

3/19 Class Notes

Disability Representation in Fictional Media

- New disability ad → girl with Down Syndrome (will be posted on Serendip)
 - Dealing with infantilization
 - Example: No one lets girl with down syndrome live on her own so she can never prove she can live on her own
 - Assumption becomes reality
- Sci Fi as a genre that typically includes disabled characters
- List of Media that deals with Disabled Characters... do they pass the Fries Test?

✗ Fail

✓ Pass

⊕ Has Disabled Actors

- Me Before You ✗
 - The Good Doctor
 - Star Wars ✗
 - Dune 2
 - AHS: Freak Show ✗⊕
 - Community
 - Glee ✗⊕
 - All the Light we Cannot See
 - Five Feet Apart ✗
 - Fault in Our Stars ✗
 - Atypical ⊕
 - The Last Airbender ✓
 - A Quiet Place
 - Breaking Bad ⊕
 - Sick Kids in Love
 - Game of Thrones ⊕
 - The Kiss Quotient
- Fries test
 - Does a work have more than one disabled character?
 - Do the disabled characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a nondisabled character?
 - Is the character's disability not eradicated either by curing or killing?
 - Sometimes creators are informed by just the tropes that they see...
 - A good creator does research or talks to disabled ppl
 - What does it take to write a disabled character? → Let them be joyful, don't kill them off, include activism
 - Importance of writing the satellite characters (non disabled friends, siblings, friends, etc.)
 - Questions of incorporating disabled people into certain genres like fantasy
 - Some people question why they would be present if there exists the power/magic/whatnot to "fix" it

- Imaginative genres tend to have more disabled characters (fantasy or science fiction)
 - Also includes gender → playing with gender fluidity and sexuality
 - More room to play with identity in these imaginative realms

Good Kings, Bad Kings

- Riva's portrait of author, Susan Nussbaum
 - Looks comfortable, confident, direct, assertive
 - Red star represents radical left politics in Riva's work
- About Nussbaum
 - Was an actor early in her life, but then she was disabled in an accident
 - Found that stages/theaters were not accessible, hard to pursue a career as actor
 - Turned to playwriting, was very successful and involved
 - Good kings, bad kings was her first novel
 - Founded an organization in Chicago for teenage girls with disabilities
 - Mostly low income latinas
 - Drew from experience to write her novel
- Thoughts about the book
 - Trained helplessness → can't take bus, cross street, etc. without passing tests or supervision → have to stay institutionalized because they don't have opportunity to develop skills
 - Connection to down syndrome ad
 - Constructing boundaries between types of disability... physical/cognitive for example
 - Making systems that are often invisible, visible
 - Showing us the lives of disabled kids without family, economic resources
 - Elucidating the existence of juvenile nursing homes, typically assumed to be a geriatric thing
 - Kids bring in a joyfulness in a dreary situation (not from their disability but from the system)