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**Janine E. Janoski\***, janinejanoski@kings.edu, and **Whitney George**. *How Harry Potter and The Walking Dead Changed Student's Performance in Calculus*. Preliminary report.

We have all been there before, you write the *perfect* word problem. The context is clever and the numbers work out perfectly. Then your students read the question and interpret it as: “Mary buys 150 fish from the Pike Street Market while a train leaves New York City traveling west at 80 mph. If Aliens invade Seattle, at what rate does the ladder slide down the wall?” So how do we create a context of a problem that the students can relate to?

We examine how student success in calculus word problems is correlated with student engagement and interest to content. This study involves two calculus courses from a small private college and two calculus courses from a medium sized public university. One section from each college was given the standard calculus word problems, while the other was given word problems themed in the context of current popular movies and TV shows. In this talk, we present samples of themed content, student reactions and feedback, and an analysis of student performance. We conclude with how to extend our findings to other content courses to help in student engagement and success. (Received September 17, 2015)