

# Opinion: Most powerful superhero in Marvel movie universe is female

By Morinsola Keshinro, USA Today, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.06.19

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Brie Larson stars in "Captain Marvel" and is the first female lead in a Marvel movie. Photo by: Marvel Studios

Now, I'm not a Marvel superfan, by any means. In fact, the first Marvel film I ever saw was "Thor: Ragnarok" in 2017. I'm sure I didn't understand any of the things a longtime watcher would pick up on, but that's the great thing about stories — a good one stands on its own. My enjoyment of Thor led me to "Black Panther" and then "Avengers: Infinity War," which encouraged me to understand the world of Marvel. And now, here we are days away from the "Captain Marvel" movie, and I'm excited to see Marvel introduce us to a powerful female character.

Now that I'm a person in the Marvel world, it feels different. Different in that all these other stories had powerful and strong male leading characters. Now the most powerful superhero in the Marvel movie universe is a woman, and it's Marvel's first female-led film. What a time. What an opportunity.

**Women's Stories Buried Under Men's**

Things have not gotten much better for women in movies in spite of all the talk about more leading roles for women. There is strong data that reveals that there is still inequality between men and women. Male leads have the vast majority of roles (71.3 percent of roles) compared to female leads (28.8 percent). Our stories are being buried under men's.

Meanwhile, women are over-represented in roles that have them without clothes or wearing "sexy" clothing. Female characters have such roles 31.6 percent of the time versus male characters 7 percent. This data comes from an examination of 2012 films. Out of the top-50 grossing U.S. films in 2018, women represented only 20 percent of directors, writers, producers, editors and cinematographers. A further breakdown shows that of those women, only 8 percent were directors.

Unlike many female characters, the women of "Captain Marvel" do not rely on romance and other typical female character storylines. There are several female characters in the film that show women of different races, careers and talents. The film is co-directed by Anna Boden and scored by Pinar Toprak. Plus, the film releases on International Women's Day, March 8, during Women's History Month. Talk about girl power.

This is why the #CaptainMarvelChallenge, an effort to have young girls see this movie, is so important. The opportunity to see and support women and girls being strong, smart and bold is something to get behind. Something I want to be a part of.

This campaign is partly about the entertainment experience for these girls. It's also about making it normal to see women in powerful positions and hear about women creating and working in spaces usually held by men. Most importantly, these programs encourage girls to be strong, smart and bold. These concepts are reinforced by having women in film who are capable, smart and important.

### **Inspiration To Girls**

Captain Marvel is a film that can encourage boys, girls, men and women alike. For girls, I hope that if they see certain strengths, then they will work hard to be like that, too.

I'm looking forward to the conversations that will happen around this film. Everything from how it made people feel to how people see the role of women. Also, how in our current social and political climate it will live in the everyday conversation, and show — what I may not hear until many years later — what it means to people in this period of time.

Is the Marvel world interesting for everyone? No. It wasn't for me for a long time. But now I see the value of films that portray strength and determination and that bring hope to others. Having young girls see this movie is supporting women in the process. It shows them that no matter what — family poverty, gang surroundings, or homelessness — they can be unapologetically strong. They can be everyday superheroes.

*Morinsola Keshinro works for the nonprofit organization We Have Stories, which is dedicated to storytellers and content creators from various communities.*

## Quiz

1 Read the list of sentences from the article.

1. *Things have not gotten much better for women in movies in spite of all the talk about more leading roles for women.*
2. *Male leads have the vast majority of roles (71.3 percent of roles) compared to female leads (28.8 percent).*
3. *Out of the top-50 grossing U.S. films in 2018, women represented only 20 percent of directors, writers, producers, editors and cinematographers.*
4. *A further breakdown shows that of those women, only 8 percent were directors.*

What central idea does this evidence support?

- (A) Women are not as involved in the production of superhero movies as men.
- (B) Women are underrepresented in all aspects of the movie industry.
- (C) Women were not allowed to work on or star in movies until recently.
- (D) Women have not been recognized for their contributions to the movie industry.

2 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?

- (A) I'm sure I didn't understand any of the things a longtime watcher would pick up on, but that's the great thing about stories — a good one stands on its own.
- (B) Unlike many female characters, the women of "Captain Marvel" do not rely on romance and other typical female character storylines.
- (C) Plus, the film releases on International Women's Day, March 8, during Women's History Month.
- (D) This campaign is partly about the entertainment experience for these girls.

3 Which option BEST describes the author's point of view about "Captain Marvel"?

- (A) The movie will help girls defeat the problems they face.
- (B) The movie will encourage girls to pretend to be superheroes.
- (C) The movie will get more girls interested in superheroes.
- (D) The movie will empower girls to act strong, smart and bold.

4 The author wrote this article mostly to show how important "Captain Marvel" will be.

What does the author do to illustrate this purpose in the article?

- (A) The author explains what messages the movie will send and how it could generate discussions.
- (B) The author explains how many women star in the movie and worked on its production.
- (C) The author explains what the movie is about and compares it with other Marvel movies.
- (D) The author explains when the movie will be released and what that date represents.