

Compare how teenagers are represented in the action/fantasy genre looking at The Hunger Games and The Amazing Spider-Man.

In the action and fantasy genre, there are a lot of expectations as to what is included in the film and how it is filmed. For example, there is always a strong plot to engage the audience and fight scenes to add edge to the film and possibly appeal more to older boys. For the females in the audience, there is usually an underlying love story which helps people to connect with the characters on a more emotional level. The males are stereotypically very strong whilst the females are attractive and have a submissive personality. Finally, good always defeats evil which is shown as a main message in both The Hunger Games and The Amazing Spider-Man. Nearly all of these expectations are met in both of the films mentioned.

The Hunger Games starts in a dystopian future world with the main protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, in her home District 12. Residents of each district must offer up two tributes to the Capitol by holding a reaping. They are to take part in a brutal fight to the death: The Hunger Games. At the reaping, Katniss' sister Prim is chosen as tribute so Katniss volunteers in her place. She is taken to the Capitol for intensive training with her fellow tribute Peeta Mellark. Whilst they are there, they must participate in parades and interviews to gain sponsors so that they will have potentially lifesaving items donated to them in the arena. During their final interview, Peeta confesses his love for Katniss and they decide to sell the image of 'the star-crossed lovers' to gain sponsors. In the arena, Peeta first joins the career group which makes Katniss think that he has left her. As a result of this, she goes to find Rue who stays as her companion for a while until she is shot by a career tribute. An announcement is then given that two tributes may win if they are from the same district so Katniss goes to find Peeta. Eventually, she finds him and they kill the last remaining tribute, Cato. The Capitol makes another announcement that there will be only one victor but when Katniss and Peeta threaten to commit suicide, both are crowned as victors.

The Amazing Spider-Man is about a teenage boy who lives with his aunt and uncle as a result of his parents' deaths. Being very interested in science, he sneaks into the Oscorp science facility and takes part in a tour held by Dr Curtis Connors. Whilst he is there, Peter is bitten by a genetically engineered spider which gives him the abilities of a spider. Dr Connors experiments with lizard DNA to grow back his lost limb; it goes wrong and it turns him into a lizard-human hybrid that attacks the city. Peter goes to save the city from him and has to leave his love interest, Gwen Stacy, behind, only for them to be reunited at the end when he defeats Dr Connors.

There are many similarities between the way that the main protagonists in both films, Katniss Everdeen and Peter Parker, are represented. One of these similarities is that both characters are brave and fearless in the face of danger. An example of this can be seen in The Hunger Games when Katniss volunteers for her sister at the reaping; she is well aware that her life is endangered by doing this but she does it anyway for her sister. Peter's bravery is shown when he

chases the criminal that he believes killed his Uncle Ben; he knows that he could fall and die or that the criminal could kill him at any moment but all he cares about is avenging his uncle's death. These characteristics are expected to be seen in Peter as he is the main character in an action/fantasy film and also because he is male. As said in the introduction, males are expected to be brave and strong as this is the male stereotype that is mostly portrayed in other films and also the wider media. He seems especially brave compared to his female love interest Gwen Stacy as she is always telling him to be careful and that she is worried about him. Gwen is a classic example of a stereotypical girl character as she is very attractive, submissive and she leaves the fighting and lifesaving to Peter. However, Katniss subverts the female stereotype in action/fantasy films because women are nearly always portrayed as being submissive and delicate, leaving all the fighting and the hardship to the males. She seems especially courageous compared to her mother and sister who are both fragile, emotional characters. She could even be seen as braver and stronger than Peter as he relies on his powers for his strength whereas Katniss is naturally this way. This is cleverly done by the film makers and producers to encourage a wide range of people to watch the film. Women would perhaps enjoy the film more as there is a female lead which empowers women and shows that it isn't just men who are strong. Men would still enjoy the film as Katniss isn't overly girly and she behaves in a way that many people would expect men to. People could easily forget that it isn't the norm for someone like Katniss to be the main character in an action/fantasy film as she plays her part so well. On the other hand, The Amazing Spider-Man would most likely appeal to a male audience more than it would to a female audience because there is a male lead and most of the themes in the film are in line with media stereotypes.

Both Katniss and Peter are also represented as quite attractive characters; this is done on purpose to appeal to people, especially teenagers, in the audiences of both films who will find them attractive and want to watch them. The fact that they are both good looking perpetuates the stereotype that actors and their characters must be attractive as nearly all lead characters in films are good looking. This idea is demonstrated even further with the fact that Peeta, Glimmer, Cato and Clove from The Hunger Games and Gwen and Flash from The Amazing Spider-Man are all young and attractive. In addition to this, The Amazing Spider-Man could be creating some unrealistic ideals for young men in the real world. As Gwen doesn't really fall in love with Peter until he has his powers and he seems strong and desirable, it promotes the idea that girls don't fall for boys who are average or have nothing special about them. This could make boys feel as though they have to compete and have something special about them to win the affection of women when this is an unrealistic idea.

One way in which Katniss and Peter differ is in what they are seen wearing throughout the films. Peter is always shown wearing quite average looking clothes with messy hair and not being too bothered about his appearance whereas Katniss is always made to look beautiful, even when she is in her poverty stricken home town. This shows that there is an idea that women always have to look good in order to get roles in films and to appeal to the males that

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may be watching. Men, on the other hand, do not have this expected of them as Peter quite clearly shows. Further evidence for this can be seen in Gwen's outfit in *The Amazing Spider-Man*; she is always dressed up and made to look her best when the males at her school walk around in casual attire. Also, Katniss is shown looking gorgeous at the tribute's parade with an incredibly detailed outfit on. This is done to appeal to girls who may like her outfit and enjoy watching the film for this reason and to appeal to boys who like to look at attractive women.

The mise en scene in the reaping scene of *The Hunger Games* shows the people of District 12 as being poor and deprived of basic human rights. This is because they are mainly dressed in drab basic colours such as beige, white and grey and because they don't wear any makeup. Their outfits are very traditional and of a 1920's/30's style with the females wearing dresses and the males wearing shirts and trousers. Although they live in a poverty stricken community, the citizens of District 12 are in formal dress as the reaping is seen as an important and honourable event for them. To make the setting appear miserable, dull lighting has been used which gives the impression of a depressing scene. In addition to this, the main colour scheme is a dismal grey which sets the bad mood even more. The town square that they are standing in has elements of both the past: the clothing and the simple layout of the buildings, and the future: the peacekeepers' uniforms and the vast stone justice building. Both of these together make the town square a retro-futuristic setting. For the most part, it is silent which shows nerves and hostility within the crowd. There is a tense atmosphere because so many people are scared and perhaps angry at the situation they have been put in by the Capitol. Regardless of the miserable mood that emanates from the crowd and the overall look of the scene, people are holding hands to comfort each other and show that they are united against the Capitol. When Katniss and Peeta are on the stage of the justice building after being chosen as tributes, the people of district 12 salute them rather than clapping as they had been asked. This act shows their respect for the tributes, especially Katniss as she volunteered for her sister, and it also shows defiance as they are not doing as the Capitol as told them to. This scene is quite unusual for the representation of teenagers as it is expected that they are nasty and unpleasant towards their younger siblings, however Katniss shows that she loves Prim more than anyone and anything else in the world by potentially sacrificing her life to save her. Finally, the reaping scene mainly contains diegetic sounds such as the gravel underneath people's feet and the sounds of people crying. This has been deliberately done by the film makers as when paired with the use of a handheld camera, it makes the scene look very effective and realistic. The only use of non-diegetic sound is at the end of this scene when Peeta is selected as tribute and dramatic music begins to play. When used in moderation, as in this scene, the dramatic music adds atmosphere and also signals that something important is happening and that it is a key part of the scene.

The mise en scene in the school scene at the beginning of *The Amazing Spider-Man* is almost completely different to the reaping scene in *The Hunger Games*. It is set in a busy school environment with upbeat pop/indie music playing in the background to create a pleasant, happy mood for the whole scene. The lighting

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is very bright which also helps to make the mood cheerful. Throughout the scene, the main colour scheme for the clothing and surroundings is yellow and grey. This is a neutral scheme which could be used for both male and female characters and the yellow is a bright happy colour which sets the mood too. The teenagers in this scene always seem to travel in groups or are seen together which accurately portrays the stereotypical view of teenagers that they always like to be with friends. In addition to this, the people that are important in the film always stand to the forefront of their group or they are shown on their own. This ensures that the audience's main focus is on them and that they realise that they are important. The main sound in this scene is the non-diegetic, upbeat music that plays whilst Peter is walking through the school. This has been done to make the scene seem light hearted and to show that teenagers are carefree and happy for the most part. There is no need for diegetic sounds as the school setting is already realistic.

In the scene where Katniss is trying to reach the edge of the arena, she is represented in a way that subverts many stereotypes of teenagers and females. The fact that she is trying to reach the edge of the arena in the first place shows that she is rebelling against the Capitol by not playing the games in the way that they want her to. This is supported by the dramatic music in the background which empowers her and seems to fuel the rebellious atmosphere in this scene. Although she is at first shown as very strong and determined, the camera then zooms out to show a birds-eye view of Katniss against the vast landscape of the arena. Camera angles such as this show that she isn't in control at all and she is in fact still just a tiny insignificant piece in their games. Because she still fights against this and tries to be the one in control, it makes her the heroine of the film. Her brave and defiant nature is what wins in the end and it shows that good always prevails over evil. All of these qualities are not often seen in female film characters or teenage film characters so this goes against the norms in the media. Close-up shots are also used when Katniss is running from the fire to show that she still gets scared and emotional and to make the audience connect with her on an emotional level. A hand-held camera is used to shoot the fire scene as the jerky quick movements capture the frantic feelings that Katniss has.

In the scene near the start of *The Amazing Spider-Man* where Peter is at school, he is represented in a way that both fits the stereotype of a teenage nerd and also challenges in some ways too. At the start, he is seen putting up a poster for debate club which is obviously nerdy and uncool compared to the sports team poster next to it. He is shown next to geeky things quite often during this scene to show that he isn't cool or popular and that he is a nerd. Furthermore, he is clearly tongue-tied when an attractive girl tries to talk to him which also fits the stereotype of a nerd. On the other hand, Peter does many things that aren't necessarily what people would expect a nerd to do. For example, he skateboards down the corridor which would be seen as something too edgy for a nerd to do. He also gets caught doing this and is told off by a teacher which doesn't fit the stereotype either. Finally, he stands up to the school bully, Flash, when he is picking on someone; Peter does this because he is not only brave but he is a good person. When he refuses to join in, he is well aware of the consequences of

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his actions but he continues because he knows he has to do what is right. High angle shots are used when he is beaten up by Flash as they make him look small and alone to show that nobody wants to help him and that everyone else is too afraid of Flash to have helped Peter. This only adds to his brave character because he was the only one to stand up to him. These qualities were given to his character because it makes the character and the overall film more interesting if not everything is the way it is expected to be.

In conclusion, the representation of teenagers in the action/fantasy film genre doesn't always fit the stereotypes that people and the media have. This is definitely for the best as it makes the films more interesting and it lets a wider audience enjoy them. However, many stereotypes are still in place but this isn't necessarily a bad thing as sometimes stereotypes are necessary to help people understand the characters.

The only thing you need add is a reference to sound in the scenes you have analysed-diegetic and non diegetic sound. Try to link the sound to the representation of teens.