

THE KENT TEST

CREATED BY CLARKISHA KENT

Definition

The Kent Test is a media litmus test designed to determine whether a film or any other piece of media has provided the audience with thoughtful representation of Black women and/or women of color. Its purpose is to encourage discussion on what good representation can look like for these groups and it is not the "be-all and end-all" of media criticism. Rather, it is to be used as a starting point. The Kent Test is named after its' creator; culture critic and writer Clarkisha Kent.

Any mention of women includes trans women.

Instructions

Add points in accordance with the following elements of The Kent Test. The lowest number of points a film or piece of media can acquire is 0, while the highest number of points is 8.

The character in question:

A. Must not solely be a walking stereotype or trope. (1 Point)

Tropes are not discouraged, but if the only thing you remember about the character is that they are the "the damsel in distress", "the sassy Black friend", "the fat friend", "the Dragon Lady", etc, this point will be **lost**.

B. Must have their own plot or narrative arc. (1 Point)

This character can and should have a story that contributes to the film/piece of media's overall narrative. If they do not, this point will be **lost**.

C. Must not be solely included in the narrative just for purpose of "holding down" a male character and his story. (1 Point)

If this character only materializes to support a male character (*particularly* if this male character is the **lead**) when he needs help and **nothing else**, this is a problem and this point will be **lost**.

D. Must not solely be included in the narrative to prop up a White female character. (1 Point)

Self-explanatory and a summation of points A, B, and C. This includes characters who only play friends, mentors, figures of authority, slaves, servants, subordinates, **antagonists**, and the like to a White woman character (*particularly* if this White woman is the **lead**). If this character materializes only when a White woman character needs the audience to read them as cooler, more interesting, more "complex", or more progressive than they **factually** are, this point will be **lost**.

E. Must not solely exist in the film/piece of media for the purpose of fetishization. (1 Point)

Historically, Black women and women of color have been oversexualized, hypersexualized, and fetishized in the United States—and this phenomenon extends to all media it produces and consumes. If a film/piece of media includes this character for the express purpose of being fetishized, gawked at, or drooled over, this point will be **lost**.

The only exception to this is if the film/piece of media has made it *abundantly clear* that this is the character's choice, is in line with their character and established logic, and/or is an attempt by the character to subvert an existing trope or expectation. If none of these exceptions apply, this point will be **lost**.

F. Must have at least one interaction with another Black woman or woman of color. (1 Point)

Said interaction does not have to be “cordial”, but this point will *automatically* be **lost** if both characters are reduced to nothing more than competition or conflict-fodder for a male character.

A bonus point will be awarded if the second Black woman or woman of color is not related (i.e. “family” or blood relation) to the first in any way, shape, or form **(1 Point)**.

G. Must not be the go-to character “sacrifice” in a film/piece of media. (1 Point)

If this character suddenly offers themselves up on a silver platter to save another character in the film/piece of media, this point will be **lost**. This is *especially* applicable if the character being “saved” is not another Black woman or woman of color. And this is **doubly** applicable if this a piece of media that is scarce when it comes to the sustained presence and involvement of Black women or women of color.

The only exception to this is if the film/piece of media has established very clearly that this “sacrifice” is completely in line with the character's wants, needs, goals, and *virtues*. If this is coming left-field for the character, this point will be **lost**.

Notes

As it pertains to **point F**, long-term media—which for brevity and clarity here means *any* piece of media that refers to itself as a “series” or a “trilogy”, and/or splits itself into “chapters”, “sequels”, “prequels”, “parts”, or “seasons”, *cannot* acquire **point F** if there is not regular, consistent, and *meaningful* interaction between different Black women or women of color.

This is doubly applicable to **television**. Meaningful and sustained interaction between Black women or women of color must occur throughout **all** seasons of the show. **No exceptions**.

Point System

7 - 8 Points	This film/piece of media contains <i>strong</i> representation for Black women and/or women of color.
5 - 6 Points	This film/piece of media contains <i>sound</i> representation for Black women and/or women of color.
3 - 4 Points	This film/piece of media contains <i>middling to fair</i> representation for Black women and/or women of color.
1 - 2 Points	This film/piece of media contains <i>pathetic</i> representation for Black women and/or women of color.
0 Points	This film/piece of media contains <i>abysmal</i> representation for Black women and/or women of color.