

RESOURCES

WATCHDOG GUIDE



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WHAT IT DOES

The Minority Reporter's Watchdog Guide™ is an innovative tool designed to assist moviegoers begin analyzing racial imagery in movies. By standardizing an analytical approach, future conversations about racial images in mainstream movies will hopefully be improved with participants having a more qualitatively supported understanding of what it is that they saw. Through this intellectual exercise, we at *The Minority Reporter* do not make movies look bad, because we do not make movies. Hollywood does its own work. In our intellectual laboratory, the Watchdog Guide merely serves as a group of blades of varying sharpness against which we test certain materials (mainstream movies). For us, the test is not how sharp the blades are, but rather, how resistant is the material that comes into contact with the blades. If, after contact, the material holds up with relatively few puncture marks, it was evidently well made. However, if the material is shredded mercilessly, we will record the data, and let you know why. In the process, we become an universal resource that audiences will depend upon for objective insight and information. More importantly, it is our hope that audience members like yourself will continue to engage *The Minority Reporter* and its audience in this developing dialogue, not only because of the stimulation you receive in watching us test materials, but because of the personal interaction you sustain when practicing the art of analyzing race at the movies for yourself.

HOW IT DOES IT

This is primarily for use after the viewing of a movie. You can also find this document posted on our website at www.minorityreporter.com where you can download it as a pdf file that you can complete online. There is no “right” answer, however, this guide will help you focus on the racial imagery within a mainstream movie (if any) for future discussion.

To help you gain familiarity with this tool, what follows are some general insights about the structure of the guide itself:

I. IS THE MOVIE A MAINSTREAM MOVIE?

The six characteristics listed under this category are the six Mainstream Movie Factors detailed in Chapter 6, *Screening For Mainstream*. This is the threshold question that speaks to the movie's influential quality. In addition, any combination of the bonus features listed helps solidify a movie's mainstream status.

2. WHAT TYPE OF MOVIE IS IT?

This question speaks to the relative need for the audience to identify with the movie's characters as explored in the connective switch concept in Chapter 1: *Race At The Movies*. Recall, that typically, comedies and the like require a lesser need for a connective switch, whereas romances and dramas require a greater need for a connective switch. Accordingly, movie patrons are less frequently "asked" or required to adopt the perspective of minorities in order to maximize the movie's experience, especially in dramas or romances, where the need to switch is greatest.

3. WHO IS IN THE MOVIE?

This question speaks to the visible racial presence depicted overtly onscreen as delineated in Chapter 3: *Race & Ethnicity*, Chapter 4: *Race & Class* and Chapter 5: *Race & Gender*.

If the character is animated, list the race of the animated character, or where applicable or able, list the race of the actor providing the animated character's voice. If unknown, list as "character undefined." Also, check the "character undefined" box if you are unable to classify the character's race as it appears onscreen.

In selecting the class status for a character, check the box for the character's terminal status, especially where the character undergoes a change in fortune.

4. WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE ROLE?

This question speaks to the impact that a minority character commands onscreen as explored in Chapter 8: *Cast of Caricatures*. If a minority character appears onscreen, it is likely that his or her role will fall within one of the six archetypal patterns in accordance with the Hollywood Acting Rule for Minorities: (a) Angel, (b) Background, (c) Comic Relief, (d) Menace to Society, (e) Physical Wonder & (e) Utopic Reversal.

5. QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

These questions are designed to help you, the movie goer, think in concrete terms about the breadth and scope of a minority role within a mainstream movie. Therefore, the questions inquire into aspects of minority "life" onscreen that is usually showcased gratuitously by Whites in mainstream movies.

6. BONUS CONSIDERATIONS

Chapter 1: *Race At The Movies* & Chapter 2: *The Price Of The Ticket* spell out the statistical reality of how minorities are overwhelmingly outnumbered in Hollywood, and how that impacts the end product provided to the end user or the neighborhood movie goer like you. Everyone has an equal opportunity to patronize a movie and support it financially, however, many considerations, including the marketing plan, often dictate a more narrow audience that movie studios bear in mind.

7. WHAT IS THE LASTING IMPRESSION?

This question speaks to the overall impression that you as a movie goer sustain upon imbibing such imagery within your consciousness. In answering this question, also bear in mind the answer of the individual not from America who has never visited personally, except for in the mental space of the movie you just reviewed.



THE MINORITY REPORTER

www.minorityreporter.com

The report that Hollywood doesn't want you to see...

MAINSTREAM MOVIE WATCHDOG GUIDE™

Please feel free to complete the following guide to help you analyze the racial images you see within a mainstream movie. Please note that this guide is intended to serve as an analytical tool only and does not offer a review or opinion about the overall quality of a movie.

NAME OF MOVIE:	YEAR OF RELEASE:
YOUR PERSPECTIVE: <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> Other	DATE OF REVIEW:

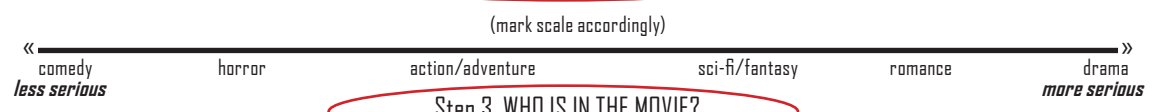
Step 1: IS THE MOVIE A MAINSTREAM MOVIE?

(check all factors that apply)

- (1) Full-length, first-run feature? (2) Widespread distribution? (3) Large production & marketing budget?
 - (4) Large box office sales? (5) A-list talent? (6) Mainstream media exposure?
- Any Bonus Features?*
- (a) product for sale (e.g., toy, video game) (b) extended promotional lead time (c) spinoff from book/TV show/movie/etc.
 - (d) extremely successful soundtrack (e) Academy Award nomination/win (f) corporate sponsorship/promotion (i.e., product placement)

----> **IS IT A MAINSTREAM MOVIE?** (i.e., 4 or more factors checked) YES NO

Step 2. WHAT TYPE OF MOVIE IS IT?



Step 3. WHO IS IN THE MOVIE?

- (a) Minority character(s) appear in movie? **IF NOT, MOVE ON TO STEP #6** YES NO
 (check all that apply) Asian Black Latino Other (list if known: _____) Undefined
- (b) If so, is the lead character a minority? YES NO
 - i. If so, what is the character's apparent gender? male female other
 - ii. What is the character's apparent class status? upper upper-middle lower-middle lower/under
- (c) What is the impact of any supporting/background minority characters? insignificant significant very significant
- (d) How many minority characters do you recall in the movie? (write in number) [_____]

Step 4. WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE ROLE?

- If any minority characters appeared onscreen, it is likely their role fulfilled an archetype pattern (in box below). Did you observe any character:
 (fill in all letters that apply; please note that characters may exhibit combinations of various archetype traits)
- (a) offer aid to a White character? (a) facilitate healing/understanding for a White character? (a) devoid of relationships outside of a White character?
 - (b) offer little to no dialogue? (b) have little to no bearing or influence on plot development? (b) devoid of close-ups or significant screentime?
 - (c) 's ethnicity/race used as fodder for jokes? (c) 's conduct contrasted vs. "normal" White behavior? (c) use exaggerated gestures/tones/language?
 - (d) violate any laws/moral codes? (d) threaten the "White" value system/status quo? (d) pose a threat for physical harm?
 - (e) overtly sexualized? (e) 's physical stature/talent acknowledged directly? (e) use physical ability as part of their primary skill set?
 - (f) occupy an uncommonly high social position (f) 's authority undermined/curtailed/compromised? (f) devoid of intimacy/familial relationships?

(a) = Angel (b) = Background (c) = Comic Relief (d) = Menace to Society (e) = Physical Wonder (f) = Utopic Reversal

Step 5. QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- a) Did any minority characters have any significant screen time? YES NO
- b) If so, was their contribution essential to the plot's development? YES NO
- c) Did any minority characters wield any authority/power over Whites? YES NO
- d) Were any minority characters justified in destroying property to achieve a goal? YES NO
- e) Did any minority characters successfully start a romantic relationship and/or reunite their family unit? YES NO
- f) Were any minority characters depicted inside of their homes? YES NO
- g) Were any minority characters depicted being intimate with the lead? YES NO
- h) Were any minority characters depicted as being intimate with whites? YES NO
- i) Were there any scenes containing exclusively minority characters? YES NO
- j) Did any minority characters control the pace and action of the movie? YES NO

(add up "YES" responses)

White Dominant Movie

(0-2)

Minority Minimal Movie

(3-4)

Minority Flavored Movie

(5-7)

Minority Involved Movie

(8-10)

Step 6. BONUS CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Is the Director of the movie a minority? YES NO
- b) Is the Writer a minority? YES NO
- c) Is the Executive Producer a minority? YES NO
- d) Are there any themes of romance, family bonding or familial reconciliation for Whites? YES NO
- e) Who would you consider as the movie's target audience? primarily for Whites primarily for minorities for all audiences

Step 7. WHAT IS THE LASTING IMPRESSION?

- Negative Impression/Marginalization At Stake
- Fair Representation/Status Quo Maintained
- Positive Impression/Breakthrough Performance

COMMENTS
