



How does gender affect filmmaking?

01 Work with a classmate. Name as many female lead characters in books, series, or movies as possible in three minutes. Write them here.

02 Read “Spin a Yarn” and circle the answer that best reflects the students’ comments.

1. The filmmaker’s gender does not impact the portrayal of female leads.
2. The gender of the filmmaker can have an impact on the portrayal of female leads when the film is not based on a book.
3. The gender of the filmmaker can have an impact on the portrayal of female leads when portraying them as complex individuals.

03 Read the text again and complete the chart about the three female leads discussed.

Jo March	
Wonder Woman	
Katniss	

Spin a Yarn

Student 1: Last weekend, I saw *Little Women*. It was great. In particular, the role of Jo March was exciting. We read the book in Literature class, and she is a strong character. I think it’s different in a book than in a mainstream movie, but she is unwavering, not looking for approval from anyone, especially a man. Does anyone have an idea what I mean?

Student 2: Yes, there’s an article about this online. The film’s director is Greta Gerwig, and her approach is different because she’s a feminist director and creates female leads that are distinct from those of the past—they’re strong, independent, complex, and not the ‘sidekick’ of the male lead. Unless I’m mistaken, analysts call it a revisioning of female leads.

Student 3: There’s a similar analysis of the portrayal of Diana in *Wonder Woman*, directed by Patty Jenkins, because Diana is not sexualized as female superheroes usually are—think *Catwoman*—and her actions are driven by her values, not a reflection of a man’s values. In addition, she’s complex and powerful, obviously, but also warm, thoughtful, and curious.

Student 4: Katniss in *The Hunger Games* is also a complex female lead, like with Jo March. While there’s a difference in the novel Katniss and the film Katniss, her voice’s inner strength, values, and clarity—by which I mean her values, perspective, and way of being, remain consistent. Interestingly, the first film was directed by a man. Still, the subsequent ones had a female director who worked closely with the author to ensure Katniss’s voice was authentically hers. She is strong and principled, but she also feels the weight of her responsibility to save her people, which leads us back to the question: if more feminist directors make mainstream films, will this change continue to take place?

04 Work in a small group. Look at the female leads from Exercise 1. Are any of them characters like Jo March or Katniss?



05 Identify if the sentences are correct “C” or incorrect “I.”

1. Unless directors are highlighting emotional complexity, their characters would have lacked depth.

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2. Had a woman directed the film, the female lead would have had more agency.

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3. Providing that female directors will be given more opportunities, the industry would already be more diverse.

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4. The character development wouldn't be so flat only if a woman directed the film.

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5. Supposing she made the film today, it would be more progressive.

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06 Rewrite the sentences using conditionals.

1. There weren't many female directors. Women-led characters lacked complexity.

2. *Little Women* is based on a beloved book. The director had less flexibility.

3. Two different directors directed *The Hunger Games* movies. Is there a difference in their approach to portraying Katniss?

4. Feminist directors do not often direct mainstream films. They may look different in the future.



07 Write a paragraph presenting your opinion on whether the director's perspective affects the film and how.

08 Work in a group of four. Imagine you have been asked to direct a new version of *Iron Man*, but it should be *Iron Woman*. How will you change the character? Write your notes and present your ideas to another group.

