A Princess, a Jedi, and a Mechanic
Walk into a Cantina:
An analysis of female characters in Star Wars: The Last Jedi

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**Introduction:**

When the film *Star Wars: The Last Jedi (TLJ)* was released in 2017, many fans were ecstatic to see their beloved characters return to the big screen. Yet, quickly after the film’s release, negative comments and personal attacks on social media directed at certain actresses in the film became a focal point of the film’s larger reception. In particular, the actress Trần Loan, largely known as Kelly Marie Tran, was widely criticized based on her performance in this film, resulting in her withdrawal from social media platforms like Instagram. These attacks beg the question: what about her character and performance in this film made contemporary American audiences so upset?

I argue, through the use of qualitative analysis, that the female characters in the film *The Last Jedi* are more like real women than male fantasies of women, which directly contradicts most of the stereotypes and narrative tropes that women are expected to fill. The representation of female heroes in this film confront cultural anxieties on the increased influence and changing roles of women in society by depicting women in roles outside of stereotypical “damsel in distress”, “feisty heroine”, or “bombshell” roles. The female characters in the film are heroes without relying heavily on classic heroic tropes such as super strength and conventional hyper-sexualized appearance. They fulfill the functions of the typical “Hero” role; they grieve, grow, take action, and make incredible sacrifices in a way that American audiences are not used to seeing in this genre. Though it is not always the case that films cannot have strong female heroes, most in the action and science fiction genre still tend to rely upon older ideals, which makes conventional gender roles and norms more prevalent in these films.

I will explore these differences through analysis of the character Rose Tico from *The Last Jedi*. To perform this analysis, I will be first asking qualitative questions to measure how the
character fits the requirements of the Hero archetype based on the dramatic functions heroes
must fill in a story to be considered an effective hero. I will supplement these questions by doing
a character analysis of Rose Tico, focusing on her objectives, motivations, and the dialogue
concerned with her character throughout the film. This analysis demonstrates that some
audiences strongly disliked this character because she does not fit any of the typical stereotypes
or narrative roles, like the femme fatale or the damsel in distress, which female characters
typically play in film.

The social media backlash of TLJ star Trần Loan provides the basis for this data. A lot of
these attacks focused on her physical appearance/attractiveness, race, and gender. In addition to
these comments that were given directly to her on her own accounts, and which eventually led to
her deleting posts on her existing accounts, there were also many threads on websites such as
Reddit where users expressed similar sentiments. I provide a sample thread of such conversations
in the appendix of this paper which started with the question: “Did anyone else absolutely
despise rose tico in Star Wars: The last Jedi?” Some responses agreed on the basis of her
character, like: “She doesn’t contribute anything meaningful, and she’s just a completely
uninteresting and useless character”\(^1\); “Annoying af”\(^2\). There were also many comments on both
her race and physical appearance:

User frunchtzergeis: She was on the same level of acting as Charlene Yi from House. She
can’t act
User nammertl: K thought they were the same person. Why does Hollywood need two of
them?\(^3\)

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\(^1\)”R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?” Reddit, 2017,
https://www.reddit.com/r/StarWars/comments/7k247d/did_anyone_else_absolutely_despise_rose_tico_in/.
\(^2\)”R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?”
\(^3\)”R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?”
As well as comments like: “they made her look hideous”⁴, “Most annoying little bitch in the film”⁵, and “she’s stupid, and not very attractive either.”⁶

Obviously there was something about the character of Rose Tico, as well as the actress that played her, which made certain groups of Star Wars fans react in such a way. By understanding society’s expectations and stereotypes of women, as well as how this particular character did not fulfill these roles, this particular instance can serve as a case study for how real life and film are intertwined and impact our daily lives.

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⁴ “R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?”
⁵ “R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?”
⁶ “R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?”
**Background Information**

*Stereotypes, Film, and Ideology:*

Stereotypes reinforce harmful ideas about diverse identities through popular culture, particularly film and television over time. This is problematic not only because people are misrepresented, but that this incorrect perception gets expanded to include real people in real life. Misperceptions of real human beings influences the way we understand cultural ideologies and how they play out in a film format. A dominant ideology is defined as a system of beliefs that is socially constructed and inherently accepted by people, and structure how society thinks about itself and others. The dominant ideology in the United States, for example, is that of white patriarchal capitalism. Race, gender, and success are key qualities of many societies, but ours focuses on favoring those that are white, male, and materially successful. By understanding that, we can then look at the United States, and see how our own dominant ideology is present in many aspects of everyday life.

We, as Americans, are then left to either struggle with or simply accept that hegemonic power which dictates much of how our lives operate, and affects the way we perceive the world. This can be difficult, as these hegemonic values may not always be compatible with our conscious value system. One key way in which this dominant ideology is institutionally maintained is through Ideological State Apparatuses, or ISAs. ISAs are social institutions and formations, such as churches, schools, family, and media structures which spread the values of the ideology through education and example. Part of the danger in ISAs for citizens is that they

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7 Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality at the Movies*, (Malden, MA, USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 7.
8 Benshoff and Griffin, 8.
9 Benshoff and Griffin, 11.
are not outwardly repressive or violent; we often do not even realize that we are being indoctrinated with such ideas and examples because it is simply how life works, and we usually do not see anything inherently dangerous or harmful about it.

Ideas about gender, specifically what it means to be either “masculine” or “feminine” are one example of cultural norms that have been defined by the patriarchy, accepted, and constructed by society. These ideas are often referred to as “gender norms,” which are the typical masculine or feminine behaviors that society expects of people, and usually align with biological sex of either male or female in mainstream American culture. Being “female,” in regards to sex, has been equated with being gendered as “feminine,” which is to be “small, quiet, passive, emotional, non-aggressive, and weak,” which are the exact opposite of what society ascribes to being masculine or male.\(^\text{10}\) These are the stereotypes which Hollywood also provides examples of, solidifying in the minds of most American society these gendered expectations through the examples of well-loved, popular characters. It maintains the standing ideology, and keeps women in an underrepresented status. This underrepresentation is exhibited in the persisting overall few woman protagonists that appear on screen, as well as the way by which these women are presented in usually adhering to these typical gender norms.

Just as society influences film, the reverse is also true; American society has long been influenced by film, particularly by the “Classical Hollywood Narrative Form,” which includes stereotypes such as the protagonist, antagonist, love interest, a plot climax, and a “happily ever after.” Most filmmakers following this structure encode themes of the United States’ dominant ideology, that of white patriarchal capitalism, as both desirable and central to success.\(^\text{11}\) This is largely due to the nature of the relationship between societal values and film; each influences and

\(^\text{10}\) Benshoff and Griffin, 214.
\(^\text{11}\) Benshoff and Griffin, 24-25.
reinforces what the other is showing. Thus, film becomes one of the ways this ideology is often reinforced in our minds, through something as simple as a movie. Recognizing that cultural ideologies are enforced in our media is important when attempting to address or learn more about current issues. A vast majority of Americans today are always “plugged in,” with media and entertainment outlets bombarding people every moment of the day. By acknowledging this phenomenon, we can also then begin to unpack how these outlets influence the way we perceive the world around us.

**Film and Gender:**

Due to the nature of the hegemonic patriarchy, women remain underrepresented in both real life and pop culture.\(^1\) This has pushed artists in the realm of theatre and other popular art forms, to explore gender norms more, particularly in the way that audiences interact with characters and stories they see. One prominent idea in this area of study is that of the “immasculation of the woman reader,” which refers to the way in which women, particularly female audiences, have been indoctrinated with patriarchal and masculine values. This can manifest itself in many different ways, but one of the most significant is how female audiences have learned to identify with male protagonists, while still regarding female characters with more of a distance.\(^2\) Scholars believe that this happens largely due to the ways in which cultural material is made and produced. Since most mainstream cultural works are usually made by men (and often for men as well), the work is often dominated by masculine ideals, thus also reinforcing society’s larger patriarchal hegemony. Female characters become representations of male desire more than female actuality. Therefore, even when female characters exist in these

\(^{12}\) Benshoff and Griffin, 213.

works, they are not generally seen as true women but rather “representations” of women.¹⁴ This is where feminism and feminist theory comes into play, and how a lot of theatre often becomes politicized. Women are represented in ways that sometimes have no relation to actual women, relying on male fantasies and fetishes, driven by the masculine-driven cultural norms.¹⁵ Part of the goal of feminism in the application of theatre is to more accurately depict women as they truly are, not as society wishes them to be. It is a way to break out of the stereotypes in which women, both in real life and entertainment, find themselves stuck.

When women are represented on film, they are often objectified and based on male bias. One of the earliest key writings on the connections between gender and images portrayed on screen is Laura Mulvey’s *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. The essay stands as one of the key pieces of literature in this field. It focuses on how mainstream narrative cinema creates pleasure for viewers through narcissism and voyeurism, both of which contain male biases.¹⁶ While part of her argument relies on the idea of psychoanalysis, which is not necessarily a focal point of modern film analysis, Mulvey is still able to make a strong and relevant argument. The main point of psychoanalysis being connected to film is that it is used to show how the dominant ideology of the patriarchy is integrated into film form; in other words, how patterns and ideas seen on screen are already present within an individual.¹⁷ Since Hollywood is an industry largely dominated by men, they also tend to dictate the three “gazes” of cinema: the camera shot, how the characters onscreen look at each other, and how audiences’ attention will be drawn. This means that the male gaze, the gaze which objectifies women to fulfill male fantasies, is what

¹⁴ Fortier, 86.
¹⁵ Fortier, 87.
¹⁶ Benshoff and Griffin, 242.
everyone is forced to see on film. It also means that audiences, whether they are female or male, are forced to identify either with the objectified female or inhabit the male’s point of view.¹⁸ Ideas of what women should be are dictated by men and the dominant patriarchal ideology. This leads to the “women” that are seen on film as representations of these male biases and fantasies rather than real women. This again demonstrates how film and society work together to strengthen biases and stereotypes that are not necessarily true, but still a part of modern culture and society.

The original Star Wars trilogy created a world to explore themes which are relatable to contemporary audiences and those of the 1970s alike. There are certain “universal” elements which contribute to the appeal: the epic struggle between good and evil, technology vs. human spirit, and of course Luke Skywalker’s iconic struggle to unlock his own heroic potential, while making huge sacrifices and ultimately saving his father and the entire galaxy.¹⁹ These themes resonate especially well with white American men, the demographic which often claims to be the “true fans” of this series. It is likely not coincidental that this is the population which identifies with this story, since they are the most supported by hegemonic norms. Therefore, their values and themes they see as “universal” will largely show up in popular entertainment.

**Common Roles for Women in Film:**

Women in film, particularly science fiction (SF) and action movies, fulfill the sidekick or romantic interest role, and do not usually portray the main hero or protagonist. These sidekick stereotypes are generally defined as the tomboy, the feisty heroine, the mother, or the

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¹⁸ Benshoff and Griffin, 244.
conventionally glamorous and sexual woman.\textsuperscript{20} Most of these “personas” that female characters take on in film are informed by, and include characteristics of, specific genre archetypes, such as the femme fatale in film noir, or the fantasy rooted damsel in distress. One current trend in filmmaking emphasizes male and female partnerships in which both parties have to work together towards a common goal. However, these relationships are almost always marked by some sort of hierarchy of skill and ability that distinguishes the man as the main hero, regardless of how central the female character might be.\textsuperscript{21}

Most female characters in film can fit into four different categories. First are women who are portrayed as highly sexualized, which tend to be informed by male fantasies and are essentially fetishized versions of women whose strength comes from her sexuality.\textsuperscript{22} These female characters tend to borrow many of their traits from the femme fatale trope, which serves as an object of fascination and fear to the men who interact with them.\textsuperscript{23} Similarly, the trope of the mother can also embody some of the same characteristics as other stereotypes, but her main driving force is always her devotion to her children.\textsuperscript{24} In this way, this type is fulfilling societal norms of femininity through her embodiment of maternal instinct as a priority. Both categories of women in film fulfill some societal expectation of femininity and how women act and appear.

Tomboys and feisty heroines are similar in that they both embody some sort of tension between masculine and feminine norms and that they are very common among female supporting roles in action and SF films. Tomboys are generally depicted as having a deep sense of kinship with her father, which legitimizes any acts of heroism since they are seen as being

\textsuperscript{21} Tasker, 74.
\textsuperscript{22} Tasker, 69.
\textsuperscript{23} Brian Attenbery, \textit{Decoding Gender in Science Fiction} (New York: Routledge, 2002), 85.
\textsuperscript{24} Tasker, 69.
based in a masculine inspiration. This female trope is a loophole in gender norms: a woman is allowed to be strong and heroic because she gets her strength from her father. Since she is taking after this male role, she can even become more powerful than her father without it being seen as damaging to the male ego. The final key trope for female characters is that of the feisty heroine. This character is usually defined by some kind of unusual strength, be it physical strength or some superiority in skill, which is usually contrasted by weaker female characters. They are seen as the exception to the rules of what it means to be a woman as opposed to the norm. However, due to the “specialness” that these characters seem to exude, they usually become objects of male characters’ romantic interest, which keeps this trope fetishized and tends to maintain the norm of women as objects of male desire. Because of this, feisty heroines tend to function as multiple different roles throughout a film, usually as both a romantic interest/sexual object and an active protagonist.

Society’s expectations for women are clear based on these common roles in film. The tropes of the sexualized woman, love interest, and damsel in distress are supported by the dominant patriarchal values of American society. When female characters stray into the realm of embodying typically “masculine” qualities, showing strength or heroism, this is seen as atypical and are justified through their ties to “real men” and father figures.
Archetype of the Hero:

Archetypes are recurring character types that have been occurring in stories for centuries. Fiction, specifically fantasy and sci-fi, archetypes are based in the general plot structure called the “Hero’s Journey.” The Hero’s Journey is the narrative structure most Western entertainment culture relies upon to tell stories. Whether audiences realize it or not, most stories follow this structure, and thus expect most entertainment to fit into the same form. Archetypes are useful for analysis for any storytelling form (including film) because once a character’s archetype has been determined, it is easier to understand their function in the wider piece, and evaluate if that character is doing everything they “should” be doing. An important note about archetypes is that they are facets of a hero’s personality. That is, a hero can embody multiple archetype functions along the way through their interactions with others, while still maintaining the identity of the Hero. Heroes are largely the characters with whom audiences most identify, and fulfill a specific list of criteria in order to be considered “effective” heroes.

The trilogy’s second film Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back (1980) has a very similar Journey structure as the newest edition, TLJ. Both films open to scenes of established characters with whom audiences are already invested, which allows more screen time in these second films to explore deeper themes and ideas of the characters. Each film weaves multiple characters’ stories together which all connect to an overriding path that achieves a larger plot objective. This greater objective is key because it provides opportunity for characters to decide to make their greatest sacrifices. For example, in The Empire Strikes Back (ESB), Han Solo risks his life for love, Luke abandons his training and mentors to save his friends, and ends in a huge moment of

30 Volger and Montez, 24-25.
uncertainty for all characters.31 The Last Jedi follows a similar arc, with one key difference being the introduction of more new characters in TLJ than in ESB. This creates an interesting “outsider” effect, and audience distrust of characters with whom they don’t feel fully introduced. New characters are often subjected to more scrutiny and may not be as loved by audiences as characters from earlier installments of the series, such as Luke Skywalker or Rey because they are seen as potential threats or outsiders to the existing order. Another key difference in the structure of the two films is that ESB’s main subplot was the romantic one between Han and Leia; TLJ provides no such clear cut storyline. Despite these differences, however, most fans might be surprised at how closely the newest installation of the series mimics what many movie fans idealize as a perfect film sequel in ESB.

Science Fiction Genre:

As the Star Wars series is generally considered to sit comfortably in the genre of science fiction, it is important to understand the significance and history of SF as a genre. While there are still many competing definitions and understandings of what science fiction is, the generally accepted idea is that it contains “ideas predicated on some substantive difference between the world described and the world in which readers really live.”32 This generally includes what academic Darko Suvin coined as “novum,” or the “new thing” explored in a work of science fiction that makes it characteristically a part of the genre.33 These “novum” are used to articulate the difference between the real world and the imaginary world of the piece, which is essential in making SF accessible for popular audiences.34 Essentially, as science fiction’s purpose as a genre

31 Voytilla, 279.
33 Roberts, 190.
34 Roberts, 28.
is to allow audiences to explore ideas that are new and different to what they may accept, issues are explored in a way that audiences may or may not notice, but are definitely able to take in. Since culture and entertainment are intertwined, there is a possibility for change in the way people understand larger societal issues.

Both entertainment and society inform what the other looks like and the potential “differences” that can be explored. One of the ways in which science fiction is specifically able to do this is through the delicate balance between the past, present, and future. Most SF appears to look at the future, a sort of prophetic idea of where humanity could be headed. In reality, it uses the guise of the future by tackling issues rooted in the norms of the past and digging into nostalgia. This allows for us to relate what we see in science fiction entertainment to what we are currently living or have previously lived. Despite its tendency to feel fantastical, it actually roots us in very real issues and circumstances which affect us more than if it were solely based on fortune telling of a society to which we have no connection. A great example of this is the Star Wars franchise, which paradoxically exists “A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away,” yet also feeling futuristic, while millions of fans are still able to connect with the characters and the plot in meaningful ways. This is part of what makes Star Wars continually feel so accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences.

**Gender in Science Fiction:**

Based on these general functions of science fiction to engage with audiences on relevant social issues, it is important to understand how gender has been purposely integrated into the genre, specifically regarding mainstream American version of SF as it exists today. Most work in

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35 Roberts, 33.
the genre prior to the 1960s was written by and for an almost exclusively male audience. There are many female authors who have made huge contributions to the field prior to the 1960s, however, widespread integration of female writing and audience enjoyment of mainstream written science fiction works did not take off until this period. In the 1960s and 70s, women finally started writing their own SF, which gradually snowballed into creating a larger female fan base as well as author base.\(^{36}\) As such, gender was not an element that started being explored by SF writers until this era; it had been a commercial product that leaned more towards reinforcing the existing social order. However, due to SF’s questioning and exploratory nature, as the genre began to expand its writer and fan base, it eventually began to integrate issues of gender norms and roles.\(^{37}\)

Over time, science fiction has accumulated signs, images, ideas, and themes that audiences and for which fans tend to search within a piece.\(^{38}\) Essentially, there is a SF code which has developed over time, which authors and directors can use to make dynamic entertainment that fans want to see.\(^{39}\) The SF code is a set signs that over time have garnered a specific meaning, which allow for them to be understood by the science fiction community who are familiar with the coding system.\(^{40}\) Science fiction’s “code” has given rise to a certain type of sign or concept called a trope, or ideas that have become codified within the genre to look and feel a certain way.\(^{41}\) If tropes remain invisible, it means that their function is normative and works unchallenged in the imagined world. However, if these tropes are used in a different format which somehow becomes visible to an audience, they can be used to question what has

\(^{36}\) Roberts, 92.
\(^{37}\) Attenbery, 5.
\(^{38}\) Attenbery, 18.
\(^{39}\) Attenbery, 26.
\(^{40}\) Attenbery, 18.
\(^{41}\) Attenbery, 32.
previously gone unattended. In this way, gender can become a way to use tropes to provoke thought.

The SF “code” also allows for pieces to borrow bits and pieces from other genres and established styles, while still remaining loyal to its own SF category. The Star Wars franchise, for example, combines elements of its own mythology with iconic Hollywood styles (Western saloons, chases, adventure duels, dogfights, etc.), while also maintaining its own distinct mythology. Audiences, then, are able to see new installments of the series with a balance of expectations for what it should look and feel like, while also reserving the hope of new twists and excitement that are brand new to the franchise.

SF thrives on exploring the idea of difference. Since the 1970s, the idea of difference and things considered “alien” have dominated the concept of gender in science fiction. Women are not targeted because they are inherently different than men, but rather because maleness and the male experience is “normal,” and that a woman’s experience is a “deviance from the norm.” Based on this line of thinking, SF often examines how gender constructs differences between people through different novum and tropes. Essentially, science fiction is a genre that is compelling in its ability to call into question the very things that we have long accepted in ways that we can relate to reality.

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42 Attenbery, 34.
43 Voytilla, 271.
44 Roberts, 100.
Methodology

Dramatic Function of Hero:

Based on the study of archetypes within the wider canon of the Hero’s Journey, there are a few functions that a character ideally serves in order to be considered a true “hero” and satisfy the expectations of audiences. These include: Audience Identification, Growth, Action, Sacrifice, Dealing with Death, and Character Flaws.\textsuperscript{45} I will be using Vogler and Montez’s breakdown of the Hero archetype to assess the characters of TLJ. I further define some of Vogler and Montez’s terms by drawing from ideas and definitions presented in James Thomas’s Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers.

Audience identification refers to the presence of a character’s “universal” and identifiable qualities that make audiences relate to them. These are the qualities that drive or motivate the hero, and connect to their overarching objective. An effective hero will make audiences understand the world through their perspective and make audiences like them or want to be like them.\textsuperscript{46} Questions I will use to analyze the way audiences identify with a character are:

- What “universal” qualities does this character possess?
  - For this project, “universal qualities” will be understood to be similar to “personality traits,” or definable features about a character that identify their appearance and behaviors.\textsuperscript{47} They are aspects of a character that audiences are able to recognize and name.

- What is their core driving force (e.g., to be loved, to survive, to avenge a loved one, etc.)?

\textsuperscript{45} Vogler and Montez, 30-33.
\textsuperscript{46} Vogler and Montez, 30.
The idea of a “core driving force” will be similar to the idea of the “super-objective,” which is the all-inclusive goal of a character. It connects both theme and the goals and actions of the character to create continuity and a sense of purpose in the larger story.\(^{48}\) It is the thing that makes the character keep going, connecting all of their actions throughout the play to this larger purpose.

- **Is the character complex?**
  - “Complex” here is defined as the self-awareness and knowledge that a character possesses, and how they act upon it. Essentially, the things characters respond to things in their world and the way in which they react determine the complexity of a character.\(^{49}\) If a character has one emotion or action which they inhabit for the entire piece, they are less complex. More variation in reaction, and the character’s ability to understand their own world and share it with the audience, tends to indicate a more complex character.\(^{50}\)

Growth is the function of the hero which is satisfied if they have learned or changed from the beginning of the story to the end. The best heroes are the ones that have grown the most.\(^{51}\) To measure the growth of a hero, I will ask the following questions:

- Has the hero learned something that has influenced their actions later in the piece?
- What does the hero say that reflects the lesson that they have learned?

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\(^{48}\) Thomas, 24.  
\(^{49}\) Thomas, 193.  
\(^{50}\) Thomas, 194.  
\(^{51}\) Vogler and Montez, 31.
A hero can also be identified by how active a character is in advancing a storyline. The most easily identifiable heroes are the ones whose wills and desires drive the story the most. 52 In measuring the activeness of a character, I will ask:

- How much have they contributed to the overall plot?
- What have they uniquely done to influence a major outcome of the story?

Sacrifice is an aspect of the hero’s actions which makes them appealing to audiences. It means that they are brave, which is a key trait of an effective hero. 53 I will ask:

- What has the hero sacrificed?
- Was the sacrifice useful/did it move the plot forward?
- Is the sacrifice justifiable?

The most identifiable function of a hero is involvement with death. It is often connected with sacrifice. An event involving death is also considered one of the pivotal moments of the Hero’s Journey arc. It is the price that heroes pay for wherever their actions have taken them. 54 Measuring this function often ties to the measurement of sacrifice. I will ask:

- Has the hero experienced death? If so, in what capacity, and how has it affected their actions?
- What price(s) has the hero paid?

The last function of a hero is the presence of character flaws, which a character ideally overcomes throughout the arc of the story. This is important as an element that humanizes fictional characters, and relates to audience identification. 55 This function often ties into the idea

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52 Vogler and Montez, 31.
53 Vogler and Montez, 31.
54 Vogler and Montez, 32.
55 Vogler and Montez, 33.
of audience identification. Flaws are essential for characters to be relatable to audiences because it makes them seem more real, more human. I will ask:

- What kind of flaws does the character have as a hero?
- How do these flaws impact their decision making?
- Are these flaws ever addressed and/or do they change?

**Character Analysis:**

In order to analyze the dramatic function of the hero, I will complete a simple character analysis can also be done based on the actual “text” of the film. “Text” in this sense includes not only spoken words, but images and visual patterns established in the film. This character analysis process is based on a technique frequently used in theatre and performance studies to better understand how a character is presented in a piece and what purpose they serve. For this project, I will perform a character analysis of Rose Tico from *TLJ* using the following questions:

- What do others say about her?
- What does she say about herself?
- Does what she say match with what she actually does? If not, where do those differences occur?
- How is she physically described and depicted?
- What is her main objective?
  - How does she achieve this objective?
  - What are her motivations to obtain this objective?

These questions will help clarify the evidence provided in the text of the film supply a solid understanding from which to draw any other conclusions about the character and the impact of the film.
Analysis and Results

What is Her Main Objective? How Does She Achieve It?

Rose’s main objective in this film is to save the Resistance, contribute towards the greater good of the galaxy, and to help others. This is shown through her actions and things that she says throughout the film. When we first meet Rose, our first clue as to Rose’s values and objective in the film comes from speaking to Finn about his acts of heroism from the previous film, *The Force Awakens* (FA). Rose quotes her sister Paige, saying,

"Rose, that's a real hero. Know right from wrong….and don't run away when it gets hard," she said.\(^{56}\)

This quote is the foundation for understanding Rose’s character, especially given the larger context of her circumstances. Rose is a maintenance worker for the Resistance, usually not involved in the central action of the films. Her sister, Paige, died at the beginning of this film as the Resistance fighter that sacrificed herself to take out the First Order’s dreadnought, a ship used by the First Order to destroy stars and planets with ease. Rose is grieving over this loss when we see her for the first time. These words seem to be the guiding value which she holds herself to throughout the film, especially now that her sister is gone. Paige seems to have fulfilled the definition of what a “real hero” is, through sacrificing herself and not running away despite knowing the consequences. This makes her definition of a hero seem all the more important to Rose, and is why she clings to this idea throughout her own journey. She emphasizes this again in her conversation with Finn, as she says:

You know… Just this morning, I had to stun three people who were trying to jump ship in this escape pod… They were running away.\(^{57}\)

\(^{56}\) *Star Wars*, 39:30.

\(^{57}\) *Star Wars*, 39:50.
“Running away” goes directly against the idea of heroism that Rose has already laid out for the audience. However, a moment after she says this, Rose realizes that Finn had been about to leave the fleet via an escape pod, which she interprets as desertion. She immediately stuns him without pause, showing her willingness to act upon this value of heroism.

The next main thing that happens in Rose’s storyline is mostly exposition. As she is taking Finn to the brig for desertion, he shares information about how the First Order is able to track them through light speed, explaining his reasons for wanting to leave. They concoct a plan to disable the First Order’s tracking abilities by sneaking onto their ship. They enlist Poe Dameron, a top Resistance pilot, for assistance in their plan. In the end, they discover that their best chance to get onto the First Order ship is to find a master codebreaker on the planet Canto Bight. So, Finn, Rose, and BB-8 start their journey and mission to save the Resistance.

As they are about to land on Canto Bight, Rose describes that she has heard stories about the planet:

It’s a terrible place, filled with the worst people in the galaxy.58

This line provides insight into the different perspectives of Finn and Rose, especially contrasted sharply to the immediate depiction of the planet. The next shots show a luxurious, glitzy town, marked by casinos, high-rolllers, and expensive everything, with beings from all over the galaxy. People are gambling, drinking, laughing, smiling, and seem to be enjoying themselves immensely. It is here that we see a divergence between how Rose and Finn each view the planet. Finn sees the planet as decadent and delightful, full of everything that could possibly be included in the “good life.” Rose, however, sees this planet as terrible due to the inequity she knows exists in the galaxy and thus believes that these are the worst people in the galaxy. Finn is

58 Star Wars, 53:30.
running around the casino in Canto Bight, smiling and filled with glee: “This place is great!” This is harshly contrasted by Rose, standing in the casino with a frown, repulsed by the shallowness of the people on the planet. She watches with disdain, showing that she is not as enthused with the place as her counterpart. After searching for the codebreaker and exploring a bit, they observe something reminiscent of horse races, but with creatures called Fathiers. Finn asks Rose why she hates the planet so much, as it seems so wonderful and beautiful. The exchange that follows gives some backstory and more motivations for why Rose acts the way she does:

Rose: Look closer. My sister and I grew up in a poor mining system. The First Order stripped our ore to finance its military... then shelled us to test their weapons. They took everything we had. And who do you think these people are? There's only one business in the galaxy that'll get you this rich.
Finn: War.
Rose: Selling weapons to the First Order. I wish I could put my fist through this whole lousy, beautiful town.

During this exchange, Finn looks through some binoculars to see the Fathiers being whipped and beaten by their owners, and observes some children trying to stop them and getting beaten in the process. This scene draws parallels to Rose describing her own childhood, and the formative circumstances of it that made her who she is in the present moment. It emphasizes her lower socio-economic level, as well as her close relationship with her sister. She has been through a lot of trauma at the hands of the First Order and her life has been hard. She dislikes Canto Bight and the people here because she sees them as the ones who essentially financed her difficult childhood and who are fostering the evil in the galaxy. She doesn’t find Canto Bight beautiful because it’s just a gilded sham, using luxury to cover up the extreme costs of others. This scene shows what people tend to value as the best things in life juxtaposed to the costs of

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59 Star Wars, 54:00.
60 Star Wars, 56:00.
what the de-privileged people experience, such as herself. Canto Bight as a whole, and Rose’s anger at the people on the planet, serve as part of a critique on capitalism that is reflected in contemporary Western culture. Since rich people on Canto Bight are an institutionally favored population, Rose’s struggle against this is noteworthy as part of her character, as well as in the way it connects to larger real life themes. Her desire to help people in a similar situation that she found herself in as a child makes her presence in the Resistance make sense. The Resistance is there to help people being oppressed by the First Order, and that is what Rose really wants to do.

Later on Canto Bight, just as they had spotted the codebreaker in the casino, Rose and Finn get arrested for parking their shuttle on the beach, ending up in a jail cell with a new character, DJ. As they are contemplating what to do next, DJ offers to help them on their mission, but they decline. DJ then proceeds to break them all out of their cell, and the three escape, DJ going a different way than Finn and Rose. The two of them end up in the stable area where the creatures from earlier, the Fathiers, were being held. They run into some of the children from earlier who had tried to help the Fathiers, likely orphans, and Finn and Rose reveal that they are part of the Resistance. The children end up helping them escape, with the use of the Fathiers. When the guards chasing Finn and Rose arrive, the children release all the Fathiers from their stalls, with Rose and Finn on the back of one. What ensues is destruction of the city as Rose, Finn, and the herd of Fathiers are chased through the town, leading in their eventual escape outside the established city. After they escape, the following exchange takes place:

Finn: It was worth it, though. To tear up that town, make ’em hurt.
Rose: Takes saddle and harness off the creature. Go. Now it’s worth it.

Though helping the creatures was not part of her initial plan on Canto Bight, it became important to her as time went on. Going back to her statement that she’d like to “put her fist” through the town, she technically has done this through the disruption and destruction caused by
the creatures roaming wildly in the casino and in other parts of the city. However, it was not done maliciously or with the intent to disrupt the lives of the elite for her own selfish purposes. It was first and foremost a way for them to all escape. Then it became about helping the creatures, serving her larger goal to help those less fortunate and those enslaved by the rich.

Eventually Rose and Finn get picked up by BB-8 and DJ in a ship to get off the planet and back on track to disable the First Order’s tracker. Rose’s impact on Canto Bight is important to understanding her character’s decisions for the rest of the film. She helps free the creatures that were being abused and misused by the greedy patrons of the planet, something highly motivated from her own childhood. Rose also starts to help Finn see the costs of the war, through revealing information about her childhood and the gilded version of society on Canto Bight. She also uses the rescuing of the creatures to paint the picture that salvation is what is important is to being successful in the war with the First Order.

While the characters are on their way to the First Order’s main ship, DJ agrees to help Finn and Rose get onboard. However, he requires payment, and suggests Rose’s necklace is worth something as a deposit. This necklace has been an indispensable token that reminds her of her sister, as they had matching pieces. Rose hands it over immediately, though earlier scenes imply that the necklace holds deep meaning to her. This demonstrates Rose’s willingness to sacrifice pieces of herself and things that have personal value for the greater good of the Resistance.

Although the characters are able to get onboard the ship and get very close to succeeding in their mission, they fail at the last moment and are captured by the First Order. This forces the Resistance to continue with the escape plan that Admiral Holdo had been planning the entire film: escaping in small pods to the planet Crait where there was an old Resistance/Rebellion
station. Later, Finn and Rose are shown, captured and about to be executed by some Stormtroopers. It is revealed that DJ cut a deal with the First Order by providing them with information on the Resistance’s escape plan. The First Order proceeds to fire at the escape pods, dooming the Resistance. Right as Finn and Rose are about to be killed, Holdo flies the Resistance craft at light speed directly at the First Order’s main ship, causing disarray and explosions. This gives Finn and Rose, as well as the escaping Resistance, opportunity to escape.

Finn, Rose, and BB-8 escape in a ship down to the Resistance base on Crait. The Resistance hatches a last-ditch effort plan to stall the First Order until their distress signal is met by allies. Finn and Rose both end up in skim speeders, small rusty ships, in the attempt to take out the First Order’s cannon, which is threatening to open the stronghold of the base and leave the Resistance to be killed by the First Order. As time goes on, Poe realizes that the goal of taking out the cannon will only result in too many losses to justify a plan that may not even work. He calls off the speeders, but Finn refuses to listen.

Rose: Finn? It's too late! Don't do this!
Finn: No! I won't let them win!
Rose: No! Finn, listen to Poe! We have to retreat!61

This is significant for Rose, and directly affects her next actions. Rose lost her sister in the first battle of the film, where the cost of sacrifice outweighed the personal benefit, and this has influenced how her character has acted the entire film. Rose recognizes the situation to be similar, but Finn, her closest friend and companion throughout this film, now refuses to listen. He is going to sacrifice himself, and Rose is going to lose someone else that she cares about deeply. She does not want this to happen, which is why she crashes her own speeder into his, throwing them both out of line of the cannon at the last moment. After the crash, Finn is the first

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61 Star Wars, 2:04:20.
to recover, and runs from his speeder to hers, where Rose appears to be unconscious. When he
gets there, he says, “Why would you do that? Huh? I was almost there. Why would you stop
me?” Finn cannot understand why Rose would sacrifice both of them, and the rest of the
Resistance, when he was so close to stopping them from using the cannon to get to the rest of the
Resistance in the mine. It goes back to his line about “not letting [the First Order] win.” It also
connects back to the destruction on Canto Bight, and how that was a good thing from his
perspective because he made them pay. This is how Finn seems to think the world operates, and
how balance is achieved. Rose has other ideas:

I saved you, dummy. That's how we're gonna win. Not fighting what we hate,
saving what we love.

This is the most succinct and explicit description of Rose’s whole objective throughout
the film. We saw it through her sister’s words about what makes a hero, and how it has informed
her decisions. Here, she finally verbalizes her own iteration of what she believes, still rooted in
that same value as before, but applied in a different way based on her own experiences. It
happened on Canto Bight: destroying the town wasn’t the payoff she wanted until she was able
to help the creatures escape. Rose saved something she loved instead of fighting what she hated.
This central objective recurs, with her literally saving Finn from sacrificing himself. She saved
what she loved instead of letting him fight what he so desperately hates. This is the lesson and
the purpose she believes in and is trying to teach others.

What are Her Motivations to Obtain Her Objective?

One significant factor that informs Rose’s decisions is the death of her sister at the
beginning of the film. Her sister is the only family mentioned in the film, and it is probable that
the two of them were orphans. Before her sister’s death, they discuss what a true hero is. Once
her sister dies fulfilling that role of a hero, Rose clings very closely to these ideas of heroism:
knowing right from wrong and never giving up. Rose lets herself be guided by these values. This is why she is so harsh on Finn when they first meet and he looks like he is trying to run away. This is why she continues to fight for the Resistance, even though her mission with Finn has a lot of challenges and does not go according to the ideal plan. This is the formative belief under which she is operating, which is molded more specifically to herself and her own experiences by the end of the movie when she explicitly states her objective to save what she loves in order to win.

Rose’s own difficult childhood is another motivating factor of her character. We learn during their brief stint on Canto Bight that Rose came from a very poor mining system which had been exploited by the First Order. She grew up as part of a de-privileged population and she has experienced how difficult life can be when not part of a group that is in power. When she sees the individuals on Canto Bight that are exploited, such as the children and the creatures, she is motivated to help them. In addition to this being a morally good decision, it is personally based in her own life experiences. They remind her of the real people like herself that are affected by what happens in the battle between the First Order and the Resistance. It is also a key factor as to why she is working with the Resistance at all and why the Resistance needs to continue to fight for hope and peace in the galaxy. Both Rose’s difficult childhood and the death of her sister are ways that Rose has experienced firsthand the price of war and conflict, something that motivates her to continue fighting to eventually reach peace in the galaxy.

Is Rose Tico Really a Hero?

Rose Tico fulfills the criteria of the Hero archetype presented by Vogler and Montez, despite what some popular audiences might believe. She meets all of the functional requirements that are necessary of a Hero in order to be effective in this narrative form. Since she is a
successful hero based on these measures, it can be inferred that the reasons for negative audience backlash mostly stem from larger societal issues regarding race and gender.

**Audience Identification**

The first category that a Hero must fill is that of audience identification. Audience identification is in a large part the ways in which a character is able to bring audiences into their world and help them understand it from the character’s perspective. Within the field of Theatre and Performance Studies, this takes the form of audience Reception Studies, which asserts that how an audience identifies with a character or a world depends on their own identity, drawing from their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. This can be used to understand real life reactions when looking at how the movie was received. Certain groups of *Star Wars* fans, for example, found that the character of Rose was a “completely uninteresting and useless character,” in addition to her being “not very attractive either.”62 All of these responses are rooted in the identities of the people watching the movie, and the way that they believe society should function. Rose, apparently, did not fulfill the requirements that they felt she should have, whether that is being visually appealing or influencing the plot in particular ways. Despite the ambiguity and variance that comes with subjective responses to the film, there are aspects of Rose’s character to measure based on what is actually presented in the film.

To be successful in audience identification, the character must have personality traits that audiences can name and relate to; an identifiable driving force; flaws; and complexity. Although these things are generally taken for granted as “universal”, there is tension in the practice of truly understanding them as such. As seen in the real life backlash that the actress received for her performance as Rose Tico, personality traits that would otherwise be valued in straight, white,

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62 “R/StarWars - Did Anyone Else Absolutely Despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?”
male characters like Luke Skywalker, are not valued in Rose, a woman of color who is not
typically “feminine”. This relates back to the dominant American ideology of white patriarchy.
Rose Tico is neither white nor male; already based on appearance, she does not fit into American
society’s favored populations. Therefore, when audiences make judgements regarding her
carder, personality, and flaws, the characteristics that she possesses that would be seen as
“normal” for a white male character no longer have that universally accepted connotation.
Therefore, when discussing Rose Tico’s “universal” qualities and traits that should make her
accessible to audiences, it is addressing traits that would normally fit into the accepted
framework of what a heroic character should be, despite the fact that audiences may or may not
agree with this assessment. Some of Rose’s identifiable traits based on her own actions and
words in the film include intelligence, a willingness to help others, compassion, loyalty, and
perseverance. These are all traits that society generally tends to recognize as “good” and
desirable. She displays these traits through her actions and words in the film, and are deeply
connected to her main driving force. Rose’s core driving force is, for this project, considered to
be the same as her “objective,” which is: to help save the Resistance; to help other people in the
galaxy who are struggling; to save others. These three all work together. By saving the
Resistance, she is helping other people in the galaxy who are living under the oppressive First
Order, and saving others, both in the actual Resistance and across the galaxy.

The final part of assessing Rose’s ability to connect with the audience is through how
“complex” she is. For this project, complexity is understood as the amount of variation that a
character shows throughout their journey, as portrayed through how they react to situations and
how they understand their own situation. The idea is that the more complex a character is, the
more an audience will be able to identify with them. Based on this, Rose is considered complex
due to her varying emotional states throughout the film, and her own self-reflection and ability to adapt. A key example of this is how she sees her own place in the Resistance, and how she acts on the understanding of that identity. When audiences first meet Rose, she is grieving over the loss of her sister and is star struck in the presence of Finn, someone she sees as a hero. However, she is able to quickly overcome this sense of awe once she thinks Finn is trying to escape, and adjusts to a more hardened figure who is able to stun people with ease. Later, despite her conviction that Finn was deserting the fleet, he convinces her that there are larger things at stake, and her desire to help the Resistance wins out as she is roped into the plan to save the fleet. She is able to adapt in this way based on self-reflection similarly in many moments throughout the film. Rose gives the audience a very clear window into her perspective of the world and how it affects herself and those around her, thus she is considered a complex character.

**Growth**

The second criteria of a successful Hero is that the character shows growth from the beginning of the story to the end. This is often based on what the character learns along the way. One example of this is that Rose has a more sophisticated understanding of what it means to be a “hero” by the end of the movie, which is different from where she started. She begins with the core idea that a hero is someone who never runs away when things are difficult. This could be taken as literally not running away. However, it can also mean never backing down from a fight, never re-evaluating a plan when it hasn’t gone accordingly, and always fighting someone despite the costs. She demonstrates throughout the course of the film that this idea of perseverance can also manifest itself as *not* sacrificing oneself; heroes can back down when it is in the best interest for the group. When she saves Finn from crashing his speeder into the cannon at the end of the film, he doesn’t understand why she stopped him. He had been fulfilling that task of heroes, not
running away or backing down even though he would have lost his life. However, she thwarts his plan to sacrifice himself. She shows that even though it might be seen as “backing down” or “giving up” the only plan the Resistance had at the time for survival, it was really the best course of action because Finn needed to survive. Saving Finn (and prioritizing love) was more important than [potentially] killing the First Order (being totally consumed by hate despite the costs). Heroes can still be truly heroic without following the “ride or die” mentality that Rose understood it to be at the beginning of the film. This is the fundamental change that Rose undergoes throughout the film.

Rose also appears to overcome her “awkwardness” that is first seen at the beginning of the film and finds her place with the Resistance. She grows from being a nameless maintenance worker to a key fighter and part of the Resistance’s mission. She finds purpose and value in helping Finn and comes into her own, identifies her own values and beliefs, and acts upon them through her mission with Finn to shut down the First Order’s tracking abilities. She goes from an awkward woman hiding behind pipes who gets her words jumbled up when talking to “heroes,” to confidently saving Finn and the Resistance with conviction and becoming a hero herself.

There is potential argument here to say that Rose does not show real “growth” in this film. She does not show a complete change in any of her previously held beliefs, nor does she overcome any huge and identifiable obstacle. One explanation to this is the unfinished and episodic nature of the Star Wars films. Since there is still another film yet to be released in this same trilogy, which presumably will continue to follow Rose’s storyline and development as a character, her growth and journey has not yet reached completion. Because of this, she may show less tangible “growth” in this film compared to other characters. However, Rose still demonstrates significant growth from beginning to end of the film.
**Activeness**

The next category of analysis for Heroes is the idea of activeness: how much a character contributes to the overall plot of a story and the impacts they uniquely make. This is demonstrated by her actions throughout the film. On her journey to help save the Resistance by stopping the tracker on the First Order ship, Rose saves the Fathiers on Canto Bight and teaches Finn about the intricacies and cost of the war, and later saves Finn’s life by crashing her speeder into him. Overall, her contributions help move the plot forward, especially the parts of the movie that focused on the fate of the Resistance. This is somewhat unique for a female character in a film who is not necessarily the main protagonist. Rey is objectively the main protagonist of the film, as her journey changes the most and has the biggest impact in shaping later events of the films. Even though Rose is not the protagonist, she contributes a significant portion to the plot, and influences to the way other characters change. This effectively makes her more of a heroic figure, rather than a sidekick.

**Sacrifice**

Sacrifice is a key component of identifying strong Heroes, and Rose demonstrates her willingness to sacrifice things throughout the film. One example, which is both symbolic and physical, is when she gives up her necklace as “payment” to DJ for the success of their mission. The necklace was the one thing she still had that reminded her of her recently deceased sister, the only family she mentions having. It was the symbolic source of her courage and inspiration. However, when DJ demanded a “deposit” for his services in helping them, she immediately gives it up in order to make sure the mission kept going as planned. She sacrificed that last symbol of her family and connection in order to keep the Resistance’s survival an achievable priority.
The second main question of sacrifice in Rose’s storyline is the end of the film, when she crashes into Finn’s speeder to save him. Some argue that she sacrifices “the odds” of the Resistance staying on Crait alive in the face of the First Order. However, it’s not actually sacrificing the survival of the Resistance to save Finn; rather, she has forced Finn to not sacrifice himself for the Resistance’s best chance at survival. She sees the cost Finn’s action, and wants to prevent Finn from making needless sacrifices that will not outweigh the benefits. In doing so, she also notably sacrifices herself. Crashing into Finn’s speeder was a life-threatening choice on her part, and she put herself back into harm’s way in order to save him. She is also physically harmed by this sacrifice, as she is unconscious after the collision. The film closes with her still unconscious, emphasizing her sacrifice.

While Rose makes tangible sacrifices that move the plot forward, not all audiences are able to “relate to” or appreciate what she does. Some audiences were angry that she “sacrificed” the good of the Resistance in order to save him. Others did not see the value in her saving Finn more than just a way to keep his character in the next film of the trilogy. However, it is unclear that Finn’s sacrifice actually would have made a difference. Rose’s dialogue about saving Finn, is one of the vital things that connects many of the subplots and themes throughout TLJ as well as the larger Star Wars franchise. It connects to Luke and Leia’s lines about the Resistance moving forward. Rose also shows audiences how they may accomplish this: through saving what they love.

**Dealing with Death**

The next measure of a hero is how they deal with death and the prices that they pay as a result of their actions. Rose deals with death from her first appearance in the film: grieving over her sister. This death is the driving force behind Rose’s actions and beliefs throughout the rest of
the film. She wants to make her sister proud, and thus is going to be the hero that her sister
wanted her and taught her to be. Rose is going to hold herself to that standard of what a hero
should look like, which will become one of her core beliefs that will grow into something shaped
by her own experiences. Her sister’s death is a source of grief, as well as an inspiration and
strength from which she draws throughout the film.

**Character Flaws**

Finally, there is the issue of flaws. For this project, flaws are not necessarily going to be
based on value judgements or morality, such as asking if Rose is a “good” or “bad” character
based on if she is greedy or manipulative. Rather, the focus is on the flaws she presents within
the characterization and archetype of the hero. These flaws are seen as important to audiences
because they help make the character seem more realistic and accessible.

The main flaw that Rose has based on her actions in the film is that she sometimes has a
lack of understanding of nuances between good and bad. She tends to trust in the dichotomy of
good and evil, as presented by the Resistance versus the First Order, which is not always
beneficial for making smart decisions. The main example of this is the relationship between
herself and DJ, and how trust is negotiated between the two of them throughout their story arc.
At first, Rose is very skeptical of him and sees him as part of the sleazy, “evil” group in the
galaxy. As he helps them over time, she learns to trust him, especially after he gives her necklace
back to her. This seemed to her to be a sign that he was officially on the “good” side. However,
this trust is betrayed in the end as DJ sells out the Resistance and their escape plan when they are
captured by the First Order. Many members of the Resistance are killed because of the lack of
judgement and falsely-based trust that Rose places in DJ, making real consequences as a result of
this flaw. Despite trust, both in her view of the world and her judgement of others, usually being
considered a desirable quality in a hero, in this case it proves to be a detriment that harms her overall objective in the end, which was to save the Resistance. Therefore, the presence of heroic flaws in her character satisfy this criteria of the hero archetype dramatic functions.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of the character Rose Tico in *TLJ* identifies what American society still values. Through understanding the character’s actions and motivations, it is clear that Rose makes a huge impact in this film, and embodies a lot of qualities that popular culture would generally deem admirable and desirable. She demonstrates characteristics of a loving, kind, and persevering nature, which support her driving force which is a desire to save the things she loves. She fulfills each quality of the dramatic functions of the hero archetype, making her a successful hero by all accounts.

Yet, fans did not seem to appreciate all of these qualities. This discord reflects the larger issues American society is facing in regards to how we perceive race and gender, how we talk about equality, and how we put these ideas into practice. America is still dominated by the ideology of favoring white, financially successful men, and the character of Rose Tico provides a strong example for a female character who does not fit into that dominant framework. She is essentially the antithesis of white patriarchal capitalistic-driven America; a poor woman of color whose identity is not favored by the dominant ideology in place. Not only does she not fit into the prevailing structure of American society, but Rose Tico is portrayed as a more realistic woman, rather than a male fantasy. Instead of adhering to any of the typical action/science fiction heroine tropes who find strength through their sexuality and physical appearance, or who justify their strength and desirable characteristics based on being some sort of exception to the rule, Rose defies these categories. She is directly criticized for not being “attractive” enough. Her
character, a mechanic, has no inherent special skills or status that gives her exceptional strength. Rather, she is a mechanic with strong convictions, which drives her to fight for what she believes. She is an average human in this fantastic world, a character who possesses no knowledge of the Force or regal command, yet she is able to be a real hero, not qualified or lessened by any “exceptional” reasoning. Despite society’s expectations, Rose is a woman of color and an unapologetic hero whose presence in the story makes a difference to how people understand and think about real life. Representation matters, and Rose Tico is here to prove that.
Appendix – Sample Reddit Thread

Reddit, the front page of the internet.

Did anyone else absolutely despise Rose Tico in Star Wars: The Last Jedi?

96 points (94% upvoted)

https://redd.it/7k247d

15 Dec 2017

Want to add to the discussion?
Post a comment!

CREATE AN ACCOUNT

[-] matrix4neo 103 points 1 year ago
Despise no. Cringed whenever she was on screen yes. They gave more mention of her sister than Han got.

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**Auzeth** 46 points 1 year ago

Right! Actually that's true. I don't have problem with Paige but, come on. The war is sacrifice. I felt like if the director was trying to force the interest in her story and...dude, that was so fucking cliche. The lady is an awful character in my opinion.

'1 saved the slaves, i saved the animals, i saved the Fynn' I felt like: 'Stop it, Rose. And die, please'...

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**mharnish** 5 points 11 months ago

I truly hope they cut her screen time in the next movie.

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**ckahn** 76 points 1 year ago

As a character, she seemed to violate the "show, don't tell" practice of storytelling. She seemed to be there to tell Finn (and the audience) what to think and feel. Very heavy-handed storytelling.

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**Melchisheh** 67 points 1 year ago

She has absolutely no reason to be in the movie. She doesn't contribute anything meaningful, and she's just a completely uninteresting and useless character. I'm still racking my brain trying to understand why she got a third of the movie's run time.

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**Prancing_Lansing** 63 points 1 year ago

Diversity

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**StCeul** 15 points 1 year ago

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She got a third of the movie because Lucasfilms and Disney do not care about the quality of Star Wars, just ploys to sell tickets.

I wouldn't say despise. I just think she had no purpose and could easily be replaced with an established character like Poe, Snap, Jess, or the A-wing pilot (since she’s a hero in battlefront)

Honestly, we are supposed to believe this character lost her family and homeworld to the empire and has a complex background full of loss and anger towards her oppressor. Instead we see a mundane and basic person whose moral code is simplistic. Not to mention, someone with her backstory should be much more hardened and jaded by the violence and loss.

Cannot stand Rose. Made me bored of Finn with that terrible subplot. I’m sure her sister would have been a much more dynamic character should their roles have been reversed.

I think she is the worst character ever. Of course, Jar Jar came to mind as worst, but with his personality aside, at least the race of Gun Guns is just some random alien race that isn't actually
good nor bad. (He is a close number two)  
Plus, at least he's an alien.

She was on the same level of acting as Charlene Yi from House. She can't act

K thought they were the same person. Why does Hollywood need two of them?

I liked her, but I did find one of her scenes to be very forced (y'all know which one I'm talking about).

Dintt hate her character at all, but I do resent that she appears to have ruined the possibility of a Rey/Finn romance.

What did you like about her? What did she add to the movie it needed?

I didn't say I liked her, I said I didn't hate her. She served her purpose, which was as the everyman character there to show that you don't have to be a soldier or a superhuman to make a difference. I don't have any strong feelings about the
character other than what I said before.

Alright. Fair enough. I outright dislike her.

I think Finn already fit the "everyman" role. He was just a stormtrooper unlike Rey super exeliterated Jedi and Poe best pilot in the galaxy.

According to the canon prequel book for "The Force Awakens," Finn is actually very talented and is the best Stormtrooper in his group. His janitor line is misleading and I'm not sure why they haven't cleared this up in the movies.

I honestly don't care what cannon is. All Disney did was purchase the franchise and write the new "cannon"

So... anyone who has the money to buy the rights can make "cannon" its a useless word. cannon to me is what feels right and makes sense.

The first time I saw it I didn't mind her that much but the second time she almost pissed me off. I get the Jar Jar comparisons. But she's a cute love interest for Finn and now Rey might actually turn her attention more towards Kylo so in that aspect, Rose is cool.

She just felt pointless and useless to the story. This is what the EU is for

Despise is a really strong word. I mean she didn't seem to have a point but I didn't despise her. Why do you?

She's just unbearably annoying. She crashes into Finn before he hits the cannon and then proceeds to say "I saved you". She was a pipe - worker aboard the mother ship and is for some reason promoted to a higher level of authority for no apparent reason. She's such an unnecessary addition to the movie also. Most of all she's just really irritating.
When did she learn to pilot or do any of the things not related to her being bodyguard to the escape pods? It doesn't even make sense for her to be flying a speeder.

What's your point? She did save him.

He had fully committed to destroying the cannon with the clear intention of sacrificing himself to save others. She literally "saved" him from himself. It's the fact that she states "I saved you" that was the most annoying.

But what annoys you about it? He asks why she stopped him and she answers him. The statement she makes is true.

But she is "saving" him from something he clearly has all intention of doing? She literally puts the lives of all the people in the base in jeopardy and then acts like a hero about it.

No she does not put anyone's lives in jeopardy. I'm starting to feel like a broken record saying this on so many threads, but Finn's sacrifice was not going to succeed.

Okay so maybe stop looking for threads that specifically dislike rose tico? How do we know it wasn't going to succeed and if that's true why didn't he just move out of the way himself.
Okay well that’s your opinion on the scene and that’s fine but that doesn’t mean that’s it definitely right and my own interpretation of the scene painted rose so negatively. Even if what your saying is correct she deserved to die for that gay speech and saving what you love.

She could’ve been utilized better. Personally, I think she should’ve been used with Poe instead of Finn and been the catalyst for his character arc. I would’ve loved watching Rose in grief, calling out Poe for his recklessness and getting good people like her sister killed.

Or maybe even telling him, "Look at these people. They all look up at you. They want to be you. And trying to pull stunts like you is getting them killed."

I second this, Poe and Rose’s personalities and approaches to the meaning of the resistance are very different so having them interact would have been an interesting arc.

You are not alone, my friend. Most annoying little bitch in the film

Nope. She was cool

How much did Disney pay you to say this?

I actually paid them about $30 to form this opinion.

You got ripped off.

Kys.
[-] SpiderPidge  2 points 9 months ago
Yeah. She is worse than Jar Jar.
permalink embed save

[-] dravenaus  2 points 9 months ago
She's stupid, and not very attractive either.
permalink embed save

[-] Mothra57  10 points 1 year ago
I found her to be very likable and thought she had great chemistry with Finn, she was really cute.
permalink embed save

[-] Hingehead  25 points 1 year ago
Did Katherine Kennedy threaten your family for you to say this?
permalink embed save parent

[-] dapub5  2 points 1 year ago
No, i thought she was great!
permalink embed save

[-] Hingehead  19 points 1 year ago
There are opinions and then there are facts. Your opinion is invalidated because the FACT is Rose sucks so bad. Liking and disliking Jar Jar Bink is a debatable opinion, the same cannot be said for Rose.
permalink embed save parent

[-] dapub5  2 points 1 year ago
Interesting that you replied to a comment that is 45 DAYS OLD. Using your specific logic about opinions and facts, the FACT would be is that you are petty about a movie character. (By the way, loving or hating a character is very subjective)
permalink embed save parent

[-] Hingehead  15 points 1 year ago
What is also interesting is that you are also taking the time to reply to a comment made in a thread that is 45 days old. I am sorry, is there a statute of limitation of when I can reply to an older thread? As far as I am concerned, this thread is not locked until the 6 months is up and so I am free to speak my mind out.
You are correct about loving/hating a character being subjective, but there is a difference. Daniel Day Lewis's character in "There will be Blood" for example, I hate him as a person, but I don't hate his character, know why? Because his character was well written. There is a big difference between "I hate this character, because he is so evil and mean" vs" I hate this character because he is so poorly written".
I am not petty about anything, know why? Because I couldn't give two shit about TLJ ruining my life. I'll still complain, sure, but my life is not over either.
permalink embed save parent

[-] dapub5  2 points 1 year ago

I may disagree with most of what you are saying, but you and me are both human beings. So because of that, I wish you happiness and joy :)
Bibliography


Karlyn, Kathleen Rowe. *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*.


https://www.reddit.com/r/StarWars/comments/7k247d/did_anyone_else_absolutely_despise_rose_tico_in/.