over losing their ability to download free textbooks, academic papers, and novels after they disappeared suddenly. People were quite frustrated, with some people going as far to compare this to “the mythical burning of the library of Alexandria in 48 B.C.” (Javaid). However, authors of novels that were pirated across the site found themselves being relieved. “Piracy costs us our sales, specifically for marginalized authors; it adversely impacts public libraries; and it hurts the publishing industry,” said Nisha Sharma, an author and BookToker. “Essentially when you mourn Z-Library, you are mourning the end of theft” (Javaid). Z-Library, while often helpful to people in need of textbooks and other reading materials, was still an extremely illegal site.

Until it was taken down, the shadow website had been using servers around the world to carry more than 11 million books and 84 million articles since 2009. Over the years, its servers had occasionally disappeared, but always came back. Anyone from across the world — barring India and France, which banned the website earlier this year — could access it (Javaid).

Some users had only heard of the website for the use of pirating college textbooks. Even college professors had told students about the sites and encouraged them to use them rather than buying expensive textbooks that they could not afford.

...she had learned about Z-Library from her college professor when she was enrolled in a writing class. The professor told his students that he didn't want everyone spending \$100 on a textbook. "He gave us a link to the textbook on Z-Library, and I realized how easy the website is to use," she said. "Textbooks can cost up to \$300 per course. Students don't have that kind of money," said Marena Herron, a journalism student at Wayne State University and a BookTok creator. "You have to understand that the majority of Z-Library users were just there for the textbooks" (Javaid).

While no one had evil intentions while using the site, it was still damaging to the authors of those novels and textbooks. While people may not want to spend full price for their books, especially in a college setting, pirating the books is still not the legal way to do so.

On BookTok in the days following the Z-Library shutdown, misguided anger began forming around popular author Colleen Hoover. According to The Washington Post, "A particular BookTok account had made a viral video collecting 130,000 likes about how to use Z-Library to download Colleen Hoover novels. The creator, whom The Post is not naming, experienced so much harassment on BookTok that she shut down her account for a few days" (Javaid). Actually, some people were so genuinely mad over the shutdown of the site that they posted some colorful phrases to express themselves on Twitter.

Some people went as far as to say that they would "bully" Hoover fans and that they should "burn in hell". "Zlib got taken down because of someone wanted to read a colleen hoover "book" we need to start shoving ppl into lockers and taking their lunch money again. Normalize bullying." "I genuinely hope colleen hoover and all her stans burn in hell I don't give a f*** anymore. BookTok people keep ruining s**t" (Goswami).

While the reactions were a bit heated and misdirected, the hate people showed towards Hoover over the shutdown of the website did not affect her book sales for the fourth quarter of 2022. By the end of 2022, Hoover had sold over 14.3 million print books that year alone, and eight of her books ranking in the top 25 overall print bestsellers for 2022 (Milliot).

In recent news, Hoover had to apologize to her audience for planning to release a coloring book based on *It Ends with Us*. *Insider*, a popular news platform, states, “According to the Amazon page for the coloring book, the 30 illustrations included would bring the most iconic scenes and settings from *It Ends with Us* to life, as well as memorable quotes from the novel” (Grindell). Readers immediately criticized the author for trying to create a light situation off of a book revolving around domestic abuse. Many readers in situations similar to Lily, the main character of the book, were heartbroken and angry with the thought of a coloring book centered around a story based on abuse. According to CNN, ““I don't even know what to say,” one user commented, while another wrote, “This is not okay. This coloring book shouldn't be a thing”” (Ronald). Thankfully, since Hoover is in touch with social media and is known for listening to her audience, she quickly ended the project and made a statement to her audience on her Instagram story.

The coloring book was developed with Lily's strength in mind, but I can absolutely see how this was tone-deaf. I hear you guys and I agree with you. No excuses. No finger pointing. I have contacted the publisher to let them know I would prefer we don't move forward with it. Thank you for the respectful discourse and accountability. Nothing but love (Ronald).

After Hoover made the statement, her publisher Atria Books confirmed that the coloring book project would be terminated.

Atria Books will not move forward with the publication of *The Official It Ends with Us Coloring Book*. We developed this book to be uplifting and empowering, mirroring Lily Bloom's story; we appreciate the feedback and discourse and have the greatest respect for Colleen Hoover's fans. Thank you for the honest conversation and passion for the world Colleen has created in her books and the characters within (Atria Books).

While Hoover and her publishing company took the correct steps to apologize and remove the sale of the coloring book, fans and previous fans of Hoover took to social media to air their grievances with the author for even thinking this was a good idea in the first place. TikTok user @vivafalastinleen made a video stating, "A coloring book? A coloring book about a novel whose central theme is domestic violence, and y'all want me to take her seriously as an author?" (Leen). When Hoover had made an Instagram post promoting the coloring book, the comments were angry as well. "This is so gross. Why make a book about literal abuse into something as lighthearted as a coloring book?" (Grindell). Hoover and Atria Books pulling the plug on the project was the right idea, but many fans still continue to question if the fame is getting to Hoover's head and she is becoming money hungry.

Conclusion

Colleen Hoover's novel *It Ends with Us* is on its way to the big screen in 2024. Thanks to Hoover's fans across all social media platforms reading and promoting the novel within their videos and posts, *It Ends with Us* has been picked up by Wayfarer Entertainment to be produced into a movie, directed by Justin Baldoni, best known for his acting in the loose adaptation of a telenovela in *Jane the Virgin*. Main characters Lily and Ryle have been casted, with Blake Lively being announced as Lily, and the director Justin Baldoni being also casted as Ryle. Fans still do not know who will be casted as Atlas, nor any other side character of the storyline. While many

fans expressed their concerns that the film could fall into the trap of other film adaptations not following the storyline of the book, Hoover and Baldoni have addressed that the film will follow the storyline of the book closely.

Social media has a large impact on many aspects of daily life. Whether that be what music people listen to, the movies people watch, the clothes they wear, or the books they read, social media influences decisions that people make each day. Since social media is such a complex phenomenon, people can find their own niche within each social media site to connect with one another. When it comes to reading, BookTube, Bookstagram, and BookTok are all great places for readers to find recommendations and support from other readers. While social media has the opportunity to become negative towards certain books and authors, overall, social media communities for readers are usually an overall positive experience for authors and readers.

Colleen Hoover is a spectacular phenomenon within herself, from her life experiences, to her writing, and her marketing. As an author, she writes about complex situations and meets her audience halfway, doing what she can to meet them where they are in their life. She has used her success to help others, such as her book subscription service that donates all profits to charity, promotes indie and lesser known authors to help them gain success, and also interacts with her fans across all of her social media platforms. Her social media success is a case study that will be studied for years, with the rate and number of followers she has being at a record high for an author.

Colleen Hoover has contributed to the BookTok community through promoting her own works and setting a standard for the BookTok community as a whole. As the current and newer generations have grown up with technology and social media, BookTok, Booktube, and Bookstagram platforms will continue to grow and promote TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram as

platforms overall. Hoover's contribution to each of these reading social media niches will continue to give authors a blueprint to follow in their own posts and how they format their social media presence. Because of Hoover, along with other social media book creators, current and future readers in the digital age can find their own communities online, encouraging others to read and experience the world of literature in a digital world.

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