**Claims and Evidence**

**Activity One: Gender Depictions of Female Superheroes**

In this activity students will read two articles which address responses from various audience demographics to the portrayals of female characters in action films, particularly superhero films. The will then write a short argumentative letter using claims, evidence and commentary to respond to key issues raised in the articles.

1. Show film clips from action films or Superhero Films which have female heroes (Hunger Games, Tomb Raider, Captain Marvel, Dark Phoenix, Wonder Woman)
2. Read the two Articles “When Captain Marvel Became a Target the Rules Changed” by Cara Buckley (packet pg. 3) and “Why Wonder Woman is a Masterpiece of Subversive Feminism” by Zoe Williams (p. 9)
3. Choose one of the following two prompts on a letter. You letter should have two paragraphs an introduction and one body paragraph. Your body paragraph should include a claim, evidence (examples), and commentary (explanation of how your evidence supports your claim)
* Write a letter to Rotten Tomatoes in which you present your position on the controversy involving Brie Larson and the Captain Marvel Film.
* Write a letter to the Guardian in which you explain why portrayals of female heroes in action films do or do not have cultural significance.

In writing your paragraphs consider the following questions

* What kind of evidence (e.g., facts, anecdotes, analogies, statistics, examples, details, illustrations, expert opinions, personal observations, personal experiences, testimony, or experiments) might you use to defend your claim?
* How does your choice of evidence reflect the rhetorical situation and advance your purposes?
* What is the function (e.g., to illustrate, to clarify, to set a mood, to provide an example, to associate, to amplify or qualify a point) of evidence in your argument, and how do you convey that function?
* How does your commentary establish a logical relationship between evidence and the claim it supports?

**Activity Two: Debate on Gender Issues**

In this activity, students will have issues on which they will have to debate. They will be in groups, splitting the class into six different groups. Each group will have the pro side or con side. On the first day introduce the topic and give students the readings which they must do. Explain the roles for each person and pass out handouts. Give the students the rest of the period to prepare. On the second day students have the period to prepare. On the third day the first two groups present, and the other members of class evaluate them, on the third day the third and fourth groups debate, and on the fourth day the fifth and sixth groups.

Directions for Debate

1. Read all the articles for your group use the links for your topic.
2. List the three most important factors to consider in planning on your group
3. Write a statement of your position on the argument
4. Write an introductory paragraph (the issue, the context, why you think it is important, what your position is and why)
5. Write one body paragraph
* Includes a thesis statement (claim)
* Includes examples from two of the documents (evidence)
* Explains why those examples connect to your argument in this paragraph (analysis)

Post parts one through 5 to google classroom

Roles

Speaker One Introduces subject, states your groups position, offers 2-3 supporting claims with evidence

Speaker Two: Elaborates on arguments presented by first speaker, offers additional claims with evidence, rebuts arguments from other side

Speaker Three: May not add additional arguments, summarizes arguments of first two speakers, offers rebuttals of other side, explains why your team has one the argument

Debate Topics

1. Should there be an equal pay law fining companies which do not give equal pay maternity leave?

Pro side: There should be a law which fines companies which do not provide equal pay and family leave for pregnancies.

Con side: There should not be a law which fines companies which do not provide equal pay and family leave for pregnancies.

[Kamala Harris Equal Pay](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/sen-kamala-harris-vows-as-president-to-fine-companies-that-pay-men-more-than-women/2019/05/19/af151a96-7a7f-11e9-a5b3-34f3edf1351e_story.html?utm_term=.03cd21515577)

[Women Don’t Need A Pay Fairness Act](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/22/opinion/22Sommers.html)

[How Paid Maternity Leave Hurts Women](https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/30/opinions/trump-budget-paid-leave-calder-opinion/index.html)

[On This Mother’s Day Pay Moms](https://www.cjonline.com/opinion/20190511/editorial-on-this-mothers-day-consider-paid-maternity-leave)

[NY Post Soccer Team Pay Equality Con](https://nypost.com/2019/07/08/us-womens-soccer-team-equal-pay-gripe-is-less-than-it-seems/?utm_source=email_sitebuttons&utm_medium=site%20buttons&utm_campaign=site%20buttons)

[Washington Post Con Soccer Pay](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/soccer-is-a-poor-arena-to-fight-out-the-issue-of-equal-pay/2019/07/09/8242cc6c-a28d-11e9-bd56-eac6bb02d01d_story.html?utm_term=.07c2d8372a09)

[Women’s Soccer Pay Pro](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/us-womens-soccer-players-shouldnt-be-paid-as-much-as-men-they-should-get-more/2019/07/08/fbd2a780-a1b8-11e9-b8c8-75dae2607e60_story.html?utm_term=.3893d97b0bdf)

[Women’s Soccer Pay Pro NY Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/08/opinion/world-cup-usa-pay.html)

1. Should women fight in combat?

Pro: Women should be allowed to fight in combat.

Con: Women should not be allowed to fight in combat

[Let Women Be Warriors](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/22/opinion/let-women-be-warriors.html)

[Putting Women in Combat is a Disastrous Decision](https://www.usnews.com/debate-club/should-women-be-allowed-to-fight-in-combat/putting-women-in-combat-is-a-disastrous-decision)

[Room for Debate](https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/08/20/should-women-serve-in-combat-roles)

1. Are traditional gender roles toxic?

Pro: Traditional gender roles have become harmful to society.

Con: Traditional gender roles have not become harmful to society.

[APA Guidelines](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/01/ce-corner)

[Is Masculinity harmful to boys?](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-young-masculinity-20190124-story.html)

[Masculinity Gender Norms are Harmful to Boys](https://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/toxic-masculinity-gender-norms-harmful-boys-12782202.php?utm_campaign=CMS%20Sharing%20Tools%20(Premium)&utm_source=share-by-email&utm_medium=email)

[Gillette](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYaY2Kb_PKI)

[Always](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhB3l1gCz2E)

Debate Participant Roles Note Sheets

1st Speaker

Group Names:

Summarize the Issue and key factors in your own words:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Your position: Clear thesis statement of your position—one sentence and establishing whether you are pro or con

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Arguments for Round One (who is going to prepare it—you will also need to take notes while the other group goes so that you may rebut their arguments)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Argument Order | What is your argument in the order you intend to present | Textual support from articles | Other evidence examples |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

Argument for Round Two (who is going to prepare it)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Argument Order | What is your argument in the order you intend to present | Textual support from articles | Other evidence examples |
| (these may be arguments that round one did not get to) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Counter ArgumentFor your Oppositions Opening round | (What was their argument) | What was their support | How do you counter it? What are weaknesses in the argument? |

Arguments for Conclusion

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Restatement of Thesis and summary of your support |  |
| Explanation of the weaknesses in oppositions support |  |
| Explanation of why you have won the debate why your argument is more logical, coherent, and persuasive |  |

Student Evaluations of other Student Group Scoring Sheets-take notes and score each group

Your Name Period Issue

For Each Round Score them 20 points based on argument, evidence, questioning, rebuttal

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Round | Pro Side | Con Side |
| 1. Arguments and Evidence
 |  |  |
| 1. Arguments, Evidence,

Rebuttal, Challenges |  |  |
| 1. Summation, Rebuttal,

Explanation of why they Won |  |  |
| Total score |  |  |

Total Score—Winner in your opinion circle Pro Con

Your Name Period Issue

For Each Round Score them 20 points based on argument, evidence, questioning, rebuttal

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Round | Pro Side | Con Side |
| 1. Arguments and Evidence
 |  |  |
| 1. Arguments, Evidence,

Rebuttal, Challenges |  |  |
| 1. Summation, Rebuttal,

Explanation of why they Won |  |  |
| Total score |  |  |

Total Score—Winner in your opinion circle Pro Con

Teacher Evaluation of Debates

Member Names

Position and Topic: Grade

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Inadequate | Adequate | Effective | Exemplary |
| Overall Score |  |  |  |  |
| Knowledge of the Readings | Little evidence of readings5 | Shows knowledge of readings and key ideas8 | Effectively supports ideas through examples from readings9 | Displays thorough knowledge of readings by synthesizing information from multiple sources10 |
| Initial Arguments | Unclear arguments0-14 | Clear and logical arguments16 | Thoughtful and well supported arguments18 | Insightful and persuasive arguments20 |
| Response to Other Teams | Little knowledge of oppositional arguments and ability to respond10 | Careful knowledge and ability to respond; signs of active listening16 | Responds to and critiques/elaborates on other teams’ positions18 | Sophisticated analysis, critique, and elaboration upon the arguments of other teams20 |
| Final Response | Limited summation of key points14 | Addresses ideas clearly16 | Effective and thoughtful expression of ideas with support 18 | Sophisticated explanation of ideas with a convincing argument 20 |
| Written Product | 10 | 24 | 27 | 30 |

**Activity Three: Unit One—The Rhetorical Situation Analysis of Luke Booth Prompt 2017**

The passage below is the opening to a speech made in 1960 by American journalist and politician Clare Booth Luce to journalists at the Women’s National Press Club. In this speech, Luke went on to criticize the tendency of the American press to sacrifice integrity in favor of the perceived demand for sensationalist stories. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the choices Clare Booth Luce makes to convey her message to her audience.

I am happy and flattered to be a guest of honor on this always and exciting and challenging occasion. But looking over this audience tonight, I am less happy than you might think and more challenged than you could know. I stand here at this rostrum invited to throw rocks at you. You have asked *me* to tell *you* what’s wrong with you—the American press. The subject not only is of great national significance but also has, one should say infinite possibilities—and infinite perils to the rock thrower.

For the banquet speaker who criticizes the weaknesses and pretensions, or exposes the follies and sins, of his listeners—even at their invitation—does not generally evoke an enthusiastic—no less a friendly—response. The delicate art of giving an audience hell is always one best left to the Billy Grahams and the Bishop Sheens.

But you are an audience of journalists. There is no audience anywhere who should be more bored—indeed, more revolted –by a speaker who tried to fawn on it, butter it up, exaggerate its virtues, play down its faults, and who would more quickly see through any attempt to do so. I ask you only to remember that I am not a volunteer for this subject tonight. You asked for it!

For what is good journalism all about? On a working level it is the effort to achieve illuminating candor in print and to strip away can’t. It is the effort to do this not only in matters of state, diplomacy, and politics but also in every smaller aspect of life that touches the public interest or engages proper public curiosity. It is the effort to explain everything from a summit conference to why the moon looks larger coming over the horizon than it does when it has fully risen in the heavens. It is the effort, too, to describe the lives of men—and women—big and small, close at hand or thousands of miles away, familiar in their behavior or unfamiliar in their idiosyncrasies. It is—to use the big word—the pursuit of and the effort to state the truth.

No audience knows better than an audience of journalists that the pursuit of the truth and the articulation of it, is the most delicate, hazardous, exacting, and inexact tasks. Consequently, no audience is more forgiving (I hope) to the speaker who fails or stumbles in his own pursuit of it. The only failure this audience could never excuse in any speaker would be the failure to try to tell the truth, as he sees it, about his subject.

In my perilous effort to do so here tonight, I must begin by saying that if there is much that is wrong with the American press, there is also much that is right with it.

I know, then, that you will bear with me, much as it may go against your professional grain, if I ask you to accept some of the good with the bad—even though it may not make such good copy for your newspapers.

For the plain fact is that the U.S. daily press today is not surprisingly good; it is just far and away the best press in the world.

\*Billy Graham, an American Christian evangelist, and Fulton John Sheen, and American Catholic archbishop, both became renowned for their religious oratory. Their speeches were widely broadcast on radio and on television.

Questions to begin discussion:

1. What is the exigence of the situation? (why has Luce come to the place?)
2. To whom is Booth Luce addressing her speech? What values do they share?
3. What is Booth Luce’s purpose?
4. How has that purpose been connected to the context of time, place, and occasion?
5. Does Booth appear to share her audience’s beliefs, values or needs? How do we know this (point to sections of the text which explore this)?
6. Since this is an introduction how is Booth preparing her audience for what is to come? What rhetorical choices has she made in the introduction to prepare them for this situation?

7. What does Booth hope that her audience will learn from her speech?

Rhetorical Analysis of Boothe Luce Speech

Review over the notes on 5 Canons of Rhetoric

*Thank You for Arguing*/*Everything is an Argument Overview* and Notes

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The 5 Canons from Cicero pp. 304-318 | Classical Outline structure (arrangement)pp. 306-307 and pp. 319-347 remember this for our first paper and Rogerian Argument) | Style’s Virtuespp. 309-310 | GoalsFor Argument |
| **Invention** (context, research, discovery, how you come up with ideas) **Arrangement** (organization see structure in next column)**Style** (4 virtues how you select words, column 3)**Memory (images in your mind you refer to construct your argument, a storehouse of ideas)****Delivery (how you deliver your message, voice, volume, stability, flexibility, tone, and diction)** | **Introduction** (ethos, gets audience’s interest and establishes goodwill-credibility or authority)**Narration** (statement of facts, logos)**Division** (list of points with which you and your opponent agree and where you disagree)**Proof** (state your actual argument, logos)Refutation (challenge your opponent’s argument)**Conclusion** (restate your best points, explain why you have been successful, call to action -pathos) | **Proper Language** (words suit occasion and audience)**Clarity** (clearness of language)**Vividness** (create visual images for audience, details, description, appeal to the senses)**Decorum** (fitting in with your audience, appropriateness of your speech for your audience)**Ornamentation**(rhythm and clever, does it sound good when you read it aloud, flow) | **Mood** (emotions)**Mind** (thoughts)**Willingness** (actions) |

Fill out the Chart Based on Claire Boothe Luce’s Speech

Notes Sheet

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Claire Boothe Luce |
| Ethos-why does Boothe Luke have authority?  |  |
| Audience—who is her audience and why is she here? Where and when is the speech taking place?  |  |
| Arrangement—How is the speech organized? What part of the speech is it?  |  |
| Style and delivery—What rhetorical strategies does the author use? (syntax, diction, rhetorical devices and figurative language)? |  |
| What is Boothe Luce’s tone? Is this appropriate for the setting?  |  |
| What evidence is provided in the article? Facts, reasons, examples, analogies, cause and effect, definitions, appeals to emotion or value? How does Boothe Luce acquire this information?  |  |
| What is the ultimate thesis of the article? |  |
| Has the evidence been persuasive? Has it convinced you of the position of the thesis and does it encourage you to take an action?  |  |

Name:

In your own word summarize the author’s purpose:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Device: what is it? | Quote | How is it used? | Why is it used? | How effective is it at reaching the author’s purpose? |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Rhetorical Precis (introduction)**

1. Name of author, [optional: a phrase describing author], genre and title of work date in parentheses (additional publishing information in parentheses or note); a rhetorically accurate verb (such as “assert,” “argue,” “suggest,” “imply,” “claim,” etc.); and a THAT clause containing the major assertion (thesis statement) of the work.

2. An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis, usually in chronological order.

3. A statement of the author’s apparent purpose followed by an “to” phrase.

4. A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

Assignment: Write two paragraphs. The first should be an introduction using the rhetorical precis as a model. The second should be a body paragraph which includes a claim about Booth Luce’s rhetorical choices, evidence to support that claim, and commentary which connects the evidence to the claim.

Readings on Gender for Claims and Evidence

**When Captain Marvel Became A Target the Rules Changed**

**By** [**Cara Buckley**](https://www.nytimes.com/by/cara-buckley)

**NY Times**

**3/13/2019**

One audience reviewer deemed the movie “a complete disaster.” Another was “tired of all this SJW nonsense,” using the abbreviation for “social justice warrior,” a pejorative term for progressives. Yet another groused that Brie Larson, the movie’s star, “says I shouldn’t see the movie anyway.”

“Captain Marvel” had not even been released yet — its opening day was a month away — but that did not stop negative remarks from piling up against the film and Ms. Larson.

Much as Facebook and Twitter have had to grapple with false stories aimed at inciting violence or disrupting elections, movie review aggregators like Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb are often besieged by users trying to manipulate a film’s box office success.

Despite the trolls’ concerted efforts, “Captain Marvel” slayed during its opening weekend, but not before Rotten Tomatoes, an influential site where a bad audience score can damage a film’s prospects, made major changes to its rules. Most critically, it eliminated prerelease audience reviews. It also stopped displaying the percentage of moviegoers who say they “want to see” a film in favor of using the raw number of people. And it removed the “not interested” button.

“We’re doing it to more accurately and authentically represent the voice of fans,” the site said, “while protecting our data and public forums from bad actors.”

The backlash against “Captain Marvel” resulted from a collision of two major forces. One was the popularity of websites that at their best democratize the reviewing of movies, restaurants and businesses and at their worst can be weaponized for score-settling or political grudges.

The other was the growing movement in Hollywood toward broader gender and racial representation in film roles, production jobs and the industry in general.

“Captain Marvel” is among the few superhero films to star a woman, but a bigger trigger factor for the film’s haters appeared to be Ms. Larson’s outspokenness about the lack of diversity in movies and news media coverage of films.

Before the film’s release, Ms. Larson told “Entertainment Tonight” that she had spoken with Marvel about making the film “a big feminist movie.” In another interview, she said that after noticing that most of her interviewers in the past had been white and male, she vowed to seek out more underrepresented journalists, including [Keah Brown](https://keahbrown.com/), who is black and disabled, and who profiled her for Marie Claire.

Ms. Larson, who won the best-actress Oscar in 2016 for her performance in “Room,” had previously lashed out against the homogeneity of professional film critics. “I do not need a 40-year-old white dude to tell me what didn’t work for him about ‘A Wrinkle in Time,’” she said during a speech last summer. “It wasn’t made for him.”

This all provided fodder to trolls, and weeks ahead of “Captain Marvel’s” release, the percentage of Rotten Tomatoes users who registered that they wanted to see it plummeted to 27 percent. On Feb. 25, Rotten Tomatoes implemented the changes, and the “want to see” score disappeared. Since the film’s nationwide release on Friday, the audience score has rebounded to a better-but-still-not-great 63 percent, [the lowest](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/franchise/marvel_cinematic_universe) for any movie in the Marvel franchise. For a while, the score had been below 60 percent, signified by a tipped-over bucket of popcorn, the symbol for a film that might be one to skip.

The “Tomatometer,” which analyzes the ratings from film critics, is at a “certified fresh” 79 percent, slightly below the average for Marvel movies. It is impossible to say whether the website’s changes helped the film, but it made $456 million during its opening weekend, trouncing projections.

A representative for Ms. Larson declined to comment, and publicists at Disney, which owns Marvel Studios, did not reply to emails Tuesday.

The film’s opponents also swarmed YouTube; video rants with titles like “Brie Larson is Ruining Marvel” often appeared at the top of searches for her name. But a day before the film’s release, a change in the search results pushed those videos beneath others from established sources like Jimmy Kimmel, “Today” and Wired.

A YouTube representative said the reason was an algorithm change made last summer that reclassifies trending search topics as news. The site, which is owned by Google, took the action as part of its effort to combat fictitious content and ensure that reliable information was highlighted.

“Captain Marvel” detractors also flocked to IMDb, though a representative from that site said no one was available to comment, and would only provide [a link](https://help.imdb.com/article/imdb/track-movies-tv/faq-for-imdb-ratings/G67Y87TFYYP6TWAV) to the site’s ratings and comments policy, which states that users are not allowed to rate a film before its release.

The new Marvel movie is not the first film to come under attack for a perceived feminist or politically correct underpinning. The all-female remake of “Ghostbusters,” “Black Panther” and “Star Wars: The Last Jedi,” which had a diverse cast, all found themselves in the cross hairs of armchair critics, some aligned with alt-right groups.

Some sites pushed back. Last year, Rotten Tomatoes said it would delete comments posted from members of the Facebook group “Down with Disney’s Treatment of Franchises and Its Fanboys” if they contained hate speech. The group had posted an event called “Give Black Panther a Rotten Audience Score on Rotten Tomatoes.” Facebook then deactivated the group (it has since been revived by someone claiming to be anti-troll), which had also [claimed responsibility](https://www.cinemablend.com/news/2305232/person-who-says-they-rigged-the-last-jedis-rotten-tomatoes-score-is-trying-to-do-the-same-with-black-panther) for torpedoing audience scores for “Star Wars: The Last Jedi.”

That a movie starring Ms. Larson spurred Rotten Tomatoes into taking a bolder step was no coincidence.

When Ms. Larson spoke out last summer against the dominance of white male critics, she cited findings by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, which is run out of the University of Southern California and had singled out Rotten Tomatoes for having 3.5 men to every female critic reviewing the top films of 2017.

Advertisement

In her speech, Ms. Larson also [revealed](https://www.indiewire.com/2018/06/tiff-media-diversity-sundance-underrepresented-journalists-1201974849/) that the Sundance and Toronto film festivals had each pledged to set aside one-fifth of their press passes for use by diverse journalists, including women and people of color.

Two and a half months later, Rotten Tomatoes threw in with Ms. Larson’s cause, and [revamped its criteria](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/28/business/media/rotten-tomatoes-critics.html?module=inline) for critics, focusing more on individual qualifications than the brand and reach of a publication, to include hundreds of reviewers from underrepresented groups in its Tomatometer score (a representative said the change had been in development for over a year). It also [pledged $100,000](https://variety.com/2018/film/festivals/rotten-tomatoes-donates-sundance-inclusion-initiative-underrepresented-film-critics-1203039590/) to various film festivals working to diversify their press corps, in part by helping cover freelancers’ travel and lodging costs.

A representative for [Rotten Tomatoes](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/), Dana Benson, said the change to its audience score had been in the works for a while, but that the attacks on “Captain Marvel” prompted them to roll it out earlier than planned.

“We’re very dedicated to making criticism more inclusive,” Ms. Benson said. “All the thought and care that went into the Tomatometer, we are expanding that to the audience score.”

Rotten Tomatoes said future changes could include having “verified” reviewers, like the ones who post on Amazon after purchasing a product. Those could come from people who bought tickets through Fandango, the movie ticket website, which owns Rotten Tomatoes.

There was, not unexpectedly, a flip side to the attacks on “Captain Marvel” — people rushing to its defense, whether they had seen the movie or not.

 “There are a large group of people that are only down-voting this movie because they somehow feel threatened by it,” wrote one fan on Rotten Tomatoes.

“Imagine being so insecure, you cry about a movie with a girl as the hero,” wrote another.

And over on IMDb, one wrote: “I do agree that this isn’t marvel’s best movie, but it was a fun and enjoyable ride. I’m sure director and co. were hyper aware of the backlash they were facing and some of the moments seemed like tongue-in-cheek middle fingers to all the hate.”

**Should the World of Toys Be Gender-Free?**

**By PEGGY ORENSTEIN DEC. 29, 2011 New York Times**

Berkeley, Calif.

NOW that the wrapping paper and the infernal clamshell packaging have been relegated to the curb and the paying off of holiday bills has begun, the toy industry is gearing up — for Christmas 2012. And its early offerings have ignited a new debate over nature, nurture, toys and sex.

Hamleys, which is London’s 251-year-old version of F.A.O. Schwarz, recently dismantled its pink “girls” and blue “boys” sections in favor of a gender-neutral store with red-and-white signage. Rather than floors dedicated to Barbie dolls and action figures, merchandise is now organized by types (Soft Toys) and interests (Outdoor).

That free-to-be gesture was offset by Lego, whose Friends collection, aimed at girls, will hit stores this month with the goal of becoming a holiday must-have by the fall. Set in fictive Heartlake City (and supported by a $40 million marketing campaign), the line features new, pastel-colored, blocks that allow a budding Kardashian, among other things, to build herself a cafe or a beauty salon. Its tasty-sounding “ladyfig” characters are also taller and curvier than the typical Legoland denizen.

So who has it right? Should gender be systematically expunged from playthings? Or is Lego merely being realistic, earnestly meeting girls halfway in an attempt to stoke their interest in engineering?

Among the “10 characteristics for Lego” described in 1963 by a son of the founder was that it was “for girls and for boys,” as Bloomberg Businessweek reported. But the new Friends collection, Lego says, was based on months of anthropological research revealing that — gasp! — the sexes play differently.

While as toddlers they interact similarly with the company’s Duplo blocks, by preschool girls prefer playthings that are pretty, exude “harmony” and allow them to tell a story. They may enjoy building, but they favor role play. So it’s bye-bye Bionicles, hello princesses. In order to be gender-fair, today’s executives insist, they have to be gender-specific.

As any developmental psychologist will tell you, those observations are, to a degree, correct. Toy choice among young children is the Big Kahuna of sex differences, one of the largest across the life span. It transcends not only culture but species: in two separate studies of primates, in 2002 and 2008, researchers found that males gravitated toward stereotypically masculine toys (like cars and balls) while females went ape for dolls. Both sexes, incidentally, appreciated stuffed animals and books.

Human boys and girls not only tend to play differently from one another — with girls typically clustering in pairs or trios, chatting together more than boys and playing more cooperatively — but, when given a choice, usually prefer hanging with their own kind.

Score one for Lego, right? Not so fast. Preschoolers may be the self-appointed chiefs of the gender police, eager to enforce and embrace the most rigid views. Yet, according Lise Eliot, a neuroscientist and the author of “Pink Brain, Blue Brain,” that’s also the age when their brains are most malleable, most open to influence on the abilities and roles that traditionally go with their sex. Of more than 5,000 3-year-olds, girls with older brothers had stronger spatial skills than both girls and boys with older sisters.

At issue, then, is not nature or nurture but how nurture becomes nature: the environment in which children play and grow can encourage a range of aptitudes or foreclose them. So blithely indulging — let alone exploiting — stereotypically gendered play patterns may have a more negative long-term impact on kids’ potential than parents imagine. And promoting, without forcing, cross-sex friendships as well as a breadth of play styles may be more beneficial. There is even evidence that children who have opposite-sex friendships during their early years have healthier romantic relationships as teenagers.

Traditionally, toys were intended to communicate parental values and expectations, to train children for their future adult roles. Today’s boys and girls will eventually be one another’s professional peers, employers, employees, romantic partners, co-parents. How can they develop skills for such collaborations from toys that increasingly emphasize, reinforce, or even create, gender differences? What do girls learn about who they should be from Lego kits with beauty parlors or the flood of “girl friendly” science kits that run the gamut from “beauty spa lab” to “perfume factory”?

The rebellion against such gender apartheid may have begun. Consider the latest cute-kid video to go viral on YouTube: [“Riley on Marketing”](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CU040Hqbas) shows a little girl in front of a wall of pink packaging, asking, “Why do all the girls have to buy pink stuff and all the boys have to buy different-color stuff?” It has been viewed more than 2.4 million times.

Perhaps, then, Hamleys is on to something, though it will doubtless meet with resistance — even rejection — from both its pint-size customers and multinational vendors. As for me, I’m trying to track down a poster of a 1981 ad for a Lego “universal” building set to give to my daughter. In it, a freckle-faced girl with copper-colored braids, baggy jeans, a T-shirt and sneakers proudly holds out a jumbly, multi-hued Lego creation. Beneath it, a tag line reads, “What it is is beautiful.”

**Why Wonder Woman is a masterpiece of subversive feminism**

Yes, the new movie sees its titular heroine sort of naked a lot of the time. But the film-makers have still worked to turn sexist Hollywood conventions on their head

[Zoe Williams](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/zoewilliams), 2/02/17,The Guardian

The chances are you will read a feminist takedown of Wonder Woman before you see the film. And you’ll probably agree with it. [Wonder Woman](https://www.theguardian.com/film/wonder-woman) is a half-god, half-mortal super-creature; she is without peer even in superhero leagues. And yet, when she arrives in London to put a stop to the war to end all wars, she instinctively obeys a handsome meathead who has no skills apart from moderate decisiveness and pretty eyes. This is a patriarchal figment. Then, naturally, you begin to wonder why does she have to fight in knickers that look like a fancy letterbox made of leather? Does her appearance and its effect on the men around her really have to play such a big part in all her fight scenes? Even my son lodged a feminist critique: if she were half god, he said, she would have recognised the god Ares immediately – unless he were a better god than her (being a male god).

I agree with all of that, but I still loved it. I didn’t love it as a guilty pleasure. I loved it with my whole heart. Wonder Woman, or Diana Prince, as her civilian associates would know her, first appeared as a character in DC Comics in 1941, her creator supposedly inspired by the feminism of the time, and specifically the contraception pioneer Margaret Sanger. Being able to stop people getting pregnant would be a cool superpower, but, in fact, her skills were: bullet-pinging with bracelets; lassoing; basic psychology; great strength and athleticism; and being half-god (the result of unholy congress between Zeus and Hyppolyta). The 1970s [TV version](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074074/) lost a lot of the poetry of that, and was just all-American cheesecake. Gal Gadot’s Wonder Woman made her cinematic debut last year in [Batman v Superman](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/mar/22/batman-v-superman-dawn-of-justice-review-ben-affleck-henry-cavill), and this first live-action incarnation makes good on the character’s original premise, the classical-warrior element amped up and textured. Her might makes sense.

Yes, she is sort of naked a lot of the time, but this isn’t objectification so much as a cultural reset: having thighs, actual thighs you can kick things with, not thighs that look like arms, is a feminist act. The whole Diana myth, women safeguarding the world from male violence not with nurture but with better violence, is a feminist act. Casting Robin Wright as Wonder Woman’s aunt, re-imagining the battle-axe as a battler, with an axe, is a feminist act. A female German chemist trying to destroy humans (in the shape of Dr Poison, a proto-Mengele before Nazism existed) might be the most feminist act of all.

[Women](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/women) are repeatedly erased from the history of classical music, art and medicine. It takes a radical mind to pick up that being erased from the history of evil is not great either. Wonder Woman’s casual rebuttal of a sexual advance, her dress-up montage (“it’s itchy”, “I can’t fight in this”, “it’s choking me”) are also feminist acts. Wonder Woman is a bit like a BuzzFeed list: 23 Stupid Sexist Tropes in Cinema and How to Rectify Them. I mean that as a compliment.



Wonder Woman … the DC comics incarnation. Photograph: DC Comics

Yet Wonder Woman is not a film about empowerment so much as a checklist of all the cliches by which women are disempowered. So it leaves you feeling a bit baffled and deflated – how can we possibly be so towering a threat that Hollywood would strive so energetically, so rigorously, for our belittlement? At the same time, you are conflicted about what the fightback should look like. Because, as every reviewer has pointed out, Wonder Woman is by no means perfect.

The woman who can fight is not new; from Sigourney Weaver’s Ripley in Alien, to Linda Hamilton’s Sarah Connor in The Terminator, this idea has a long pedigree. Connor was a far-fetched feminist figure because her power was concentrated in her ambivalent maternal love – like a hypothetical tiger mother, which doesn’t do a huge amount for female agency. She is still an accessory for male power, just on the other side of the mother/whore dichotomy. Ripley, being the same gender as her foe, recast action as a cat-fight, with all the sexist bullshit that entails (hot, sweaty woman saying “bitch” a lot – a classic pornography trope).

But the underlying problem is that the male fighter is conceived as an ego ideal for a male audience, who would imagine themselves in the shirt of Bruce Willis or mankini of Superman and get the referred thrill of their heroism. If you are still making the film for a male gaze, the female warrior becomes a sex object, and her fighting curiously random, like pole dancing – movement that only makes sense as display, and even then, only just. That was always the great imponderable of Lara Croft (as she appeared in the video-game, not the film): the listlessness of her combat, the slightly dreamlike quality of it. Even as it was happening, it was hard to remember why. When Angelina Jolie made her flesh, I thought she brought something subversive to the role; something deliberated, knowing and a bit scornful, as though looking into the teenage gamer’s soul and saying: “You don’t know whether that was a dragon, a dinosaur or a large dog. You are just hypnotised by my buttocks.”

The fighter as sex symbol stirs up a snakepit of questions: are you getting off on the woman or the violence? An unbreakable female lead can be liberating to the violent misogynist tendency since the violence against her can get a lot more ultra, and nobody has to feel bad about it, because she’ll win.

This is tackled head on in Wonder Woman. The tension, meanwhile, between the thrill of the action, which is what combat is all about, and the objectification, which is what women are all about, is referenced when Wonder Woman hurls someone across a room and an onlooker says: “I’m both frightened, and aroused.” A word on the fighting: there’s a lot of hurling, tons of lassoing, much less traditional fighting, where people harm one another with punches. This is becoming a sub-genre in films: “the kind of fighting that is ladylike”. It almost always involves bows and arrows, for which, as with so many things, we can thank Jennifer Lawrence in The Hunger Games. The way Lawrence fights is so outrageously adroit and natural that she makes it look as though women have been doing it all along, and men are only learning.

I find it impossible to imagine the feminist action-movie slam-dunk; the film in which every sexist Hollywood convention, every miniature slight, every outright slur, every incremental diss was slain by a lead who was omnipotent and vivid. That film would be long and would struggle for jokes. Just trying to picture it leaves you marvelling at the geological slowness of social progress in this industry, which finds it so hard to create female characters of real mettle, even when they abound in real life. Wonder Woman, with her 180 languages and her near-telepathic insights, would stand more chance of unpicking this baffler than Superman or Batman. But the answer, I suspect, lies in the intersection between the market and the culture; the more an art-form costs, the less it will risk, until the most expensive of them – blockbusters – can’t change at all. In an atmosphere of such in-built ossification, the courage of Wonder Woman is more stunning even than her lasso.

**Grown Men Are the Solution, Not the Problem**

**Grown Men Are the Solution, Not The Problem**

With young men in crisis, the American Psychological Association wrongly declares war on ‘traditional masculinity’

January 7, 2019 *National Review*

David French

Yesterday afternoon, immediately after the Dallas Cowboys’ hard-fought victory over the Seattle Seahawks, Fox’s Erin Andrews interviewed Dallas quarterback Dak Prescott and running back Ezekiel Elliott. She asked Elliott what he thought when he saw Prescott take off for a key run that set up the winning touchdown.

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“It’s simple,” Elliott responded, “He’s a grown-ass man. That’s what it is. That’s how he played today, and he led us to this win.”

That’s a phrase you hear a lot in sports. “Grown man.” There’s [grown-man football](https://atlallday.com/2018/09/21/georgia-football-five-keys-georgia-beating-missouri/). There’s [grown-man basketball](https://twitter.com/NBATV/status/922990840942804992). It speaks to a certain style of play. Tough. Physical. Courageous. Overpowering. It’s also fundamentally aspirational. It’s quite safe to say that millions of young boys desire to become a *grown man* — a person who is physically and mentally tough, a person who can rise to a physical challenge and show leadership under stress. In fact, that’s not just an intellectual goal, it’s a deeply felt need. It’s a response to their essential nature.

But becoming a true “grown man” — while a felt need — isn’t an easy process. It involves shaping and molding. It requires mentoring. It requires fathers who are themselves grown men. Turning boys into grown men means taking many of their inherent characteristics — such as their aggression, their sense of adventure, and their default physical strength — and shaping them toward virtuous ends. A strong, aggressive risk-taker can be a criminal or a cop, for example. To borrow from the famous *American Sniper* speech, they can be a sheepdog or a wolf.

And if you’re a father of a young boy or spend much time with young boys — especially if you coach boys in sports — you’ll note a very human paradox. Even as they want to become the grown man they see in their father or in their idols, they’ll often fiercely resist (especially at first) *the process*. They’ll find the discipline oppressive. Building toughness requires enduring pain. And who likes enduring pain? Effective leaders have to have a degree of stoicism, but it can be hard to suppress natural emotions to see reality clearly.

Nothing about this process is easy. Some fathers default to cruelty as a teaching tool, with disastrous results. Others are deeply intolerant of differences, rejecting or even bullying those boys who don’t conform to masculine norms — thus driving them into deep despair.

But while the process of raising that grown man isn’t easy, it is necessary. Evidence of its necessity is all around us. While a male elite thrives in the upper echelons of commerce, government, the military, and sports, men are falling behind in school, committing suicide, and dying of overdoses at a horrifying rate, and their wages have been erratic — but still lower (in adjusted dollars) than they were two generations ago.

Men still make more money than women, but to see the differences in wage growth, compare these two charts from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. [Here are male wages since 1979](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LES1252881900Q):



Contrast that chart with the positive story of the [female economic revolution](https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LES1252882800Q):



We are in the middle of an intense culture war focused around men, dominated at times by two kinds of men-as-victim narratives. On the populist right, you’ll get those voices — [such as Tucker Carlson](https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/01/the-right-should-reject-tucker-carlsons-victimhood-populism/) — who see these trends and rightly decry them, but then wrongly ascribe an immense share of the negative results of immense social, economic, and cultural changes to the malice or indifference of elites, with solutions wrongly centered around government action.

Carlson has triggered a critical debate on the right, but then — just in time to remind us that well-meaning people from all sides of the political spectrum can propose solutions worse than the disease — along comes the American Psychological Association with its first-ever “[Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men](https://www.apa.org/about/policy/boys-men-practice-guidelines.pdf).” The APA sees the challenges facing young men and rightly seeks to overcome those challenges, but then diagnoses the wrong cause. As Stephanie Pappas [notes on the APA website](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/01/ce-corner.aspx), the new guidelines conclude that “traditional masculinity — marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance, and aggression — is, on the whole, harmful.”

The guidelines themselves argue that “traditional masculinity ideology” — defined as socializing boys toward “anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk, and violence” — has been shown to “limit males’ psychological development, constrain their behavior, result in gender role strain and gender role conflict,” and negatively influence mental and physical health.

Yet as we survey a culture that is rapidly attempting to enforce norms hostile to traditional masculinity, are men flourishing? And if men are struggling more the farther we move from those traditional norms, is the answer to continue denying and suppressing a boy’s essential nature? Male children are falling behind in school not because schools indulge their risk-taking and adventurousness but often because they relentlessly *suppress* boys and sometimes punish boys’ essential nature, from the opening bell to the close of the day. Especially in fatherless homes, female-dominated elementary-school experiences often mean that boys are exposed to few — if any — male role models, and male restlessness is therefore viewed almost entirely as a problem to be solved rather than a potential asset to be shaped.

It is interesting that in a world that otherwise teaches boys and girls to “be yourself,” that rule often applies to everyone but the “traditional” male who has traditional male impulses and characteristics. Then, they’re a problem. Then, they’re often deemed toxic. Combine this reality with a new economy that doesn’t naturally favor physical strength and physical courage to the same extent, and it’s easy to see how men struggle.

[As I’ve argued before](https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/08/male-physical-decline-masculinity-threatened/), acculturation into healthy traditional masculinity used to be a far more natural and inevitable act. Even upper-class men had to learn to work (at least to some degree) with their hands; to earn a living, working-class men often had to be strong; and with more intact families (and male-dominated work spaces), men did not lack for role models.

That does not mean that men were perfect. There is already too much nostalgia in our society for a past that had virtues but also had terrible vices. But it does mean that it was easier for a man to have purpose, and meaningful and sustainable happiness is elusive without purpose.

Now, acculturation into healthy traditional masculinity has to be far more intentional. Why should a man who works in a cubicle and types on a keyboard all day be strong? How does he productively satisfy that quest for adventure? How do you shape an identity as a sheepdog in safe suburbia? Why be stoic at all when everyone around you is indulging in the emotionalism that’s often a hallmark of “self-care”?

All of this is hard. Very hard. Especially when combined with the fact I mentioned at the start of the piece — the creation of a “grown man” involves short-term pain. As with so many things, we want the result, but we hate the process. Effective role models understand this reality, and they preach relentlessly about the worth of sacrifice.

Take, for example, one of the world’s most popular celebrities, Dwayne Johnson (better known as “The Rock”). He shares a mantra for life improvement that particularly resonates with young men — “blood, sweat, and respect.” You sweat and bleed and in return you earn respect. It’s a more vivid version of “no pain, no gain.” Virtuous traditional masculinity is inherently incompatible with a pain-avoidance culture.

Let me close with a story [I’ve told before](https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/course-physical-strength-important-masculinity/). I’ve spent most of my career as a litigator and most of my recreational time as a nerd. Given that reality, it’s very easy to get soft. There’s nothing about writing legal briefs or reading *The Silmarillion* for the tenth time that builds your biceps. I was an active kid, and I played basketball in leagues into my early 30s, but when I aged out of my league, I started to surrender to my desk job. I gained weight. I couldn’t run even a mile without gasping for air.

And I was deeply unhappy with myself. So I did something about it. I put down Tolkien, logged off World of Warcraft (well, for a few minutes anyway), and started running again. I joined the Army and got stronger before I left for my officer basic course. I got stronger still before I left for Iraq. I was stronger still by the time I came home.

Then, one day after I returned from overseas, I was on a Cub Scout hike with my son. We were at the bottom of a ravine, when one of the boys threw a rock that hit my son square in the head. The gash was deep, blood was everywhere, and he started to lose consciousness. Our cell phones worked to call 911, but there was no way the ambulance could come down to us. We had to run up to it.

So, with the pack leader applying direct pressure to his head, I picked him up and started to run — straight up a steep incline. I ran, carrying him, until I was about to pass out. Then my wife (who is very strong but couldn’t carry him as far) would spell me for a bit. Then I’d grab him and run some more. We got to the top of the hill just as the ambulance arrived, and they were able to stop the bleeding before the blood loss got too serious.

A few years before, I would have collapsed, wheezing on the ground, after carrying a third-grader even 100 yards uphill. I would have failed my own son. But I answered the call of my “traditional masculinity” and got stronger not because I wanted to look good or attract women or “be fit” but because something inside me whispered that an able-bodied man should not be weak. In other words, I tried my best to become a true “grown man.”

We do our sons no favors when we tell them that they don’t have to answer that voice inside them that tells them to be strong, to be brave, and to lead. We do them no favors when we let them abandon the quest to become a grown man when that quest gets hard. Yes, we do them no favors when we’re not sensitive to those boys who don’t conform to traditional masculinity, but when it comes to the crisis besetting our young men, traditional masculinity isn’t the problem; it can be part of the cure.

[30](https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/01/psychologists-criticize-traditional-masculinity/)



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