

Indeed, popular culture can transcend its roots. Sometimes its influence becomes a tool for teaching. “The Philosophy of Star Trek,” incorporated as part of the curriculum at the University of Texas at Austin, served as a springboard for ethical and philosophical considerations under the mentoring of Dr. Anne Collins Smith. Dr. Smith’s May 6, 1992 letter acknowledges *Star Trek’s* value as a tool for learning and its impetus behind academic motivation. Mass entertainment, enriched by ideas and ideals, leaves rich rewards.

MAY 6, 1992

BELMONT FARIES, CHAIRMAN  
CITIZEN'S STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20260-3500

DEAR MR. FARIES:

AS THE INSTRUCTOR OF °THE PHILOSOPHY OF STAR TREK° AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS MY STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE ENTERPRISE POSTAGE STAMP. I HAVE OBSERVED STAR TREK'S EDUCATIONAL IMPACT ON MANY LEVELS. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE COURSE I TEACH, STAR TREK HAS HELPED ME TO INTRODUCE PLATO, ARISTOTLE, DESCARTES, NIETZSCHE, AND MANY OTHER PHILOSOPHERS TO MY STUDENTS. IN MY REGULAR PHILOSOPHY COURSES, BE THEY HISTORY, LOGIC, OR ETHICS, I AM OFTEN ABLE TO USE STAR TREK EXAMPLES AS A HERMENEUTIC SPRINGBOARD FOR DISCUSSION OF DIFFICULT PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS. FURTHERMORE, OUTSIDE OF A COLLEGE CONTEXT, STAR TREK INSPIRES ITS VIEWERS TO LEARN AND GROW. I KNOW PEOPLE WHO READ SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON TO TRACK DOWN STAR TREK'S LITERARY ALLUSIONS; I KNOW PHYSICISTS AND COMPUTER SCIENTISTS WHOSE INTEREST IN SCIENCE WAS NURTURED EARLY BY THEIR EXPOSURE TO STAR TREK. STAR TREK VIEWERS ARE MOREOVER FORCED TO THINK HARD ABOUT ETHICAL AND POLITICAL SITUATIONS THROUGH THE POWERFUL USE OF ANALOGY AND ALLEGORY; AND WE ARE ALL AFFIRMED BY ITS OPTIMISTIC VISION OF A HUMANE AND PROGRESSIVE SOCIETY.

FOR ITS EDUCATION IMPACT ON PEOPLE YOUNG AND OLD, AND FOR ITS WEALTH OF PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES, I COMMEND STAR TREK TO YOU AS A WORTHY SUBJECT FOR A COMMEMORATIVE STAMP.

SINCERELY,

*Anne Collins Smith*  
ANNE COLLINS SMITH, PH.D.