

“The propagandist’s purpose is to make one set of people forget that certain other sets of people are human”

Aldous Huxley

“Disabled people throughout the world are engaged with a long and complicated struggle with the way we are portrayed and the meanings attached to these portrayals that include disability as stigma, as a sign of a damaged soul, as being less than human, as dependent, weak, sexless, valueless “

Jackie Gay & Mat Fraser

“Nearly all portrayals are negative. Lots of harmful tropes including the disabled villain, disability as a burden, disability as a plot device – usually the impact a family member or other loved one’s disability has on a non-disabled protagonist, better dead than disabled, disabled super villain, the lovable childlike disabled person (usually with a social or intellectual disability), and I can go on and on. They come from a place that doesn’t truly understand disability. They paint disabled people as helpless burdens on the society that don’t deserve to be in this world. They paint disability as something worse than death.” - Interviewee

Representations of disabled people in media often perpetuate stereotypes that can reinforce prejudice and lead to the marginalisation and oppression of disabled people. Many conventions for representing disabled people in film were formed during the eugenics movement and continue to the modern era. This document provides a toolkit for assessing and improving portrayals of disabled people in film.

Disabled people are eight times more likely than other minority groups to say that how they are represented in the media is inaccurate; in fact, many disabled people find existing depictions problematic and disempowering. Disabled people constantly rate improving representations in the media as a top priority yet little has been done to achieve this. 87% of disabled people said that the negative behaviour and attitudes of non-disabled people affect their daily lives.

Non-disabled people learn about disability primarily from the media, which frequently presents disabled people in negative ways. 43% of the British public claims not to know anyone disabled, and 67% admit to feeling uncomfortable talking to disabled people. Disabled people are under-represented on television. Disabled people are 18% of the total population, yet only 8.3% of on-screen characters. A core issue in sustaining harmful portrayals of disabled people is that the industry not recognising and understanding disability as a civil rights issue in the same way as other minority groups.

Disabled lives are often depicted as being fundamentally not worth living, with death and suicide often framed as 'happy endings' for disabled characters. These depictions obfuscate harm and assist in justifying policy changes that raise fatality rates. For example, policies that prioritise access to assisted suicide instead of accessible housing or healthcare. Negative representations of disabled people in the media have been directly linked to a reduction in their rights as citizens. For example, laws enabling the execution of people with learning disabilities were justified based on the fictional portrayals of them as inherently violent and dangerous.

This zine is distilled from People or Props? - How to portray disability without reinforcing prejudice, the MSc dissertation by Richard Amm.



The first depiction of disability in film is *The Fake Beggar* (1898) by Thomas Edison. The beggar (who is really begging) is pretending to be physically disabled and blind, when the police accost him he runs off. The trope of the disabled person faking their disability is still common today. As are the accusations and harassment disabled people experience in real life. While this depiction is likely not the origin point of this prejudice, repeated depictions likely help to reinforce this idea. Do existing social structures incentivise the creation of justifications to ignore suffering and cut social support?

“It’s pertinent because nondisabled people look to media to better understand people and situations, they don’t have experience with. So, if they see disabled people on television, they’re going to look to those media representations for how disabled people are, and how to treat disabled people as a result. We know that when portrayals are harmful, it often leads to disabled people being treated in harmful ways not just individually but on a societal and systemic level. If we want to truly change systemic oppression and societal attitudes about disability, we must make representation more authentic and inclusive.” - Interviewee

Disability representation ‘Bechdel’ tests made by disabled people

Test 1 - **The aegipan-omnicorn (/Antinormal) test**

- 1) There’s Disabled Character
- 2) Who’s an active participant in resolving their own conflict*
- 3) That conflict revolves around something other than “Their Disability.”
- 4) They’re still alive and disabled at the end.

Test 2 - **The Capri0mni test**

- 1) There’s a disabled character visible
- 2) Who wants something, and tries to get it,
- 3) Other than a) Death, b) Cure, or c) Revenge.

Test 3 - **The Jessica Test** (Jessica Cox and Patrick Chamberlian)

- 1) It features at least one character with a disability, where
- 2) Their disability is not central to the plot, and
- 3) The character talks about something other than their disability.

Test 4 - **The Dave Test** (Dave Hingsburger)

- 1) There a character with a disability in the movie
- 2) Who exists and takes action independently without support or approval from others.
- 3) And who comments on disability as a real experience - not an ennobling one, not one of pity, or one as comic relief.

Subsequently updated to “**The Rolling Test**”:

- 1) There a major named character with a disability in the movie who exists and takes action under personal motivation without needing approval from others.
- 2) And who comments on disability as a real experience - not an ennobling one, not one of pity, or one as comic relief.
- 3) And who isn’t smothered with a pillow or done away for their own good.



Tod Browning's 1932 film *Freaks* is still frequently misinterpreted to be a horror movie, it was co-produced by disabled people and the villains are non-disabled. It still has the record for most disabled people in a film. It shows disabled people having belonging, community, relationships, getting married, having children. All these things are very rarely seen in modern depictions of disability.

"The propagandist's purpose is to make one set of people forget that certain other sets of people are human" - Aldous Huxley

"The overwhelming majority of stories about disability [made by non-disabled people] portray how sad and tragic disabled lives must be. It shows that life ends with disability and it doesn't. The abled gaze, seeing it from the non-disabled perspective. No disabled writers, actors etc. Not being told from the perspective of disabled people. When people rely on tropes and stereotypes when they are infantilised or overcoming their disability or cured and then everything is perfect, because "you can't be happy if you have a disability" When it is about assimilation instead of acceptance." - Interviewee

Test 5 - **The Edgar Test** (Justin Edgar)

- 1) The film must have a disabled actor playing a disabled character or a disabled writer or director
- 2) The disabled character does not have to overcome adversity
- 3) The disabled character is not able-bodied at the start or end.”

Test 6 - **The Fries Test** (Kenny Fries) (2017)

- 1) Does a work have more than one disabled character?
- 2) Do the disabled characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a nondisabled character?
- 3) Is the character’s disability not eradicated either by curing or killing?

Test 7 - **The Gold Test** (Jenny Gold) (2-part version)

- 1) Is there anyone in the world at all in the film or TV show that has a disability—in the background, under five lines, anything?
- 2) Is that character shown in a positive, non-stereotypical, three-dimensional way?

Test 8 - **The Gold Test** (Jenny Gold) (3-part version)

Part A: Is there anyone in the world of this story that has any type of disability? If a work passes Part A it goes on to...

Part B: Does the work feature a disabled character whose story is not about their disability, and whose character is not solely defined by their disability?

Part C: And for bonus points, I added Part C which brings up another hot-button issue in the disability community, which is if the character is played by an actor with that same disability.

Test 9 - **Hornberg and Greer Test** (Emily Hornburg and Casey Greer)

- 1) Does the character talk about something other than their disability?
- 2) Does the character stay disabled the entire story?
- 3) Does the characters/storyline/arc serve a purpose beyond making the lives of people around them better?



(Non-disabled people present us as if...) "We don't do anything, we are just depressed and want to kill ourselves, are a burden. We all know that is not the truth at all, we are active and we do things. And have fulfilling lives and it's important to show that. It's important to tell the stories of more marginalised disabled people. I don't know what it is like to be black and disabled or gay and disabled or black and gay and disabled. If people see things of disabled people wanting to kill themselves, they will make decisions on healthcare "They just want to die, why should we help them live?" In America, healthcare for disabled people literally kills people. Especially disabled black people and police brutality. 50% of people killed by police have some kind of disability. But they don't fund mental health support services" - Interviewee

Test 10 - **Divyani Rattanpal** (2015)

- 1) Their characters are not entirely centred around their disabilities
- 2) They are portrayed realistically, with flaws and ambitions – think Forrest Gump
- 3) They are not shown as mere receivers of help
- 4) If other characters can have romantic and sexual desires, their characters should too

Test 11 - **The short Pulrang test** (Andrew Pulrang) (2016)

- 1) Features two or more disabled characters, who
- 2) Talk to each other,
- 3) About something other than their disabilities.

Test 12 - **The medium Pulrang test** (Andrew Pulrang) (2014)

- 1) At least one character with disabilities are involved in significant plot developments not centered on their disabilities.
- 2) Disabilities are depicted realistically, neither less, nor more severe than they would be in real life.
- 3) Disabled characters are givers as well as receivers ... supportive of other characters, not just supported by them.

Test 13 - **The long Pulrang test** (Andrew Pulrang)

- Two or more disabled characters supporting or advising each other on disability-related matters. (Rather than a non-disabled character “confronting” a disabled character’s depression, resignation, or self pity).

- 1) One or more disabled characters who are involved in stories, events, and conversations not related to their own disabilities.
- 2) Disabled characters portrayed as having both good and bad qualities. (Rather than one-dimensionally angelic, bitter, or terrifying).
- 3) One or more disabled characters who have role in the story more complex than “the disabled character”.
- 4) Wheelchairs and other adaptive equipment resemble what people actually use in real life. (Rather than generic hospital equipment, unless poor equipment is part of the story).
- 5) We get to experience at least part of the story from the disabled character’s point of view. Rather than the disabled character only seen in how they affect other characters. (Rather than the disabled character seen only from other character’s point of view).



The one thing most non-disabled people know about disability is that blind people want to touch your face. This is generally not the case. The first depiction of blindness in film was the life story of Hellen Keller, who was blind as well as deaf and felt lips, the mouth shapes and throat vibrations in order to learn how to produce speech. Subsequent films since then repeated the trope, basing depictions of blindness on previous depictions without ever talking to or involving blind people at any point. What else might this be happening with?

“I couldn’t and wouldn’t, as a white man, write about the lived experiences of black women during Windrush for example. It would be rejected. I don’t know why we are ok with disability with non-disabled people constantly chiming in. The BBC has non-disabled people and disabled people on their disability steering committee, this isn’t done for other groups. If you are not doing disability then you are not doing diversity” - Interviewee

Advice from interviews

“Always cast authentically with actual disabled people. Have disabled people in the writing room helping craft the stories. Hire disabled crewmembers.”

“Consult, consult, consult! If you don’t have personal experience with disability, you have to hire somebody, bring them in early when you have rough ideas, not at the end.”

“If less than 20% of crew is disabled you are not doing it right. Disabled people at every level of production. Disabled actors, crew, writers, producers etc. No more excuses about accommodations being hard. Talk to disabled people’s organisations not charities. Start out by writing disabled characters like you would any other character. Make their disability secondary as you learn to write them as human beings. Don’t reduce to stereotypes.”

“Don’t reduce to stereotypes. More subversive, progressive, challenge stereotypes. A person of equal value and humanity Not hierarchical like boss and employee or parent or caretaker.”

“If you are gonna focus on disability, it has to be about real issues, like money. If you are going to talk about disability, money has to come up, the most common barrier. If it’s focused on disability, you have to. The grouping of being disabled is about how you are not as exploitable in the system. Disability itself is framed as a cause of suffering, and so must be fixed and made to go away, but no stories talk about that it is that is making disabled people suffer, which is capitalism. “

“I don’t see the point of putting disabled people on tv if you gloss over the world being difficult. Hard to show how it is without it being about tragedy. Needs to touch on challenges, but shows how people get through. With tears, with laughter, with community. That is what disability is, its closest to queerness. You have to be able to cry and laugh.”

“Honestly, I think that if we had disabled people telling these stories, they would come from a much more organic place and I think that while it’s important to show systemic problems running through disability right now I think it’s even more important that we start showing disabled people as more than just disabled. I believe that as we develop authentic disabled representation stories about the systemic problems will come out naturally in the telling, but they won’t be the only vote focal point of the disabled person’s life. Just one of the many highlights.”

“The majority of representation is straight white males when it comes to disability and that needs to change especially since the LGBTQIA community for example is made up of mostly disabled people. At the very least, most LGBTQIA people have mental health and chronic health disabilities due to systemic oppression and mistreatment. Oppression can really wear on the body. I’ve also heard Black and Brown communities talk about the same – how stress from oppression has led to greater issues with mental health and more chronic disabilities, so why is the majority of representation not of more marginalized communities who are more likely to be disabled? I think that’s a question creators need to be asking themselves. “

“I really liked Bryony on the British Bake-off she had one arm. It was never referenced, it was never a big deal, it wasn’t “this is the first disabled person on Bake-off” It was just “She made a cake” Completely normalising, no need to have a discussion. Nobody needs to know why.”

“Having romantic interests, portraying disabled people with nuance. It’s very hard for people to portray disabled sexuality. People really struggle with it. Rainman was a movie about autism but it was about somebody who knew somebody with autism, it was the “Guy having a [marginalised] friend” Stories are often told from carers perspective. “

“Narrative needs to be about more than the disability. If showing negative aspects of disability, it can’t be the introduction as that forms the impression. The initial exposure to disability can’t be the shock of getting it. Fine in flashback later.”

“Is the disabled person the sidekick or do they get to be the main character? is it only about disability? do they do other things? eg a lawyer etc more than seeing disabled people successfully engaging in things that are cultural norms, dating, sexuality, sports need to be more complex and interesting and relatable.”

“Flat power or inverted power structure. - His relationship to the main character doesn’t have a power structure, they know each other socially and are working together.”

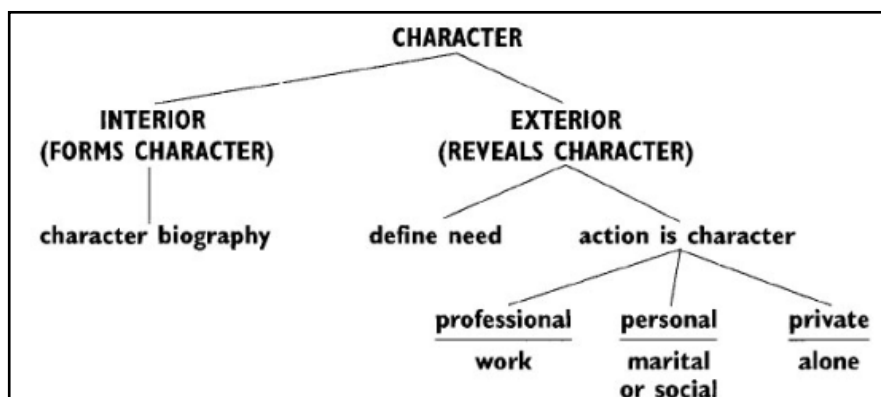
“It’s the little things, like in Margarita With a Straw, the wheelchair got stuck in the snow. Lots of little things in it that were identifiable. Things about eye level. You know that the writer has lived experienced. The level of patronising treatment.”

“Background character of wheelchair user in Star Trek Discovery. It’s a future where we are there. They were just living their lives normally without it being a thing. You don’t often see disabled people in the background.”

“Single most useful thing is common concern, common anxiety, worries, common hope. Work, develop themselves, enjoy life. Not separate. More similar than you know. Weird thing about tv is the separation between disability representation and the disabled people you know. Disabled tv people are characters, not people you feel like who live next door. Real lives and real stories, sharing life experience is best way for disabled people to taken seriously. We don’t just want positive portrayals; we want authentic portrayals.”

“How the world sees you affects how the world then treats you. As time has gone on, we have become a media and screen-heavy culture. It is important that disabled people are empowered to tell their own stories themselves, rather than having non-disabled people throw out archaic and outdated stereotypes of disabled people that invariably do harm. It does harm at both ends, it takes away power and work from disabled people in the media, and then the negative portrayals that come out as a result effect the way that disabled people are treated in wider society by those who consume that media, not knowing any better or knowing any different”

Below is a page from "The Bible" of screenwriting (Syd Field, 2003), in a section about writing characters. It is recommending adding disability to evil characters. For physical disability to visually represent moral failings. Physical difference = Moral difference. Disability = Evil



A screenplay, remember, is a story told with pictures. And "every picture tells a story," sings Rod Stewart. Pictures, or images, reveal aspects of character. In Robert Rossen's classic film *The Hustler*, a physical defect symbolizes an aspect of character. The girl played by [Piper Laurie](#) is a cripple; she walks with a limp. She is also an emotional cripple. She drinks too much, has no sense of aim or purpose in life. The physical limp underscores her emotional qualities – *visually*.

[Sam Peckinpah](#) does this in *The Wild Bunch*. A character played by [William Holden](#) walks with a limp, the result of an aborted hold-up some years before. It represents an aspect of Holden's character, revealing him to be an "unchanged man in a changing land," one of Peckinpah's favorite themes; a man born ten years too late, a man out of time. In *Chinatown* Nicholson gets his nose slit because, as a detective, he's "nosy."

Physical handicap – as an aspect of characterization – is a theatrical convention that extends far back into the past. One thinks of *Richard III*, or the use of consumption or VD that strike the characters in the dramas of O'Neill and [Ibsen](#), respectively.

Form your characters by creating a character biography, then reveal them by their actions and possible physical traits.



When Ian Fleming wrote James Bond he likely knew many ex-soldiers who had disabilities and scars. James Bond had a facial scar and his best friend was an amputee with multiple prosthetic limbs. When the movies were made disabilities were taken away from the “good guys” and given to all of the “bad guys” instead.

Disabled villains in Bond films include the following: Dr. No and Tee Hee Johnson are amputees, Emilio Largo is missing an eye, Jaws has prosthetic teeth and giantism & Oddjob is mute. Alec Trevelyan, Le Chiffre, Raoul Silva, Safin, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, all have facial scars and Blofeld is also a wheelchair user. All while many actors with scar or facial difference are denied access to roles.

Authenticity

- [] Disabled actors and disabled writer/producer/directors **(+2)**.
- [] Disabled actors, but non-disabled writer/producer/directors **(+1)**.
- [] Crippling up (A non-disabled actor portraying a disabled character) **(-1)**.

Frequency

- [] More than two disabled characters **(+1)**
- [] All characters are non-disabled **(-1)**

(Or character is temporarily disabled or crip-coded, for example has autistic traits but not explicitly said to be autistic)

Embodied empathy

- [] Story told from a disabled person's point of view **(+2)**.
- [] Story told from a non-disabled person's point of view **(-1)**.

Status

- [] Equal to other characters, not inferior or superior **(+2)**.
- [] Pitying/subordinate/dependant/supercrip **(-2)**.

(A supercrip is someone who overcomes their disability in ways that are often seen by the public as inspiring, or is disabled but has some sort of genius or other skill to make up for it-- they have to be exceptional and compensate for being disabled in order to be accepted)

Agency/depth

- [] Disabled character exists for themselves **(+2)**
(Has flaws and ambitions, shows character development over time and a range of emotions, and disability is just one aspect of them among many.)
- [] Disabled character primarily defined by disability **(-2)**
(or their narrative purpose is for the education, growth, profit and motivation of non-disabled character .

Range

- [] Normalising/counter-stereotype/stereotype subverting **(+2)**.
- [] Stereotype or reinforcing stereotype **(-2)**.

Stereotype examples: - Linking desexualisation / emasculation / childlike or animal-like traits to disability?

- Linking evil / vengeance / violence to disability or facial difference?

- Linking disability as caused by supernatural forces as punishment for wrongdoing / lack of faith / healed with prayer?

- Presenting somebody faking a disability?

- Disabled character framed as a burden or dead / institutionalised / cured or "overcome disability" by integrating into excluding world by the end?

← **The People or Props (POP) Quiz** by Richard Amm, can assign an abstract positive or negative number score to a film. Negative scores indicate that the representation is dehumanising and the Recommendations should be checked. This was produced by combining existing tests by the disabled community and prejudice reduction psychology insights with disabled media experts interviews.



“Show them that it sells, make it, promote it, somebody has to be the first. Have an alternative Oscars where you give out award’s different awards for most empathetic, or most addresses structural issues etc. Approach the Razzies to have the worst disability portrayal category. Disabled stories are human stories, they will be relevant, your neighbour, your kids, you in the future. It’s a fundamental aspect of humanity, it’s not something you can put a bubble around, there will be a disabled person in your life.” - Interviewee

Prejudice reduction psychology guidelines

- High frequency of contact between groups, not Low frequency of contact between groups (But only if other conditions are met).
- Equal status between groups, not subordinate or inferior or superior.
- Shared common goal, not competing for limited resources or a threat.
- Seen as legitimate by authority, not shown as lawbreakers with no respect for tradition or cultural norms.
- Vivid counter-stereotypical examples and a high variety of portrayals, not using of Stereotypes and tropes.
- High levels of empathy and identification, not othering and indifference to suffering.
- Associate with positive feelings with the group, not associate with disgust, sadness, anger, pity.
- Show group members taking care of one another, not showing minority group members as even treating each-other badly.
- Show friendships between those from different groups, not highlighting irreconcilable differences and avoidance.
- Showing group identities shared between groups, not only showing groups by characteristics that set them apart.

System Justification Theory says that prejudice is generated against low power groups in society in order to maintain inequality. This relates to the subconscious belief that the world is fair and good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people. So to justify inequality, a society will make positive stereotypes of the rich being smart and talented, and negative stereotypes of the poor being lazy or stupid. Prejudice helps justify the inequality the system produces, by blaming individuals instead of structural forces. As disabled people exist at the bottom of society, negative associations will likely be attached to them. This is less likely to happen in societies with low inequality, so structural change may be the most effective way to reduce prejudice.

Recommendations

These were produced by combining prejudice reduction psychology insights with interviews with disabled media experts.

1. The higher the frequency of representations the better.
2. Disabled characters must be shown to have the same amount of status as non-disabled characters. Not subordinate or superhuman, not infantilised or dehumanised, shown to have equal rights, agency, value, humanity etc. The disabled character should be treated as if their life has equal value to non-disabled characters. If they are an adult, they should be shown to have sexual desire, sex, romance, or a relationship. The disabled character shouldn't be able to be replaced with an injured dog without radically altering the story. They should not be treated like a child even when they are an adult. A non-disabled person should not be shown to have more power over the disabled person's life than the disabled person.
3. Disabled characters are shown to have a goal in common with non-disabled characters For example goals like accessing healthcare, rights, work, family, dating, sport, friendship, religion, hobbies etc. They should be actively participating in resolving their own conflict not related to disability.
4. Disabled characters must not be framed as competing for limited resources with non-disabled people.
5. Disabled characters must be represented as legitimate by institutional authority, power structure or cultural norm. For example, do not portray the disability as being faked. If there is prejudice against the disabled character, it should be called out. If the disabled character is physically hurt, confined, has privacy violated or their communication restricted by others that should be framed as unacceptable. If the disabled person's disability related equipment is touched without their consent, that should be framed as unacceptable.
6. The higher the level of empathy with the disabled character the better, the more authenticity the better. For example, the disabled character

should be played by a disabled actor with a similar disability. They should be three-dimensional characters with flaws and ambitions. There should be a disabled writer or director. The disabled character should get to make a meaningful choice not related to their disability.

7. The higher the level of identification with the disabled character the better. They should be complex, three-dimensional, well-written and acted fully fleshed-out characters with agency and desires. For example, ideally being the main character and not a sidekick. The disabled person's story should not be told from the point of view of a non-disabled person. The character is not entirely defined by or centred on their disability; they should get to talk about something other than their disability. They should own narrative purpose other than the education, growth and profit of a nondisabled character. Disabled character should experience growth as a character or have an arc. Disabled characters should be shown to experience a range of emotions, and not just ones related to disability.

8. Positive feelings should be associated with the disabled character. They should appear unobtrusively without pity or tension. Don't associate the disabled character primarily with negative emotions. The narrative should not be centred on tragedy or trauma.

9. Have a high degree of variety of portrayals, different disabilities, stories etc. Do not limit the disabled character to privileged identities: rich, young, straight, white, male, cisgender, etc. Disability should be one facet of a deep, multifaceted, intersectional character.

10. Associate positive information with disabled people as a group. Do not portray disabled lives as sad and not worth living. Do not use disability as a reason or justification for vengeance or violence. The emotions the disabled person experiences are more often positive than negative.

11. The more you show disabled people taking care of one another the better. Disabled character is shown to be part of a community of disabled people. The disabled character must not be shown isolated from other disabled people. Show friendships between disabled and non-disabled people. Disabled person has a strong social and emotional connection with others.

12. Show disabled people sharing other kinds of group identities that are shared with non-disabled people. The disabled character has interests, work, hobbies, or expertise unrelated to disability.

13. Avoid depoliticization and individualisation of social responsibility. Do not link the inability to accept disability with anger and bitterness. Do not portray disabled people as recipients of charity. Disability is should not be presented as a personal tragedy. Disability should not be portrayed as a personal responsibility linked to individual effort. Do not portray a disabled character being magically cured or healed with prayer. Disability should not be shown to be a barrier to overcome to have a fulfilling life. Disability shouldn't be shown to be caused by or related to supernatural, spiritual or magical forces. The disabled person should not be framed as contagious. Mental illness should not be portrayed as entirely hereditary. A character should not suddenly lose their disability or be quickly cured. Disability must not be portrayed as an individual medical tragedy. The lack of accessibility in the physical environment should be mentioned. There should be some discussion of disability and how it relates to social class and social mobility.

14. Use stories that are vivid counter-stereotypical examples of disabled people. For example, showing a disabled person living a life, not dying, institutionalised, cured or desexualised. Portrayal challenges stereotypes or tropes about disability. They are disabled the whole way through the movie and not cured, institutionalised or dead by the end.

15. Stereotype: Avoid eugenics and desexualisation. The disabled character should not have their reproductive rights controlled by others. The disabled character should not experience sex/intimacy only as an act of charity or pity. The disabled character should be shown to have sexual interests and be able to have sex. The disabled character should not deny themselves a relationship. The disabled person should have children or is a parent. A disabled foetus should not be aborted because of disability, without any discussion. If having children is framed as undesirable because of their disability it should be challenged. The disabled character should not be assumed to be an unfit parent. The disabled character should not be framed as a

burden to their partner or family. The disabled person should not be institutionalised. Institutions should not be represented as idealised and caring places where disabled people should want to be. The disabled character should be alive for the whole movie and achieve a personal goal. The disabled character should not attempt or complete suicide because they are disabled. The disabled character should not be shown to be wanting to die because they are disabled. Killing the disabled character must not be framed as positive or necessary (including 'Euthanasia' and 'mercy killing'). If the setting is the far future, there should still be disabled people.

16. Stereotype: Do not conflate disability with evil, or visible difference with moral difference. Disability must not be portrayed as a reason or justification for being evil/criminal/violent. The villain should not have a life support machine. Disability and difference should not be used as a symbol for moral difference. (For example, adding a limp to a character to underline being an emotional cripple.) The disability should not be used as a reason or justification for revenge. The disability should not be shown to be caused because of rule-breaking or sin. Facial difference or scarring should not be used to denote evil or as shorthand for villainy. The portrayal must not link appearance to moral character and value. Disability must not be portrayed as due to being caused by a lack of faith or positivity. Disability must not be used as a metaphor for dependence or vulnerability or anything negative.

17. Stereotype: Do not use the Super-cripple or magical-minority stereotypes, they are often overcompensation for perceived inferiority. Do not show the character "overcoming their disability" as if it were purely down to character. Do not link superhuman or magical abilities linked to disability. Are other senses or abilities boosted to compensate for the loss of a sense or ability? Do not excessively praise the disabled characters for relatively ordinary achievements. Do not show the achievements of the disabled character dependent on the benevolence of others. The disabled person shouldn't be overcoming the disability to accomplish a grand task that is intended to be inspiring.

Would you like to know more?

Videos

Code of the Freaks (2020) (Comes with lots of materials from
<https://www.codeofthefreaks.com/>)

Youtube : Superheroes, Spies and Star Wars: Disability in Popular Culture by the The Writer's Bloc.

Youtube : Why the "Disabled Villain" Trope is So Offensive by The Take.

Youtube : MacTaggart Lecture: Jack Thorne 2021

Books

Norden, M. F. (1994). **The cinema of isolation**: A history of physical disability in the movies. Rutgers University Press

Smith, A. M. (2002). 'Hideous progeny': Eugenics, disability, and classic horror cinema. University of Minnesota.

Nario-Redmond, M. R. (2019). **Ableism: The causes and consequences of disability prejudice**. John Wiley & Sons.

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Barnes, C. (1992). **Disabling imagery and the media**. An Exploration of the Principles for Media Representations of Disabled People. The First in a Series of Reports. Halifax.

Kashani, T., & Nocella, A. J. (2010). Hollywood's cinema of ableism: A disability studies perspective on the Hollywood industrial complex. In *Hollywood's Exploited* (pp. 105-114). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Mendez, B. (2019). Better dead than disabled: Analysis of me before you. *Access*: Interdisciplinary Journal of Student Research and Scholarship*, 3(1), 3.

Sancho, J. (2003). **Disabling Prejudice: Attitudes towards disability and its portrayal on television**. A report of research undertaken by the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television Commission.

Underlying Health Condition (2021). **Everybody forgot about the toilets: An independent study into the accessibility of the TV industry**.

Web : <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DisabilityTropes>
<https://creativitydiversitynetwork.com/> , <https://triplec.org.uk/> , <https://www.filmdis.com/> , <https://gadim.org/>



This zine is produced by the **Disability Action Research Collective (DARK)**, which is a disabled-led group working to make disability perspectives, history, and research more accessible to a general audience. We are always looking for disabled (and non-disabled) volunteers to help write, edit and share their perspectives. Be part of something bigger than yourself, join us in the DARK today!

This zine features work by
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