

Feminist role model? Reactions to Jodie Whittaker as the 13th Doctor

Introduction

Jodie Whittaker is an English actress who is most famous for being the first woman to play the Doctor, the main character in the BBC series *Doctor Who*. In this project I analysed how *Doctor Who* fans reacted when Whittaker took over the role from Peter Capaldi.

Method

On Twitter I analysed the revelation tweet posted on the 16th July 2017 by @bbcdactorwho, the official account of the series. I only looked at direct replies to the post to avoid an excess of information. I also posted a survey in the subreddit r/doctorwho where I asked people for their opinion on Whittaker.



Reactions on Twitter

Out of the 74 comments I analysed 45 had a positive mindset towards Whittaker, 11 a negative one and 18 a neutral one.

Works Cited

Jowett, Lorna. "Is The Future Going To Be All Girl?" Doctor Who And The Frustrations Of A Feminist'. *CST Online*, 28 Mar. 2018, <https://cstonline.net/is-the-future-going-to-be-all-girl-doctor-who-and-the-frustrations-of-a-feminist-by-lorna-jowett/>.

whovianfeminism. 'A #MeToo Moment Unfolds At Gallifrey One'. *WhovianFeminism*. <https://whovianfeminism.tumblr.com/post/171100560852/a-metoo-moment-unfolds-at-gallifrey-one>. Accessed 22 June 2021.

Survey on Reddit

The survey I posted in r/doctorwho got 8 responses. People's opinion on Whittaker's function as a feminist role model varied but were mostly answered by "no" or "I don't know". One user said gender did not matter to them but it could matter to other people, they therefore acknowledged Whittaker as a possible role model. Another user refused to see her as a role model all together, stating that

"to be a feminist role model she needs to be good at what she is doing [...] but she failed so bad that ppl [sic] think its [sic] because she is a woman."

Interestingly the majority said they liked Whittaker in the beginning and most of them did not change their opinion later on.

Is Whittaker a feminist role model?

- Gallifrey One (February 2018): "Gallifrey Waits No More" panel about women in the entertainment industry takes a turn and panelists tell their #metoo stories
- Jowett: "Potentially, yes, this is a great step forward. In practice, I fear mishandling [...]. Having taken the decision to cast a woman, the pressure is on to do this right. [...] much of the scrutiny will be focused on Whittaker herself, yet she is in control of very few factors that will produce a 'positive' female Doctor."

