Feeling Down? Try Some Chicken Soup Essay, Research Paper

Feeling Down? Try Some Chicken Soup In 1989, Mark Victor Hansen and Jack Canfield compiled 101 of their favorite inspirational tales and poems into a book and added a catchy title. Unfortunately, 33 publishers turned them down before a small publishing house in Florida agreed to put out the book, figuring that they could sell about 20,000 copies. Seven million copies later, the two authors are living happily and have since added numerous titles to the series of Chicken Soup for the Soul. The stories deal with universal themes such as a mother s love, overcoming obstacles, teen suicide, and following one s dreams. In addition to the many stories, there are poems, quotes, illustrations, letters, and cartoons. (Ferguson, 62) What made this series so popular? How has Chicken Soup for the Soul become a world-renowned book, sold in 29 countries, and printed in 23 different languages (Nathan, 20)? When the writers thought of chicken soup, they had more on their minds than just the title of their book. Mark Victor Hansen and Jack Canfield modeled their series around actual chicken soup by including similar themes such as healing, femininity, and cost-effectiveness. Chicken Soup for the Soul is a series designed to be gentle on the mind and soothing to the soul (Lengel, 128). The stories teach lessons, open the heart, and motivate people to perform good deeds. This is a recurring theme throughout the series. Some stories will make you laugh, while others will make you cry. No matter what feelings you have as you read the stories, you will be touched in some way by each one. The myth connected with chicken soup is that it was and is still used as a healing device for just about any ailment. When you are sick, you are told that it would heal your hurt and make you better. However, although both the book and the soup have healing qualities, they only work if you believe that they will work. When you read the stories in the book, you must want to open your heart, evaluate your inner being, and heal your soul. When you are sick, you must believe that the soup s warm broth has healing qualities to it. Otherwise, it will just be a warm snack and have no effect on your illness. So, the series was written to be a healer of the soul as chicken soup is used as a cure for the flu. Not only was Chicken Soup for the Soul similar to chicken soup because of its healing properties, but also because of a maternal element. Chicken Soup for the Soul was written for women. My mother bought me my first copy and I have since bought numerous copies as gifts for friends of mine, my sister included. Because of the feminization of American culture, this series has flourished. According to Andrew Ferguson, …women purchase 85% to 90% of the Chicken Soup for the Soul books. It is part of American culture for women to be the ones who analyze and think about our feelings. Men don t like to express their feelings, or prod deep into their inner beings. Since the Chicken Soup books do just exactly that, men don t find themselves having an urge to run out and buy the next book in the series. I, on the other hand, have 11 Chicken Soup for the Soul books and hope to receive the two newest ones for Christmas. I have tried to get my boyfriend to read one, but he really wasn t interested. He said, That s girl stuff. I don t want to read that! So, these books are seen as a feminine series. Chicken soup has an attachment to women, as well, but not in the same way. Mothers and maternal figures are usually the ones that serve chicken soup to their sick children. In a way, they are administering the healing. Now, Chicken Soup for the Soul is here to administer healing to the mothers. It has turned the tables around to help those that have helped others for so long. Chicken soup and Chicken Soup for the Soul not only have connections with feminine figures, but they have similar cost effectiveness.

The Chicken Soup for the Soul books are very inexpensive for books. They are mostly printed in softcover at $12.95 each. Although one may find some titles printed in hardcover, it is uncommon because of the expense. Publishers keep the cost of the books down, in order for people to keep their collections growing. The books are also great gift giving ideas. They are inexpensive, but very rewarding. This inexpensive form of healing is similar to the healing of chicken soup. It is much cheaper than antibiotics and easier to obtain. Dr. J.T. Dorrance, who started working with Campbell s Soup Company in 1897, …invented the idea of reducing the cost of soup by taking the water out and condensing it in the canning process. (McMath, 36) This allowed a can of soup to drop in size and as well as in price. By 1904, Campbell advertised 21 varieties, 10 cents a can. (McMath, 36) Not only does the series mirror the soup by price, but by variety. There is something for everyone. There are Chicken Soup books for the Pet lover s, Christian s, Mother s, Teenager s, and Woman s souls. As far as soups go, not only are there different ingredients, but different textures, such as chunky, creamy, or broth are included in the variety. Therefore, both the Chicken Soup for the Soul series and chicken soup are inexpensive and have many different varieties to choose from. My favorite story in Chicken Soup for the Soul is about a little boy who wanted to buy a puppy. When he picked out the little crippled puppy, the owner tried to discourage him, saying that the puppy will never be able to run and jump with the boy like the other puppies. When the child insisted, the owner offered to give the boy the puppy for free. At this comment, the little boy replied, This dog is worth every bit as much as all of the other dogs and I ll pay full price for him. Then, the little boy reached down and rolled up a pant leg to reveal a badly disfigured left leg supported by a metal brace. He softly added, I don t run or jump too well myself, and the little puppy will need someone who understands. (Canfield & Hansen, 65) Each time I read that story, I cry because I am reminded that a person s worth is not determined by his physical abilities, but by his love for others. That story is just one example of the soul healing that a Chicken Soup for the Soul book can do. So, when you are in bed with the flu, heat up some warm chicken soup, courtesy of Dr. Mom. However, when you are in need of some soul healing, buy a Chicken Soup book and see what everyone is talking about.