

Women in action movies assignment

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Women in old westerns mainly played distressed, helpless, feminine roles; however, women commonly appear in fighting roles in modern day action movies. Today, movies starring provocative, strong women characters seem to sell more than movies featuring helpless women characters for the simple reason that sex sells. One of the main stereotypical female characters in present day action movies represents beauty and promiscuity, for example the character of Lara Croft in the movie Lara Croft: Tomb Raider. The other major stereotypical action film female role disguises a woman as a man, for instance in the story of Mulan.

Recent action films tease females by recognizing their strength, with the conditions that the character possesses a perfect figure and pretty face, or depicts the female hero as a male. Action films stereotype women as weak, powerless homemakers. Women are inferior to men in society, which Hollywood reinforces by giving men the leadership and military roles. For instance, in war movies, women play either the damsel in distress or the nurturing mother and wife caring for the soldiers. It seems only when a woman dresses as a man is she able to take the role of a soldier.

However, times are changing. In the past decade, many screenwriters wrote action films where independent, scantily clad women fight crime with style, class, and many powerful weapons. An article on female action heroes called Make Her Day, found in Entertainment Weekly explains, “ the studios aren’t as concerned with striking a blow for feminism as they are in tapping into a potentially lucrative crossover market”(Hruska 62). Therefore, writers do not concern themselves in being politically correct, but rather create a character an audience finds entertaining. Moss 2

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, a movie based on the 1996 video game (Inness 22) is about a woman on a mission to find halves of a triangle that gives the finder the power to rule time hidden deep inside a tomb. Angelina Jolie, the actress who plays Lara Croft, was voted one of the “ 50 Most Beautiful People” by People Weekly in 1998, and is a value to third world countries for her volunteer work. Her character in Tomb Raider, reflects Jolie’s own admirable emotional and physical strength, but her captivating beauty is defined by revealing, impractical clothing and flawless make-up and hair styling.

Raiding tombs wearing miniscule shorts and a decorative midriff top does not merit practicality. She climbs through Stone Age rubble and wilderness with grace. Women have not been able to break through the barrier where society portrays them as sex symbols rather than real women on a mission. The article “ Lara’s Lethal and Loaded Mission” comments that Croft, “ adopts male forms of behavior but is unmistakably female and highly eroticized” (Herbst 22). The article goes on to talk about how the character of Croft serves as a sex symbol in advertising (24).

Apparently, men find women with guns attractive, not threatening. There was a time when the idea of a woman soldier was laughable. Disney remade the Chinese folktale Mulan as a cartoon, but the story is still in tact. Mulan wants to fight in the war for her elderly father, but her ancestors do not want to allow her because of her sex. She disguises herself as a man by wearing baggy clothing and cutting her hair extremely short. She can fight just as well, if not better, than any man on the field can, yet her ancestors will disown her if they catch her.

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Her family considered her a disgrace for interfering instead of watching over the home while the men fight. When a woman outdoes a man, his pride takes a beating. Society raises women to be well mannered, which does not entail fighting. The role of a woman Moss 3 requires her to feed, clothe, and calm the man. Absurdly, a woman feels she must disguise herself to fight for her people. Most women in society would not have the self-esteem to wear the clothing that women in action movies today wear, however many of them contain the strength and independence to fight crime and war.

Film sends women a message saying fighting is sexy if you wear minimal clothing and own a thin, toned, body. When women in action movies look like real life women wearing practical clothing while fighting for the common good then the stereotype will be broken. Unfortunately, real women are not entertaining and they do not make profits. Lara Croft represents an idealistic woman with the perfect body doing a man's job. Mulan disguises herself as a man to do a man's job. A story about an everyday woman doing a man's job seems too common to sell movies, which means maybe present day females frequently conquer the man's world already.