
Stereotypes And A Stock Characters In The Movies The Help And Hidden Figures

According to Cambridge dictionary a stereotype is the set idea that a person may have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong. Stereotypes have become a big problem in our society today, it puts labels about how a person should act or live according to their sex, race, personality, and by other irrelevant facts. Stereotyping allows for individuals often to be ashamed of who they really are due to them liking different things or wanting to do different activities feeling ashamed due to the things they fear may be said about them. Stereotypical characters are that of the same meaning as stereotypes on a whole except stereotypical characters are those portrayed in film.

A stock character is a type of stereotypical character which is a conventional character that's instantly recognizable to readers because it pops up everywhere. Evil stepmothers, Tortured artists, Reluctant heroes, Manic pixie dream girls. They're all stock characters. Stock characters seemingly pop up quite frequently in movies so normally they can be portrayed as boring but they do not necessarily have to be as the directors can switch it up and portray them as interesting.

The Help and Hidden Figures are the 2 movies I will be exploring in this essay. The film Hidden Figures which is up for a Best Picture Oscar, is based in the 60s when women and coloured people were given the 'treatment' in America. There was a particular group of women in the movie who were recruited to work at Langley Field that were chosen because they were all above average at mathematics. However they were also placed with only their peers, segregated in their own building with their own facilities appallingly labelled 'coloured'. Katherine Johnson is one of the main characters in the film who is a human computer, she is the genius who invents the new style of mathematics that would change "the game" ensuring that NASA would successfully launch the first American astronaut into space. She is the only woman in a room full of men who offer her hostility and resentment. They are all eager for the new IBM machine to be installed so they do not have to associate with Katherine just because of the mere fact that she is colored. Themes portrayed in this film are racism and inequality, community, luck, persistence and hard work.

The film The Help recounts the story of a young white woman who is an aspiring journalist Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan. The movie focuses on Eugenia's relationship with two black maids, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, during the Civil Rights Movement in 1963 Jackson, Mississippi. In an attempt to become a legitimate journalist and writer, Skeeter decides to write a book from the point of view of the maids — referred to as "the help"— exposing the racism they are faced with as they work for white families. Stereotypical roles portrayed in both movies seem to be prominent as stereotypes are represented throughout the entirety of both films. Both films have racial stereotyping as a main feature in them. In Hidden figures, the men don't want to associate themselves with Katherine since she is colored and in The Help the women are colored so they can only be qualified as the help. To some extent black females are presented as stereotypical females such as the angry black woman like or the sassy black friend in the two movies.

Based off of my research, the movie *The Help* portrays the blacks as “the other”, whereas the whites are seen as the norm. The movie “*The Help*” had many different reviews from those who watched. According to CNN entertainment the movie got a lot of backlash nationwide due to the fact that it represented a very painful era, leading many to raise questions as to how far black actors have come in Hollywood. It is known that black actresses have been able to come a very long way from the 1900’s being able to now make a name for themselves and land big roles but they still face a struggle in Hollywood. *Golden Age of Hollywood* states that from the 1920s to the early 1960s, African-American actors were often relegated to roles as domestics which leads me back to the film *The Help* where the main actresses as maids. Two stereotypes that i’ve come across when watching movies featuring black actresses in film are the “assertive black woman” as well as the submissive black woman. The definition of the word submissive is to allow yourself to be controlled by others so relating it back to the movie, “*The Help*” it features the submissive black woman as main actresses Viola Davis & Octavia Spencer play the maid in the movie.

The other movie *Hidden figures* is about the way colored women struggled to get jobs and pursue what they wanted to in America. I think that this this movie is extremely powerful because it shows the endless work that women, particularly African American women, in our history have had to put forward just to have an equal opportunity in getting further in life and into their careers.