



## Article

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# Downplaying Trauma and Tragic Backstories with Sarcasm: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Freeze Your Brain* Lyrics

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## Abstract

This study explores how trauma and tragic backstories are downplayed by the use of sarcasm through analysis of the lyrics of *Freeze Your Brain*, written by Laurence O'Keefe and Kevin Murphy and performed by Ryan McCartan in the *Heathers: The Musical Original Broadway Cast* recording that was uploaded on June 10th, 2014, a dark comedy that critiques high school hierarchies. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model as the primary framework, this study analyzes how lexical choices, grammatical structures, and social contexts turn traumatic personal experiences into enjoyable humor and irony for both characters and audiences. The critical discourse analysis reveals that sarcasm in the musical number not only masks emotional vulnerability but also frames psychological numbness as an aspirational state of control, emotional regulation, and perceived maturity. Further, the linguistic transformation in the lyrics serves as a defense mechanism for the character and shapes listener interpretations of coping and resilience in the face of adversity. The findings contribute to broader discussions on emotional suppression, consumer-based escapism, performative detachment, and ideological messaging in musical theatre texts.

## Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Sarcasm, *Heathers: The Musical*, *Freeze Your Brain*, Lyrics.

## Introduction

Through language, humans build meaningful relationships, reinforce norms, and negotiate access to knowledge. It becomes a mechanism for both reproducing and contesting social inequalities. According to Van Dijk (2001), discourse is more than structured language: it is a form of social practice interwoven with systems of power, ideology, and identity. Further, Van Dijk (2014) also emphasizes the cognitive dimension of discourse, highlighting how it influences perceptions of power, authority, and group identity.

Responding to the limitations of formalist and descriptive linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a powerful framework for analyzing these social dynamics. Fairclough's (2023) three-dimensional model: comprising textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, enables scholars to investigate how texts both reflect and shape societal ideologies. Traditionally applied to political, media, or legal discourse, CDA has recently gained traction in cultural analysis, especially where ideological narratives

are embedded in stylized expression (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). In modern media, representations of trauma have gone from being overly dramatized to more subtle and layered portrayals. The media often mask emotional distress with irony, metaphor, or sarcasm (Bitterly & Brooks, 2020). Song lyrics often serve as a medium to critique emotional and societal dysfunction (Alek et al., 2020; Aprilia & Neisya, 2022).

Further, Critical Discourse Analysis has been viewed as a valuable approach for analyzing how language in media texts conveys, conceals, and challenges societal norms and ideologies. In music studies, CDA has been used to explore how various topics are encoded into lyrics, specifically through ironic or subversive language. Liando et al. (2022) showed how the lyrics of Michael Armstrong's *What a Wonderful World* construct an idealized vision of harmony and optimism while implicitly framing social realities. Meanwhile, Alek et al. (2020) and Aprilia & Neisya (2022) illustrate that lyrics often operate as disguised critiques of systemic dysfunctions, with sarcasm and satire serving as tools to make such critiques emotionally resonant and socially legible. Antari (2022) and Dewi (2022) also show the value of CDA in uncovering how artistic works, specifically artistic texts, camouflage broader ideological struggles, particularly those tied to youth identity and coping strategies.

Sarcasm plays an important discursive role, especially in music. Camp (2011) defines sarcasm as a communicative strategy that creates deliberate incongruity between literal expression and underlying intent, enabling complex emotional expressions like frustration, cynicism, or despair. The analysis of figurative discourse in Shakespeare's *Dark Lady Sonnets* by Ahmad et al. (2025) shows that irony embeds layered power relations within poetic form. Such findings reinforce how musical theatre similarly embeds critique in nonliteral expression. Amanah (2022) extends this view in the context of pop music, arguing that sarcasm allows artists to critique social norms without exposing raw emotion or vulnerability, especially important in cultures where emotional restraint is expected. Further, Chubaryan and Danielyan (2022) argue that sarcasm should be treated as an independent pragmatic category, given its complexity and variability. Their claim strengthens the case for CDA as a suitable tool to unpack sarcasm's ideological and emotional functions. Further, sarcasm is often a strategic rhetorical device in these media.

This rhetorical strategy is closely tied to constructions of masculinity. Pearson (2021) states that dominant social scripts often discourage emotional expression in young men, equating emotional control with maturity. Tyler and Williams (2014) add that many young men internalize emotional detachment as a masculine ideal, which affects how they seek or avoid psychological support. Lyrics in *Freeze Your Brain* reflect this ideology, presenting emotional numbness as both survival tactic and masculine badge of honor. Benner et al. (2024) note that adolescents often experience ambivalence when humor intersects with discrimination, underscoring the emotional costs of "laughing off" serious issues. This aligns with how *Heathers* uses sarcastic lyrics to both mask and expose despair. Ray et al. (2022) also provide computational evidence that sarcasm often intertwines with emotional expression, complicating automatic recognition systems.

Humor complicates these dynamics. MocarSKI and Butler (2016) show how humor in mental health campaigns can reduce stigma but also reinforce hegemonic masculinity by framing emotional vulnerability as acceptable only when filtered through comedy. This tension between confessing pain and maintaining control is embodied in J.D.'s ironic monologue. Zhu and Wang (2020) highlight sarcasm's reliance on theory of mind, showing how comprehension depends on recognizing both literal and intended meaning. In *Heathers*, this layered decoding positions audiences as co-conspirators in the masking of trauma. Recent psychological research links individual humor styles to reported sarcasm use, suggesting that self-presentation strategies shape interpersonal dynamics (McAuley & Glenwright, 2025). Thus, J.D.'s sarcastic detachment in *Freeze Your Brain* aligns with this model of strategic humor deployment.

Musical theatre offers a rich yet underexplored medium for such analysis. As Wolf (2011) argues, musicals are ideological arenas where personal and social conflicts are enacted through lyrical and dramatic

language. While CDA has been widely applied to political texts, its application to musical lyrics, especially those deploying irony or dark humor, remains limited. Theatrical lyrics are uniquely positioned for this kind of layered communication. As Wolf (2011) notes, musical theatre songs serve as sites of ideological negotiation, where affect and critique intersect. To support the statement, Airaksinen (2020) emphasizes that sarcasm cannot be separated from its ethical dimensions, since ironic speech often balances between playful critique and potential harm. This tension is particularly relevant in musical theatre, where sarcastic lyrics both protect and expose emotional vulnerabilities. Makarla et al. (2024) further demonstrate how irony and “white lies” are filtered through cultural norms of politeness, which shape their reception across age and gender. This resonates with how sarcasm in the musical is simultaneously harsh and oddly protective.

Despite this, Fairclough (2023) observe that these cultural texts have not received the same analysis as journalistic or political discourse. The current study contributes to filling that gap, showing how lyrics can operate simultaneously as emotional expression and ideological intervention. Therefore, to deepen this inquiry, the present analysis integrates additional theoretical frameworks from discourse and masculinity studies (Azmy et al., 2024). Van Dijk's (2001) cognitive approach to discourse emphasizes how recurring linguistic patterns shape social memory and normalize ideologies. Phrases like “Freeze your brain,” when repeated, operate not only as metaphors but also as cognitive cues that embed emotional detachment into cultural scripts. This process is reinforced through gendered expectations.

As Connell (2020) asserts, the theory of hegemonic masculinity situates emotional restriction and stoicism as dominant masculine ideals, particularly in Western contexts. In this model, vulnerability is feminized and thus devalued, compelling men and boys to construct their identity around control, detachment, and resilience (Reddy, Sharma, & Jha, 2019; Zulia & Rahman, 2024). J.D.'s portrayal echoes this paradigm, where sarcasm becomes a performative act of masculine power: communicating pain while simultaneously controlling its visibility. Moreover, the commercialization of emotion adds another layer. As Illouz (2007) argues, late capitalism has commodified emotional life, replacing interpersonal care with consumer experiences. J.D.'s obsessive reliance on slushies as coping mechanisms echoes this theme, suggesting that corporate products serve as emotional placeholders in the absence of familial or institutional support. This critique is embedded within the language of the lyrics and further amplified through musical performance, where consumption is not just symbolic but functional.

Thus, these theoretical perspectives enrich the CDA framework by grounding the lyrical analysis in broader sociocultural discourses (Bansal, Agarwal & Jain, 2025). They also clarify how seemingly humorous or stylized lyrics participate in serious conversations about masculinity, emotional health, and resistance. Thus, the integration of van Dijk's cognitive discourse theory, Connell's masculinity framework, and Illouz's emotional capitalism provides a multidimensional foundation for understanding how sarcasm in *Freeze Your Brain* functions both rhetorically and ideologically.

This study employs CDA to examine *Freeze Your Brain* lyrics from *Heathers: The Musical* (O'Keefe & Murphy, 2014), which adapts the 1989 cult film into a darkly satirical critique of high school culture and psychological repression. Sung by the character J.D., the song ostensibly glorifies slushy consumption, but undercuts itself with tones of nihilism and trauma. By analyzing its elements, this paper investigates how sarcasm masks emotional pain, constructs masculinity, and reinforces social scripts surrounding mental health, especially around young people.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative research design, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary methodological framework (Fairclough, 2023). The goal is to uncover the implicit ideologies and power relations embedded in the lyrics of *Freeze Your Brain*. Rather than quantifying textual features, this study prioritizes interpretive depth, focusing on how language both reveals and obscures trauma, emotional repression, and societal norms.

The approach focuses on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which conceptualizes discourse as both a linguistic product and a form of social practice. The three analytical dimensions are textual analysis (micro-level), Discursive practice (meso-level), and social practice (macro-level). Textual analysis examines the song's vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, modality, and rhetorical devices to identify discursive cues that convey emotional detachment, sarcasm, and trauma. While, discursive practice examines how the musical number is produced, distributed, and interpreted within the context of *Heathers: The Musical*. Finally, social practice analysis connects the song's discursive patterns to broader ideologies such as social contexts, power relations, and ideologies.

The data for this study is the lyrics to *Freeze Your Brain*, written by Laurence O'Keefe and Kevin Murphy and performed by Ryan McCartan in the *Heathers: The Musical* Original Broadway Cast recording that was uploaded on June 10th, 2014 (O'Keefe & Murphy, 2014). The lyrics were obtained from verified transcription databases. The researcher also reviewed annotated lyric sites to understand how audiences engage with the song's ironic discourse.

## Findings & Discussion

Fairclough's three-dimensional model of (CDA) Critical Discourse Analysis is employed to examine how sarcasm and dark humor in *Freeze Your Brain* lyrics function as rhetorical devices that downplay trauma, mask emotional pain, and reframe vulnerability as ironic detachment.

### Freeze Your Brain Lyrics

[1st Verse]

I've been through ten high schools  
 They start to get blurry  
 No point planting roots  
 'Cause you're gone in a hurry  
 My dad keeps two suitcases packed in the den  
 So it's only a matter of when

I don't learn the names  
 Don't bother with faces  
 All I can trust is this concrete oasis  
 Seems every time I'm about to despair  
 There's a 7-Eleven right there

[1st Pre-Chorus]

Each store is the same  
 From Las Vegas to Boston  
 Linoleum aisles that I love to get lost in  
 I pray at my altar of slush  
 Yeah, I live for that sweet frozen rush

[1st Chorus]

Freeze your brain  
 Suck on that straw  
 Get lost in the pain  
 Happiness comes  
 When everything numbs  
 Who needs cocaine?

Freeze your brain  
Freeze your brain  
Care for a hit?  
Does your mommy know you eat all that crap?  
Not anymore

[2nd Verse]

When mom was alive  
We lived halfway normal  
But now it's just me and my dad  
We're less formal  
I learned to cook pasta  
I learned to pay rent  
Learned the world doesn't owe you a cent

[2nd Pre-Chorus]

You're planning your future, Veronica Sawyer  
You'll go to some college and marry a lawyer  
But the sky's gonna hurt when it falls  
So you'd better start building some walls

[2nd Chorus]

Freeze your brain  
Swim in the ice  
Get lost in the pain  
Shut your eyes tight  
'Til you vanish from sight  
Let nothing remain

Freeze your brain  
Shatter your skull  
Fight pain with more pain

[Bridge]

Forget who you are  
Unburden your load  
Forget in six weeks  
You'll be back on the road

When the voice in your head  
Says you're better off dead  
Don't open a vein

[Outro]

Just freeze your brain  
Freeze your brain  
Go on and freeze your brain  
Try it

## Textual Analysis

### 1. *Lexical Choices*

The musical number has playful and lighthearted lyrics, depicting a teenage boy being obsessed with 7-Eleven slushies at surface level. Though when examined deeper, it has some concerning elements. In the first verse, “I’ve been through ten high schools”, “They start to get blurry”, “No point planting roots”, “‘Cause you’re gone in a hurry” shows the character’s background of moving to a new place every few months has left him with the understanding that human connections are a waste of time. “My dad keeps two suitcases packed in the den” and “So it’s only a matter of when” implies that J.D.’s father’s stay was only for a matter of time before they leave again and that they never really unpacked everything to settle down in a place.

“I don’t learn the names, don’t bother with faces” supports the statement on how J.D. thinks human connections are useless. “All I can trust is this concrete oasis”, “Seems every time I’m about to despair”, “There’s a 7-Eleven right there”, and “Each store is the same, from Las Vegas to Boston” shows that the only thing he cares about is the familiarity of 7-Elevens as they’re widespread and are consistent in features and menus. The lyric “Linoleum aisles that I love to get lost in” could imply that he prefers being in a 7-Eleven rather than his own house. The choice of words in “I pray at my altar at slush” and “Yeah, I live for that sweet frozen rush” shows that the character’s attachment with 7-Eleven goes to an extent to where he considers it his church as he feels peace when in it, just as one would in any house of worship. The lyrics also implies that he worships slushies.

“Freeze your brain” indicates that the slushies act as a numbing agent. The lines “Happiness comes when everything numbs, who needs cocaine?” shows how J.D. treats slushies as a drug, supporting the earlier statement. While offering his slushy to another character, J.D. asks, “Care for a hit?”. This sentence is more often used when passing around a joint of marijuana or any other drug. “Does your mommy know you eat all that crap?” This sentence was spoken by another character (Veronica), the first half of it showing how she is mocking maturity by mocking J.D.’s relationship with his mother, and the second half implies that Veronica’s parents dislikes the idea of junk food, as seen as how she refers junk food as ‘all that crap’.

“Not anymore. When mom was alive, we lived halfway normal. Now it’s just me and my dad, we’re less formal.” These lyrics visibly show and downplay the facts that J.D.’s mother had already passed away and his family was less than normal then. It also downplays the fact that his family’s condition turned worse after his mother died. “I learned to cook pasta, I learned to pay rent. Learned the world doesn’t owe you a cent” shows that J.D. grew up, or was forced to grow up, earlier than his peers because of his circumstances. He also learnt that he doesn’t owe anyone anything, given the hardships he’s been through.

The lines “You’re planning your future, Veronica Sawyer. You’ll go to some college and marry a lawyer” was sung using a sarcastic and mocking tone, viewing Veronica’s ideal future as silly and making her immature for wanting it. This was followed by “But the sky’s gonna hurt when it falls, so you’d better start building some walls” shows that J.D.’s suggesting Veronica to find protection as he believes she too will end up hurting when things don’t go her way.

In the bridge, “Forget who you are” shows how J.D. is very dissatisfied with who he is, likely because he’s aware of his distance from people. “Forget in six weeks, you’ll be back on the road” shows his disdain for his father and all the moving they do as it had affected his life negatively. “When the voice in your head says you’re better off dead” tells a lot about J.D. as a person. It’s very clear that he’s had suicidal thoughts and he tells about his self-destructive behavior throughout the number. “Don’t open a vein, just freeze your brain, Freeze your brain, Go on and freeze your brain” could be a straight up reference to committing suicide. This also implies that not only does J.D. use emotional numbing to keep himself sane, but also to keep himself from actually dying. Last but not least, the line “Try it” is spoken gently and emphatically, trying to persuade Veronica into joining him.

## 2. Grammatical Structure

The musical number uses simple present tense (“I’ve been through ten high schools”, “Each store is the same”) to show repetition and immediateness, suggesting that J.D.’s situation is constant and ongoing. There are also imperatives such as “Freeze your brain”, “Shut your eyes tight”, “Try it”, resulting in an instructing or commanding tone, reinforcing the idea that he already mastered emotional suppression as a coping mechanism. The lyrics also use short, declarative sentences (“I don’t learn the names”, “I learned to pay rent”) to make the character’s statements sound cold and resigned, reflecting his emotional detachment and acceptance of hardship. “Freeze your brain” is repeated numerous times, emphasizing the main point of the number. At one point, J.D. also shifts between sarcastically formal language and casual slang (“You’ll go to some college and marry a lawyer”, “Care for a hit?”), showing his bitterness towards social expectations, mixed with his own unstable reality.

## 3. Rhetorical Devices

There are some metaphors throughout the number that indicate how trauma is disguised as humor or indifference, such as “Freeze your brain” as a metaphor for emotional numbing, “Fight pain with more pain” implying pushing through trauma with destructive coping mechanisms, and “Build some walls” as a metaphor for emotional barriers. In the line “Who needs cocaine?”, irony and dark humor are used to describe serious emotional pain and dangerous, intrusive thoughts. [Gunawan et al. \(2021\)](#) point out how discourse strategies, one of them being metaphors, construct layered and hidden meanings within a song.

## Discursive Analysis

### 1. Production

This musical number was written by Laurence O’Keefe and Kevin Murphy for *Heathers: The Musical*, a dark comedy musical that was based on the 1989 film with the same name. The musical itself critiques high school hierarchies and emotional repression.

### 2. Distribution

This musical number is distributed through stage performances, and is widely accessible through the cast recordings on online platforms. Its reach is amplified by fan interpretations and social media discourse, shaping how its layered meanings are received across audiences.

### 3. Reception

Listeners will have different reactions. Some might react with amusement and empathy as the number itself is humorous yet packs a deep message, but some might be concerned when seeing the darker elements present in the lyrics. The blending of comedy and trauma fosters ambiguity, leaving interpretation open to personal and cultural filters.

## Social Practice

### 1. Social Context

*Heathers: The Musical* is set in suburban 1980s America, a period marked by rising consumerism, deregulation, and shifting family dynamics. Against this backdrop, mental health was poorly understood and heavily stigmatized, especially for adolescent boys. As [Pearson \(2021\)](#) observes, emotional suppression was and still is systematically rewarded in young men through educational, familial, and media systems that associate vulnerability with weakness.

In this context, 7-Eleven stores and their ubiquitous branding function not only as literal consumer spaces but also as symbols of emotional refuge. The lyric “There’s a 7-Eleven right there” exemplifies how corporate consistency replaces relational security. The number transforms consumer culture into an

emotional anchor, echoing Tyler and Williams' (2014) findings on how young men legitimize help-seeking through socially acceptable forms such as food or humor rather than overt emotional disclosure.

## 2. Power Relations

This number reflects a breakdown that happens in traditional adult-youth hierarchies. In J.D.'s case, adults fail to provide emotional or physical stability, leading him to construct an alternate system of authority grounded in ironic wisdom. His use of imperatives like "Try it" or "Freeze your brain" mimics authoritative speech but cloaks despair beneath sardonic confidence. Mocarski and Butler (2016) states that rhetorical strategies offer men a way to reassert control while remaining emotionally disengaged. Ediana's (2024) CDA of Stromae's *Tous Les Mêmes* also illustrates how sarcasm encodes power dynamics into lyrics, reinforcing gender stereotypes while cloaked in playful tones. This parallel highlight how music becomes a site of ideological struggle.

Moreover, the song's sarcastic tone reflects a deeper ideology of emotional neoliberalism, the belief that individuals must "manage" their emotions privately and efficiently (Rahman et al., 2025). Rather than inviting empathy or community, J.D.'s monologue prescribes isolation, further illustrating how capitalist logic colonizes emotional life.

## 3. Ideologies

Three ideologies are present in the song's discursive field. First, the number shows stoicism as strength where emotional numbing is shown not as dysfunction, but as maturity. The lyrics also point out consumerism as solace in which products such as slushies offer temporary control, standing in for therapy or any other mental help. Lastly, futility of vulnerability is present throughout the lyrics where realistic aspirations like "going to college and marrying a lawyer" are mocked because they represent belief in a system J.D. finds broken.

Van Dijk (2001) calls these ideologies "symbolic elites" as they are socially dominant ideas that are rarely questioned but deeply influential. By reinforcing these norms through sarcasm and song, the number both critiques and conserves them. In his doctoral research, Wood (2023) demonstrates how American musicals negotiate toxic masculinity through lyrical discourse, with songs serving as ideological battlegrounds. This directly parallels the masculine scripts reinforced in J.D.'s sarcastic detachment. Cole (2022) also highlights that trauma narratives are not abstract constructs but lived realities, often articulated through fragmented first-person accounts.

Further, the lyrics of "Freeze Your Brain" show how language can be used not only to narrate traumatic personal experiences, but also to suppress emotions through the use of irony and sarcasm. On a textual level, the repetition of the phrase "Freeze your brain" acts as a mask for emotional numbing, signaling a recurring pattern of psychological avoidance rather than healing. This is reinforced through the use of drug metaphors like "Who needs cocaine?" and "Care for a hit?" blur the line between addiction and escapism, positioning consumer products as comfort zones. These expressions underestimate the suffering in tone while intensifying it in implication, highlighting the social normalization of emotional suppression in youth discourse. As sarcasm is similar to humor-based coping strategies, it reflects this specific pattern that allows people to mask their distress through the use of wit, while also indirectly signaling it (Atif et al., 2025).

On a discursive level, the number serves as a performance of cynicism and artificial maturity. J.D. employs imperatives and sarcastic wit to assert control, suggesting that detachment equates to emotional wisdom. This self-fashioned persona allows him to gain rhetorical dominance over Veronica while shielding his own vulnerabilities. In this way, language is not merely descriptive; it is strategic. Sarcasm, within this context, becomes an armor: it permits critique without confession, intimacy without exposure. This supports research indicating that sarcasm in youth-centered texts often masks deeper existential anxieties while offering socially acceptable scripts for disengagement (Camp, 2011; Amanah, 2022).

At the level of social practice, the musical offers a critique of neoliberal values and toxic resilience. The motif of 7-Eleven, a corporate chain, is used as a symbol of emotional stability, suggesting that in the absence of familial or institutional support, youth turn to predictable consumer environments for comfort. This reveals how capitalist structures fill emotional voids left by unstable homes or absent caregiving. Such settings are sanitized, consistent, and non-judgmental, everything human relationships often are not. The lyric "Linoleum aisles that I love to get lost in" illustrates a preference for anonymous, transactional spaces over intimate, personal ones, further reinforcing the commodification of mental refuge.

Moreover, *Freeze Your Brain* does not only reflect these norms; it subtly reinforces and critiques them. On one hand, the musical exposes the absurdity of glorifying numbness, yet on the other, it does not provide a clear counter-model for emotional healing. In this ambiguity, *Heathers* aligns with broader postmodern narratives that resist moral resolution, leaving audiences to grapple with contradiction. This underscores CDA's strength by revealing how texts function ideologically, even when they appear to be subversive (Reyes & Jung, 2025).

To deepen this analysis, future research could include audience reception studies or compare *Freeze Your Brain* with other songs in the musical that use different discursive strategies (e.g., parody, confrontation, romanticism). Likewise, examining how live performances and actor interpretations shift the tone or reception of sarcasm would provide richer insights into the fluidity of meaning-making in musical theatre.

## Conclusion

Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, *Freeze Your Brain* demonstrates how language, particularly sarcasm and metaphor, functions as both a shield and a revealer of psychological trauma. The lyrics show how emotional pain, abandonment, and suicidal ideation are cloaked in flippant tones and consumerist references, creating a layered discourse where meaning is as much implied as it is spoken. By masking grief and instability in dark humor, the song illustrates the psychological cost of emotional repression and the ideological structures that make such masking necessary, especially for adolescent males raised in environments where vulnerability is equated with weakness.

At the textual level, language reflects trauma as a performance, rich in numbing metaphors and dismissive syntax. At the discursive level, sarcasm positions the speaker as a pseudo-adult who uses linguistic confidence to mask internal chaos. And at the social practice level, the song critiques but also participates in a cultural system that sells detachment as resilience and consumption as care. This tension between resistance and reinforcement is central to how *Heathers: The Musical* communicates its message; one that is as much about the fragility of youth as it is about the systems that fail them. Ultimately, this study affirms the value of applying CDA to musical theatre, a medium where emotional narratives are often dramatized, stylized, and layered with irony. *Freeze Your Brain* stands as a potent example of how popular media can function as both mirror and mold for societal ideologies, prompting not only reflection, but also a critical interrogation of what it means to be young, damaged, and understood.

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