



THE WOMEN PROTAGONISTS WHO DEFINED THE DECADE

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Watching a movie is my self-care: I can escape from my everyday life, transported into the story unfolding before me in a dark theatre with popcorn in my lap. Thus December, with its many holiday releases, is one of my favorite times of the year, and this has been especially true in the last few years.

With two younger brothers and a dad who were passionate about Star Wars and Star Trek, I grew up watching superhero films. However, it wasn't until 2017 that I could see myself represented as the superhero with the release of both Wonder Woman and Star Wars: The Last Jedi. This exciting trend continued in 2019 with the release of Captain Marvel and The Rise of Skywalker, and as we approached 2020, they had me wondering if female representation had actually increased in film. I am thrilled to report that women were the protagonists in 40% of 2019 films, which was a significant increase from 33% in 2018.

Unfortunately, this did not extend to the percentage of women directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers working on the top 250 films, which only increased from 20% in 2018 to 21% in 2019. Additionally, in 2019, the majority of print, broadcast and online film reviewers in the U.S. were still men — only 34% of all film reviewers were women.

The good news is that in 2018, 51% of moviegoers and 47% of ticket buyers were women, so we have the power to continue to support films that represent and are created by women. I think that 2020 is going to be a record-breaking year for women in film. Below are my top 20 women protagonists from the last decade who helped us get where we are today. We all need superheroes who represent and celebrate us, and I hope they empower you too.

REY

Portrayed by Daisy Ridley in Star Wars *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019) – Rey takes on the Final Order and some serious family issues to save the galaxy in the final Star Wars trilogy.

KATHERINE G. JOHNSON

Portrayed by Taraji P. Henson in *Hidden Figures* (2016) – This character is based on the real Katherine Johnson, who was a brilliant mathematician for NASA whose calculations were critical to the first U.S. spaceflights.

Portrayed by Viola Davis in *The Help* (2011) – Aibileen is a maid living in Jackson Mississippi in the early 1960s who risks her life to tell the world her story during the Civil Rights Movement.

AIBILEEN CLARK

CAPTAIN MARVEL OR CAROL DANVERS

Portrayed by Brie Larson in *Captain Marvel* (2019) – A pilot for the U.S. Air Force, Carol gets amnesia after a flight accident and ends up becoming more powerful than she could have ever imagined.

Portrayed by Nora Lum (known professionally as Awkwafina) in *Ocean's 8* (2018) – Constance is a skilled pickpocket who is critical to the lady-led heist of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's annual gala.

CONSTANCE

OKOYE

Portrayed by Danai Gurira in *Black Panther* (2018) – As one of the key members of a women's special forces unit, Okoye is skilled in multiple forms of combat and swears to protect her country – even when her husband threatens its safety.

Portrayed by Jennifer Lawrence in *The Hunger Games* (2012) – When her sister is chosen for the brutal Hunger Games competition, Katniss volunteers to save her life and must compete for survival in the nationally televised event.

KATNISS EVERDEEN

MOANA

Voiced by Auli'i Cravalho in *Moana* (2016) – Living on an island that is slowly dying, Moana journeys across the ocean to save her people and encounters some unique allies and monsters along the way.

Portrayed by Gal Gadot in *Wonder Woman* (2017) – Diana, princess of the Amazons, leaves her home to stop Ares, the god of war, and discovers just how powerful she is along the way.

WONDER WOMAN OR DIANA PRINCE

Portrayed by Emma Watson in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 2* (2011) - In the final Harry Potter film, Hermione must help her friends defend Hogwarts and destroy the Horcruxes that are keeping their enemy alive.

HERMIONE

ELASTIGIRL

Voiced by Holly Hunter in *Incredibles 2* (2018) - With the help of her family, Elastigirl fights crime and changes the negative perception of superheroes that has forced them into hiding.

Portrayed by Letitia Wright in *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) - The princess of Wakanda, Shuri is a genius inventor who uses her smarts to defend her country and defeat the evil Thanos, who threatens half of the world's population.

SHURI

**KATHARINE
GRAHAM**

Portrayed by Meryl Streep in *The Post* (2018) - This character is based on the first female publisher of a major American newspaper, *The Washington Post*, who exposed a massive government cover-up that spanned 3 decades.

Portrayed by Melissa McCarthy in *Ghostbusters* (2016) - Dr. Yates is a former professor and believer in the paranormal who sets out with her crew to trap ghosts and save the world.

**ABBY
YATES**

**JYN
ERSO**

Portrayed by Felicity Jones in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) - Orphaned as child, Jyn discovers why her father was taken away, then joins the Rebel Alliance to find his key to destroy the Death Star.

Portrayed by Mindy Kaling in *Late Night* (2019) - Molly is hired as the first ever female staff writer for a late-night talk show, and she navigates her way through the challenging workplace culture with hard work and a love of punch lines.

**MOLLY
PATEL**

**OLIVE
PENDERGHAST**

Portrayed by Emma Stone in *Easy A* (2010) - When a clean-cut high school student, Olive, confirms an untrue rumor about her life, it makes her notorious for the wrong reasons and she must navigate how to make things right.

LORRAINE BROUGHTON

Portrayed by Charlize Theron in *Atomic Blonde* (2017) - Lorraine, an MI6 spy, is sent to Berlin in 1989 to retrieve a classified list of informants and discover a double-crossing spy working against the Crown.

Portrayed by Saoirse Ronan in *Mary Queen of Scots* (2018) - Based on the real 16th century queen, Mary returns to Scotland to reclaim her throne while Scotland and England fall under the rule of Elizabeth I, making them women rivals in power in a masculine world.

MARY STUART

BLACK WIDOW OR NATASHA ROMANOFF

Portrayed by Scarlett Johansson in *The Avengers* (2012) - Trained as a spy, martial artist and sniper, Natasha is a Russian agent, who joins the Avengers to defeat Loki, mitigating the threat he poses to the world.