

**Notes for We Learn Together:**  
**Portrayal and Representation of Disabilities in**  
**Popular Culture**


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We Learn Together:  
Portrayal and Representation of  
Disabilities in Popular Culture

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## Slide 2

About Me      About Me      About Me



- Why I chose this topic
- How society has treated me at times
- How I have reacted
- My goal in this presentation

Notes:

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## Disabilities Definition

dis·abil·i·ty | \ ,dis-ə-'bi-lə-tē\

a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions

**Notes:**

**What are disabilities?**

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### Types of Disabilities

- Physical
  - Quadrapalegic
  - Parapalegic
  - Amputee
- Sensory
  - Blind
  - Deaf
  - Hearing loss
  - Tactile
- Psychological
  - PTSD
  - Depression
  - Bipolar
- Developmental/cognitive
  - Autism
  - Aspergers
  - Down Syndrome
  - Speech disorders

...and many more

#### Notes:

**Physical:**

**Sensory:**

**Psychological:**

**Developmental/Cognitive:**

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### Disabilities in Pop Culture

- People with disabilities makeup about 20% (56.7 million) of the population.
- They are the minority which is the least represented in:



Film



Television



Books



Theater

- Easiest platforms to address/bring awareness = influence millions
- Actors portray disabilities incorrectly
  - Only research symptoms - they don't know what it is exactly like
  - Acting is only as good as their research

#### Notes:

- **Twenty percent of the population have disabilities based on the 2010 Census.**
- **So many people are accessible through the different types of entertainment, why not use it in a good way to bring awareness?**

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### Disabilities in Film/TV

- *Negative Stereotypes*
  - Villains (mentally ill, dangerous)
  - Victim (angry, bitter, unable to help themselves)
  - Objects of sympathy/fear
  - Not worthy of love/friendship
  - No redeeming qualities
  - Unable to contribute to society
  - Will do anything to be rid of disability



### Notes:

**How do you think they should portray disabled people if they are in a villain role?**

**Do you think they need to change the way do it now?**

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### Disabilities in Film/TV (continued)



- *Positive* stereotypes are usually heroes who overcome their disability to do good
- Covers where they struggle and succeed
  - Daredevil (2003) - Matt Murdock
  - Finding Nemo (2003) Nemo
- Their main disability is never a huge part of the story
  - X-Men (2000) - Professor X
- At the end of the piece, do you feel inspired?

### Notes:

**What other characters might fit the positive inspirational category?**

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### Other Popular Titles

*Do you think they are done in a positive or negative way?*

- Avatar (2009) Jake Sully - parapalegic
- Hunchback of Notre Dame (Many versions first silent film 1911) Physical, deaf
- Phantom of the Opera (book, film, and theater) - facial disfigurement
- Percy Jackson (book, film) ADHD, Dyslexia
- Forrest Gump (1994) physical and intellectual
- The Big Bang Theory - Sheldon

#### Notes:

**Positive Way**

**Negative Way**



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# Plan of Action

What can **YOU** do to help?

- Volunteer at nonprofits - such as local autism chapters, horseback therapy Best Buddies.
- Become friends with, and include, people with disabilities in your activities.
- Provide better job opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Request that studios provide more opportunities for people with disabilities.

### Notes:

- **Best Buddies is the world's largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**
  - **More information for Best Buddies can be found at:**  
<https://www.bestbuddies.org/>
- **Do you have anything to lose by becoming friends with someone with disabilities?**

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### Laws Regarding Disabilities

<https://www.ada.gov/> Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

Prohibits the *discrimination* of people with disabilities and gives them the same opportunities. Requires equal access in public areas, commercial, and transportation.

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/> Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1975)

Protects the rights of children and youth giving them the same *educational* opportunities as typical peers.

#### Notes:

Only since 1990!

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## Conclusion

Does the fact that I have a speech disorder make the info any less credible?  
We should look more into changing the world for people with disabilities

**Notes:**

**Do you think the public should have more knowledge and awareness about people with disabilities?**

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### Citations

- Andrews, T. (2019, January 27). Disabled actors say they're the 'last civil rights movement' in Hollywood. Retrieved October 25, 2020, from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/movies/ct-ent-disabled-actors-films-20190125-story.html>
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- Walker, Hailey, "Film Portrayals of People with Disabilities Post 2000" (2016). *Honors Theses*. 10. <https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/honorsthesis/10>

### Notes:

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## A Service Learning Project From:

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Notes: