
MEDIAVERSITY



Mediaversity Handbook for Writers

— TV Reviews —

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I. Templates

INSTRUCTIONS: The below templates are locked. To access, please either Make a Copy of the template (under the File tab) or Download it to your computer. When you're finished writing your review, share the file with li@mediaversityreviews.com through Google docs. If you've downloaded it to your computer, you'll have to paste content back into a Google doc before sharing.

Feel free to work from any of these templates:

- [Blank Template](#)
- [Template with Hints](#)
- [Finished Review Example](#)

II. Style Notes

Write your review like you've having lunch with a friend. You're discussing why a TV show made you feel seen, or why it bothered you. Keep it casual, colloquial, snappy—but always informed. Every assertion you make should be backed up with sound argument-building and/or source links. Specifically:

- **Write in the present tense.** Exception: speaking about events prior to the TV season's release (e.g. "In 2019, the series changed showrunners between Seasons 2 and 3")
- **Avoid passive voice.** "Is/are" verbs halt momentum and can sound too academic for a Mediaversity review. If you want a quick gut check, paste your words into [Hemingway App](#) which will call out passive voice, along with other great suggestions
- **Be opinionated.** We aren't trying to craft a neutral plot summary or Reuters-style news debrief. Our reviews come out much later than those of other publications, usually with spoilers, precisely because we're giving analysis. To that end, each line should give the reader a sense of whether or not the detail you're describing is good or bad for representation. For example, we'd much prefer to see "Unfortunately, Sarah never listens to Jill" instead of "Sarah never listens to Jill." The latter puts the onus on the reader to parse whether or not you're saying that's a good or bad thing. Instead, lead the reader by the hand through your thought progression, one sentence at a time
- **Keep it brief.** Our reviews have no set word count, so it really depends on how much ground you want to cover. In general, try to avoid getting too in the weeds, since the goal of a Mediaversity review is to give readers a snapshot of how inclusive a TV show is, while leaving breadcrumbs to deeper reading if they want via source links and quotes from other articles

- [This review](#) is a great example of brevity while still having credible stats to reinforce the writer's arguments
- [This review](#) is a great example of getting more in-depth, while still relying on outside articles and authors to sum up what could otherwise be a textbook-length review
- [This review](#) is a great, standard example of something that sits in between

If helpful, this outline summarizes what every Mediaversity review should answer:

Technical Q: Is this a good TV show?

- **A:** It's good / It's weak
 - Evidence 1, 2, 3

Gender Q: How well does this TV show represent women and/or nonbinary people?

- **A:** It portrays them well / It portrays them poorly
 - Evidence 1, 2, 3

Race Q: How well does this TV show represent people of color?

- **A:** It portrays them well / It portrays them poorly
 - Evidence 1, 2, 3

**LGBTQ or Disability Q: How well does this TV show represent queer people?
OR How well does this TV show represent people with disabilities?** (Discuss just one—whichever community is better represented.)

- **A:** It portrays them well / It portrays them poorly
 - Evidence 1, 2, 3

III. Scoring Guidelines: Core Categories

Don't worry too much about whether or not you're getting the exact score right. That's what I'm here for! Since I have a bird's eye view to all Mediaversity reviews, I'll make sure the end result is congruent with our body of work.

On your end, please just make sure your suggested scores are multiples of 0.25 and that your written sections explain your reasoning. The [Mediaversity database](#) may be helpful for you to reference what other shows were scored.

These 4 core categories are required in your review:

TECHNICAL

We include technical merit into the Mediaversity score because attributes like complex characters or fresh storytelling give deeper representation. You can't be truly inclusive if all your characters are flat, for example.

- **5/5** - Amazing show that's perfectly paced, with compelling characters, great dialogue, etc.
- **4/5** - Good show that's well-paced with decent characters, cinematography, etc.
- **3/5** - Enjoyable show but largely forgettable
- **2/5** - Not a great show, clunky pacing or clichéd dialogue
- **1/5** - Awful show that feels like it was made by an amateur

GENDER

We consider the numbers, depth, and positivity of female characters. Nonbinary, genderfluid, Two-Spirit characters are discussed in this section or in LGBTQ, or both—wherever it makes the most sense for that title. Behind-the-lens representation is considered as well. Specifically:

- **5/5** - This work is centered from a woman's perspective. Women are the lead protagonists, their characters are complex, and they do not fall into stereotypes
- **4/5** - Most episodes pass the Bechdel Test and women get important roles, backstories, and generally do not fall into stereotypes
- **3/5** - Episodes pass the Bechdel Test about half the time, women are only in supporting roles, they have thin backstories, and they may slip into stereotypes
- **2/5** - Episodes mostly fail the Bechdel Test and women are flat characters in minor, stereotypical roles
- **1/5** - This show is a sausage-fest and when women do exist, they're offensive stereotypes

RACE

We consider the numbers, depth, and positivity of characters of color. Behind-the-lens representation is considered as well. Specifically:

- **5/5** - This show is centered from a non-white perspective. People of color (POC) are the lead protagonists, their characters are complex, and they do not fall into stereotypes
- **4/5** - POC get important roles, backstories, and generally do not fall into stereotypes
- **3/5** - POC are only in supporting roles, they have thin backstories, and they may slip into stereotypes

- **2/5** - POC are flat characters in minor, stereotypical roles
- **1/5** - This show is white AF and if any POC do exist, they're offensive stereotypes

LGBTQ or DISABILITY

Choose one, whichever scores higher. If the show includes representations of both, select the higher-scoring representation—then describe the other representation in a bonus or deduction section.

We consider the numbers, depth, and positivity of either LGBTQ or disabled characters. (For any characters who are both LGBTQ and disabled, please focus on one facet of identity for the core category.) Behind-the-lens representation is considered as well. Specifically:

- **5/5** - LGBTQ/Disabled characters and their relationships are at the center of this show. Their characters are complex and they do not fall into stereotypes
- **4/5** - LGBTQ/Disabled characters get important or supporting roles, backstories, and generally do not fall into stereotypes
- **3/5** - LGBTQ/Disabled characters are only in minor roles, they have thin backstories, and they may slip into stereotypes
- **2/5** - LGBTQ/Disabled characters are non-existent or flat characters in minor, stereotypical roles
- **1/5** - This show is cishet/ableist AF and if any LGBTQ/Disabled characters do exist, they're offensive stereotypes

IV. Scoring Guidelines: Bonuses and Deductions

Bonuses and deductions are optional. But if the show does represent any of the following groups, all of which have been stereotyped and/or marginalized on TV in the past, we should take that into account in our final Mediaversity grade.

AGE

How are adults over 50 years old depicted?

- [Bonus example](#)
- [Deduction example](#)

BODY DIVERSITY

How does the show depict diverse body types?

- [Bonus example](#)
- [Deduction example](#)

DISABILITY

How are disabled characters depicted?

- [Autism example](#)
- [Deaf example](#)
- [Chronic Illness example](#)
- [Mental Health example](#)
- [Mobility example](#)

LGBTQ

How are LGBTQ characters depicted?

- [Bonus example](#)
- [Deduction example](#)

RELIGION

How are minority religions depicted?

- [Bonus example](#)
- [Deduction example](#)

Guidelines for how to score bonus points or deductions:

BONUS

- **+1.00** - This show centers a marginalized community that isn't already covered above. Their character(s) are complex and they do not fall into stereotypes
- **+0.75** - A marginalized community gets important or supporting role(s) with backstory and do not fall into stereotypes
- **+0.50** - A marginalized community gets supporting or minor role(s) that lack complexity but generally do not fall into stereotypes
- **+0.25** - A marginalized community gets brief representation in a positive role and generally does not fall into stereotypes
- **+0.00** - This show includes a marginalized community or its themes, but neither helps nor hinders their representation

DEDUCTION

- **-0.25** - A marginalized community (that isn't already covered above) sees brief representation in a negative and/or stereotyped role
- **-0.50** - A marginalized community sees some stereotyping in supporting or minor role(s)
- **-0.75** - A marginalized community sees offensive stereotypes in important or supporting role(s)

- **-1.00** - This show employs offensive stereotypes about a marginalized community in repeated or central role(s)

V. How to Calculate Final Score

Don't worry too much about whether or not you're getting the exact score right, I'll double-check your math. But take a stab, the arithmetic is actually very simple:

1. Add up all the core category scores
2. Add any bonuses
3. Subtract any deductions
4. Divide this total by 4 (number of core categories) to get the final score
5. Round this final score to two decimal points

Find the Mediaversity Grade through these ranges:

A+	5.00+	Breaking ground in media representation and generally just kicking ass.
A	4.70 - 4.99	Inclusive AF and damned well-made.
A-	4.40 - 4.69	Inclusive AF.
B+	4.10 - 4.39	Nailed it, just maybe not in all categories.
B	3.80 - 4.09	Great job, just maybe not in all categories.
B-	3.50 - 3.79	All we ask is that you try, and try you did.
C+	3.20 - 3.49	Chilling in that inoffensive groove.
C	2.90 - 3.19	Diversity was not a priority.
C-	2.60 - 2.89	I spy missteps.
D	2.00 - 2.59	These creators don't see race.
F	1.00 - 1.99	How was this greenlit?

VI. Emoji Guide

To give context, we list the gender, ethnicity, nationality, LGBTQ, and disability status of show creators and reviewers alike. Understanding that emojis leave very (very) little room for nuance, we still see net value in giving an offscreen snapshot as a way to set the stage for a conversation about representation.

If you're unsure of how to input an emoji, you can always use [Emojipedia](https://emojipedia.org/) to copy-paste the icon into your review.

GENDER

- 🧑 = Female
- 🧑🧑🧑 = Nonbinary, Agender, Two-Spirit, Genderfluid, Genderqueer
- 🧑 = Male

ETHNICITY

- 🧑🧑🧑 = Black, Afro-Latino, or Multiracial
- 🧑🧑🧑 = Latino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, MENA, Native, or Multiracial
- 🧑🧑🧑 = East Asian, Southeast Asian, or Multiracial
- 🧑🧑🧑 = White, Latino, or Multiracial

NATIONALITY

- Include flag of country where person was born
- If different, also include flag of the country where the person has citizenship and resides

OTHER

- 🏳️ = LGBTQ (publicly)
- ♿ = Disabled (publicly, including both visible and invisible disabilities)

EXAMPLES

- I'm a woman of Taiwanese descent, born and raised in the United States. My emoji profile is 🧑🇺🇸
- Director Luca Guadagnino is mixed-race Sicilian and Algerian, born and raised in Italy. He is openly gay. His emoji profile is 🧑🇮🇹🏳️
- TV showrunner Jill Soloway is white, born and raised in the United States. They identify as nonbinary. Their emoji profile is 🧑🧑🇺🇸🏳️
- Director Lucia Aniello is a white woman, born in Italy and raised in the United States, where she still resides. Her emoji profile is 🧑🇮🇹🇺🇸