

# IMAGERY AND REPRESENTATION IN TV AND FILMS



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How does discrimination, people treated unfairly because of their backgrounds (race, gender, etc.), harm Black people?
- What questions can we ask about Black representation on tv and in films?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Examine and discuss images from a variety of tv/news shows, magazines, etc. to examine how Black people have been represented over time.
- Reflect on the ways in which mainstream media representation of Blackness is important.
- Write a response to reading that builds a sense of agency to use your voice to advocate for racial justice.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

75–90 minutes



## MATERIALS

- Teacher Edition—Vocabulary Planning and Definition
- Historical Social Change/Social Movements
- Newsela Article: Black Panther Movie Produces 2 Oscar Firsts for African Americans
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Highlighters



## VOCABULARY

CONTENT	Create	ACADEMIC	Summarize
Media	Popular	Determine	
Representation	Event	Analyze	
Film	Stereotype	Produce	

**PART 1****Introduction (15 min): Knowledge Building**

- 1** Say: *There are moments in history that are captured on film, in the news or in photographs that allow viewers or those witnessing them, to feel the emotion of the moment. In earlier years (the earlier part of the 1900s after the invention of television in 1927), there were very few programs that had Black representation. If Black people were part of a film or television show, there were very few roles they could play. Many films and tv shows made fun of Black people and promoted stereotypes. Some of those stereotypes showed Black people as unintelligent, lazy, or in jobs that served white people. (Reference Mammy from the last lesson).*
- 2** Say: *We are going to take a look at a few images from tv shows and films/movies over the past 70 years and examine how they have changed over time. I invite you to focus on two questions as you look at the images: What do you notice about the people in the picture? What actions would you expect of this person based on this picture?*
- 3** Say: *Please work in groups of 4 to record your reactions to the pictures on chart paper. You should select 1 recorder, 1 presenter, and 2 idea seekers (students who give thoughts and ideas and helps other think about the content) for your group. I will read a brief description of the picture, then you will have 2–3 minutes to answer the two questions.*
- 4** Show students the slide show, read the notes for each description, and allow for discussion of the two questions for each picture. Capture student ideas on chart paper. Be sure students label or make a note of which image they are discussing.

**PART 2****Content Analysis (40 min)**

- 5** Say: *We are going to read about the impact the movie “Black Panther” had on the 91st Academy Awards (Oscars). The Oscars is an award show that recognizes movies, movie productions, musicians, and actors for their hard work. “Black Panther” received many awards for its acting, as well as its costume design, an award that rarely goes to Black designers. We will read the text two times. The first time I will read it while you read along. Then I will let you read the text again in pairs and answer questions about it.*
- 6** Read the text from the article handout without pausing, as students read along silently. If you have an annotation guide that you use for reading, you can remind students to highlight information that stands out to them. After the first round of reading, ask students the following question for a quick turn and talk with a partner:
- What information does the author want the audience to know, and why?
- 7** Once students answer the question, confirm or support their understanding, then direct them to re-read the text with a partner to answer the next set of questions:
- Are there positive outcomes for Black people because of “Black Panther” and movies/tv shows like it?
  - How did Ruth E. Carter affect Black Panther, the movie?
  - How did Hannah Bleacher affect Black Panther, the movie?
  - The movie employs actors, writers, directors, set and costume designers (and many other roles) that are Black. What positive impact does this have on Black children who wish to work in tv and film when they are older?
- 8** When students finish the second read, allow each group to connect with another group to share their responses. Also, allow students to add to their responses as they hear other classmates’ answers.

**PART 3****Writing (30 min)**

**9** Say: *Now that you have seen images from tv and film (movies) and read an article about awards received from a very popular movie, “Black Panther,” we will write a response to the following question, to sum up what we have learned. (Read the prompt.)*

- Think about the many ways Black people were represented in tv and movies over the past 70 years. Representation matters because seeing positive images of ourselves affects how we see ourselves and how others see us. Stereotypes on tv and in movies can harm our self-image and limit opportunities to show positive images on tv and in movies. Use the article and notes from the slide show to answer the questions in the sidebar to the right.
- Your response should have an opening sentence, 1–2 pieces of evidence from the text or from your slide show notes, and a conclusion sentence.

**10** Students should be given 20–25 minutes to write their essays using the criteria presented.

**PART 4****Closing/Sharing (5 min)**

**11** Choose 2–3 exemplars to read aloud (or have the students present) with permission from the class. This is to give students an idea of what they might aspire to and to celebrate their classmates work.

**NOTE**

What does Black representation on tv and in movies mean to you, and why? How can you use your voice to advocate for more positive representation of Black people? Use or refer to 1–2 pieces of evidence that you collected.



# Teacher Edition: Vocabulary Definitions

This document is meant to serve to build teacher knowledge and capacity. Please use the following document to know and understand the vocabulary for this lesson. Review and define these terms before teaching your lesson to help better understand and frame the content. There is also space to add any context necessary for your students.

Word	Definition	Teacher Notes/Context
<b>CONTENT VOCABULARY</b>		
Media		
Representation		
Film		
Create		
Popular		
Event		
Stereotypes		
<b>ACADEMIC VOCABULARY</b>		
Determine		
Analyze		
Produce		
Summarize		



# Historical Social Change/Social Movements

## Images For Social Change/Social Movements Throughout History

Transition period in the early 1940s where Black people were represented differently in films and white people didn't appear in Black face to play Black characters.

However, this period was short lived. By the late 1940's to early 1950's tv and films represented Black people as lazy, in service roles and unintelligent. The difference is Black people were playing these parts, not white people in Blackface.

### 1910

#### THE PULLMAN PORTER



William Foster of Chicago starts the first black-owned film company and produces all-black film shorts, THE PULLMAN PORTER: 1910, and THE RAILROAD PORTER: 1912. Distribution and production problems caused Foster to cease operations in 1913. There were no tv shows at the time as tv hadn't been invented until 1927.

### 1915

#### THE BIRTH OF A NATION



"Birth" is noted as the first-ever "race film." Its subject matter would affect the way movies involving blacks would be conceived and produced. Though DW Griffith's film had no black stars, it took stereotypes to stratospheric levels. Blacks were depicted by white actors in blackface as slaves escaped: The Ku Klux Klan "saved the day."



# Historical Social Change/Social Movements

## 1939

### MOVIE: 4 SHALL DIE



99 percent of 'race' movies are produced by white-owned companies. The focus changed to parodies of Hollywood films and fantasies where Black people lived, ruled and played in "their own world." Dorothy Dandridge makes her first feature appearance in "4 SHALL DIE."

## 1940's

### STEPIN FETCHIT



Lincoln Perry was America's first black movie star. But for that distinction, Perry paid a heavy price -- he is best known as the character of Stepin Fetchit, a befuddled, mumbling, fool. Seen through a modern lens, Perry's "laziest man in the world" character can be painfully racist.

## 1950's

### AMOS AND ANDY

After more than 70-odd episodes had been broadcast, it was taken off the air after protests from specific groups including the NAACP, who alleged that the show engaged in stereotyping. Afterwards, there were no all-black sitcoms shown in the U.S. until the 1970s.







# Historical Social Change/Social Movements

## White tv shows during the 1940's and 1950's

During this time of film and television, most Hollywood productions did not allow Black actors to audition for many roles outside of stereotypical roles. They were "type casted" and only allow to play those roles, meanwhile, white actors were able to play a range of roles that showed everyday life to heroic roles and entertainment.

### THE LONE RANGER



### THE HONEYMOONERS



### THE HOWDY DOODY SHOW



## Late 1960's

### JULIA



Julia is an American sitcom. It was the first weekly series to star an African-American woman in a non-stereotypical role. Previous television series featured African-American lead characters, but the characters were usually servants. The show starred actress and singer Diahann Carroll, and ran for 86 episodes on NBC from September 17, 1968, to March 23, 1971.





# Historical Social Change/Social Movements

## 1970-1980's TV

Some shows during this time period began to integrate with Black and white characters. However, the Black characters were not in lead roles and were often depicted as needy, poor, or orphaned and adopted by rich white characters. When there were all Black casts represented, they were shown as poor families, who struggled greatly.

### GOOD TIMES



### THE FACTS OF LIFE



### DIFFERENT STROKES





# Historical Social Change/Social Movements

## The 1990-2000's TV

During this decade there were more shows that integrated Black characters and other people of color with white characters. Black actors began playing roles that were not stereotypical. Black actors played judges, police officers, college students, etc. and depicted everyday life and experiences.

**FAMILY MATTERS**



**THE FRESH PRINCE OF BEL AIR**



**SAVED BY THE BELL**



**A DIFFERENT WORLD**





# Historical Social Change/Social Movements

## 2010-2020's

With cable tv becoming more popular in the 1990's, networks created shows that featured Black people as leads. Before there were very few Black writers writing the scripts for show with Black characters, now Black writers and directors such as Issa Rae (seen in the picture for the show Insecure which she created, wrote and directed) and Shonda Rhimes writes and directs shows for multiple audiences. Also, Black voice actors are now playing the voice for Black cartoon characters such as Doc McStuffins.

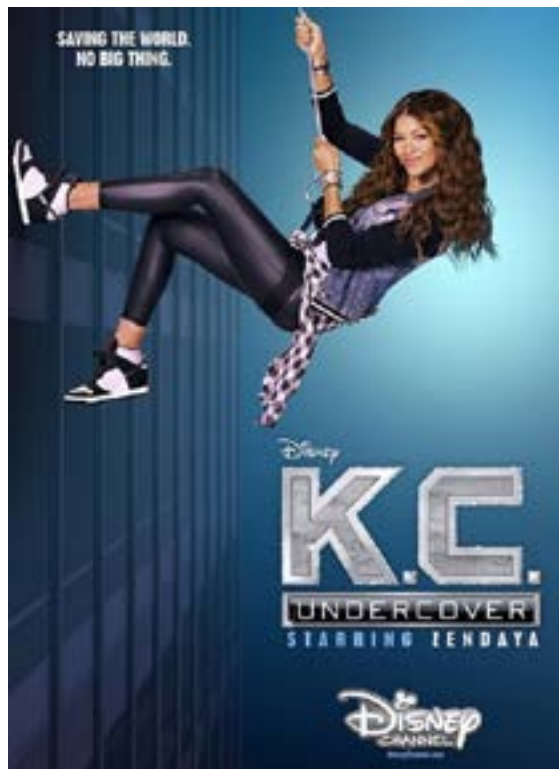
### DOC MCSTUFFINS



### GREY'S ANATOMY



### KC UNDERCOVER



### INSECURE







# “Black Panther” movie produces two Oscar firsts for African-Americans

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.01.19



Ruth E. Carter holds her award for best costume design for “Black Panther” at the Oscars on February 24, 2019, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, California. Photo by: Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP

LOS ANGELES, California — The 91st Academy Awards happened February 24. It was a historic night for two women. Both worked on the film “Black Panther.”

Ruth E. Carter won the award for best costume design. Hannah Beachler was recognized for best production design. Each became the first African-American to win in these categories.

“I dreamed and prayed for this night,” said Carter. She laughed while accepting her trophy. She dedicated the award to her 97-year-old mother. Carter also thanked the director, Spike Lee. He helped her get her start in the 1998 film “School Daze.”

In response, Lee rose from his seat. He pumped his fist into the air.

Beachler cried during her speech. She was joined by fellow design awardee Jay R. Hart. Beachler said she “stands here stronger than she did yesterday.” She helped create the world of Wakanda. It was the fictional homeland of Black Panther’s main character. The film was based on a comic by Marvel.

## BEACHLER HAD WORKED WITH DIRECTOR BEFORE

“Black Panther” was directed by Ryan Coogler. Beachler had worked with Coogler on other films. She thanked him. Beachler said he “made me a better designer, a better storyteller, a better person.”

Beachler said her success was because of Coogler, who gave her a better understanding of life. She added, “I’m stronger because Marvel gave me a chance.”

Beachler and Carter were important parts of “Black Panther.” It became a hugely popular film worldwide.

Both said they wanted to show the pride of the African diaspora in the film. The diaspora is the worldwide collection of communities from Africa.

## CARTER’S COSTUMES TURNED BLACK PANTHER INTO AFRICAN KING

Marvel Comics created Black Panther, Carter noted. He was the first black superhero. “But through costume design, we turned him into an African king,” said Carter. The film’s colorful clothing was inspired by her travels to Africa. Carter spoke with people there. She wanted to understand the history of each item. She wanted to make sure the different characteristics were shown correctly in the film.

The costumes have become popular. Many people wear Black Panther-themed costumes to theaters. They come from all age groups and backgrounds. Some even dressed in Wakanda wear at a pre-Oscar event.

“We wanted to bring the world of Africa to life,” Beachler said.

Carter said she hopes their Oscar wins can open more doors for other African-Americans. Maybe they will want to follow in her and Beachler’s footsteps.

She said she hopes to help such people follow their dreams.