

PLAYBILL

AMBASSADOR THEATRE

CHICAGO

THE MUSICAL

ROXIE ROCKS
CHICAGO!

SHIRVAIKAR
ANIKKA

LITTLE WOMEN

the musical



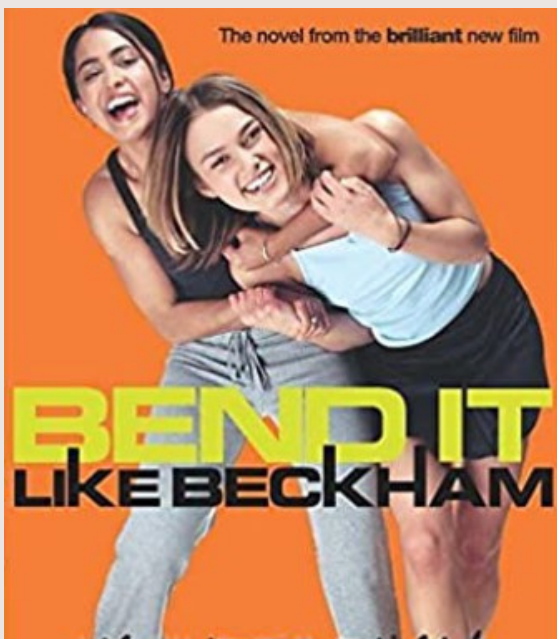
WOMEN

IN

FILM AND

THEATER

MAY 2022



WELCOME!

A N I N T R O D U C T I O N :

Film has always been something that interested me – the visual art almost always left me feeling complete. However, when I was in middle school, I learned about the Bechdel test. What is the Bechdel Test? Well, it is three simple questions that any viewer can ask themselves in regards to how women are represented in film. The three questions are:

- Are there at least two named female characters in this piece of work?
- Do those characters interact with each other?
- Do they talk about something other than a man?

(Feminist frequency, 0:20)

Seeing that so few of my childhood favorite movies actually passed the Bechdel test really upset me (especially the South Asian films, but that is a different topic all together). Women's representation in media is so important. It's not just women but also minorities and all the different levels of intersectionality.

Growing up, the different typecasts for anyone who was not white was so apparent, and that is only starting to get a little bit better recently.

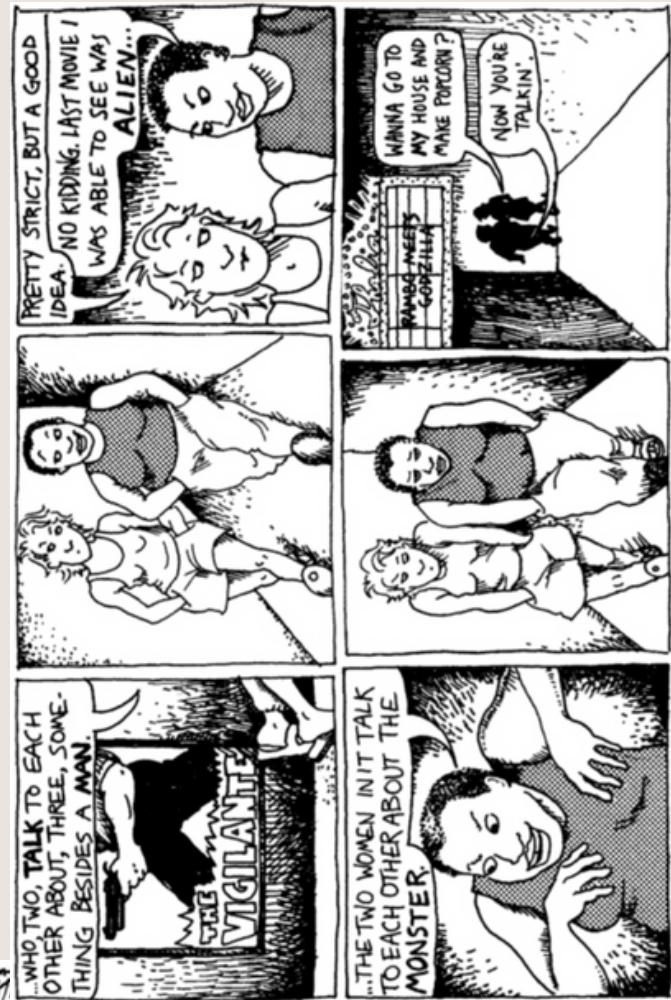
Throughout this 'zine, there will be short essays about different films and pieces of theater that passed the Bechdel test and also were extremely significant to people of color. Along with that, there will be quotes from creators and tons of fun little pictures and visual aids - I learned so much creating this zine and I hope you enjoy and learn as much as I did!

¹ Feministfrequency, director. The Bechdel Test for Women in Movies. YouTube, YouTube, 7 Dec. 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLF6sAAMb4s&list=PLF470CE6D6988DF23&index=7>. Accessed 29 May 2022.

THE HISTORY

Dykes To Watch Out For

In 1985, Alice Bechdel, an author and artist, mentioned it in her comic *Dykes To Watch Out For*. However, she has mentioned many times that the credit belongs to a friend of hers, Liz Wallace, for mentioning that fact that very rarely are these specific criteria met. In an interview with the Atlantic, she has mentioned that she would very much like to rename the test the Bechdel-Wallace Test. That very same article mentions that "The Bechdel test, after all, came from the very thing it's meant to celebrate: two women, talking about something other than men. The test's current name doesn't recognize that dialogue, though. It does not, actually, pass the Bechdel test."(Garber)¹The comic is below, so be sure to check it out!²



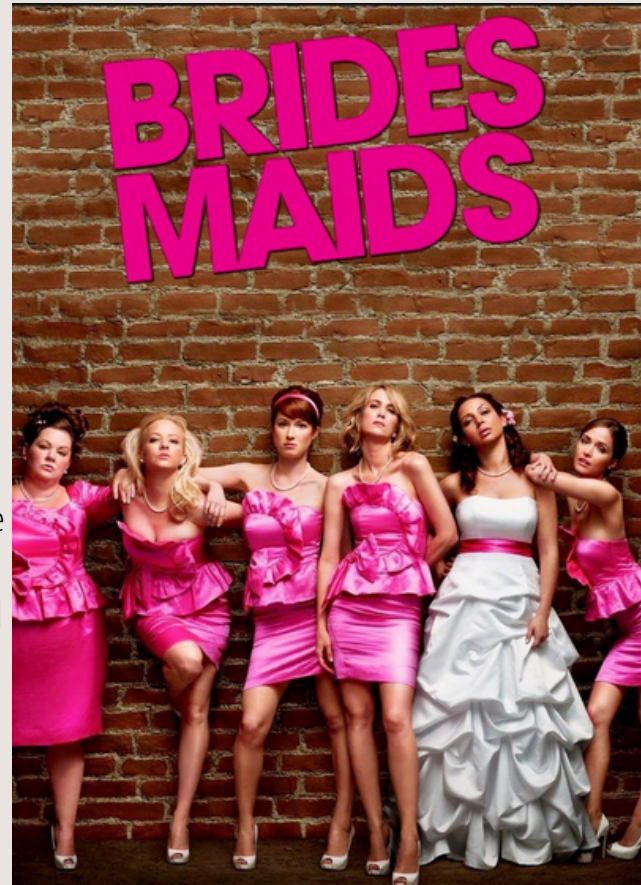
¹ Garber, Megan. "How the Standard for Women in Culture Became Known as the 'Bechdel Test!'" The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 25 Aug. 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/08/call-it-the-bechdel-wallace-test/402259/>.

² Caplan, Walker. "Read the 1985 Comic Strip That Inspired the Bechdel Test." Literary Hub, 26 Sept. 2021, <https://lithub.com/read-the-1985-comic-strip-that-inspired-the-bechdel-test/>.

MOVIES THAT PASSED

and how!

I actually didn't realize this passed the Bechdel-Wallace test until I really considered what the movie is about. While it is about a wedding, there is very little talk of boys and it's just about the drama that ensues with the bridesmaids. It has many named female characters who are all constantly interacting. Considering it now, all I can think of is how it embodies the *BITCH Manifesto*. Many of the characters have the personality and some have the physical appearance, but it's the fact that they are all themselves and celebrate that (in an albeit weird way) that really allows it to pass the test. In the words of Joreen, "Bitches are so damned independent and they have learned so well not to trust other women that it will be difficult for them to learn to even trust each other. This is what BITCH must teach them to do. Bitches have to learn to accept themselves as Bitches and to give their sisters the support they need to be creative Bitches." (Freeman, 7)



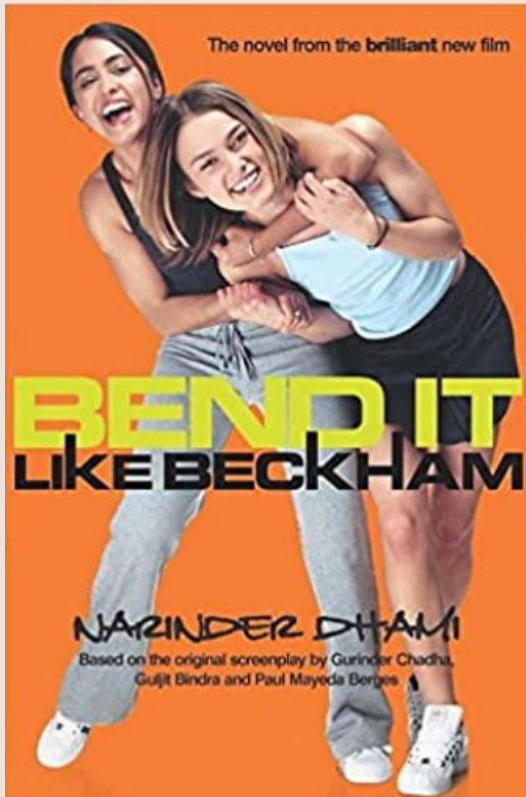
This is a pretty obvious one because it is based on a real-life story. It reflects real life problems and triumphs. It passes the test because it features multiple women (of color) consistently talking about topics that do not include men, besides to discuss sexism and racism done unto them by misogynistic men. In fact, the topic most talked about is math. This is once again really important for diversity's sake because the three leading women (and characters!) are black women. Black stereotypes, especially for women are often so oppressive – in A Black Feminist Statement by the Combahee River Collective, they talk about their beliefs, which include the fact that “it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered [their] specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression.” (Combahee River Collective, 3)

These women fought – and they are breaking the stereotypes that often fall upon black women in film (Mammy, Matriarch, Jezebel, etc).



MOVIES THAT PASSED

and how!



Both of the main characters are named – Jessie and Jules – and they are constantly talking. When they talk, they do have conversations about boys, but the majority of their conversations are about soccer and their families. In addition to them, there are a lot of other women who have supporting roles. On top of this, the diversity and intersectionality between many of these characters. Intersectionality is when a person belongs to many different minority groups. Jessie is both Sikh and a woman, and her best friend is Sikh and gay. This movie was released in 2003. Considering the time and the amount of inclusion is insane.

This movie, while it does include a small amount of romance that is vocalized, it has so many strong female characters, both main and supporting, whose main idea is surviving and protecting people they love. Katniss's relationship with Primrose is really beautiful because all Katniss cares about is protecting Primrose from the dangers of the world. They have conversations and through some are about boys, the majority are not. In addition to Primrose, Katniss takes on a sisterly relationship with Rue, plus she has so many conversations with her mother and many other essential female characters. The main love that is talked about in this movie is familial love and platonic relationships.



O'Callaghan, Lauren, et al. "The 25 Best Movies That Pass the Bechdel Test with Flying Colors." Gamesradar, GamesRadar+, 6 Apr. 2022, <https://www.gamesradar.com/best-movies-that-pass-the-bechdel-test/>.

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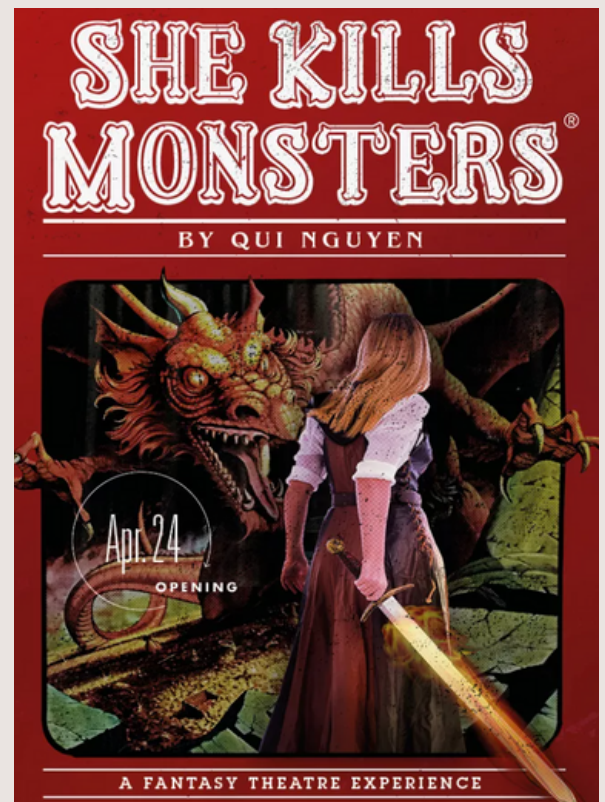
THEATER THAT PASSED

and how!



The only time men are really mentioned in this play is explaining why the women killed them and fighting over the lawyer. This musical is about two women on death row for killing off their romantic partners and, in one of their cases, her sister. There is a man who is set to defend both of them, but the two women are rivals and have multiple conversations together, not regarding the men around them. They also both consult the other women on the block and the whole story is both their trials. Eventually, despite both of them having a slight support system, both women – Roxie and Velma – realize that there is no one they can rely on but themselves, and they get themselves out of their trouble.

This is a story based off of Dungeons and Dragons. An older sister - Gabby - is trying to get to know her deceased younger sister - Tilly - through Tilly's Dungeons and Dragons module. There is romance since Gabby does have a boyfriend who shows up occasionally, and Gabby's best friend in real life talks a lot about relationships and romance, but within the game there is little talk of men who are not villains. Tilly was in the closet as a lesbian when she died and she really designed her game around that. All of the women and non-binary individuals are really bad-ass and strong. The majority of the conversations between them just has to do with completing their mission.



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THEATER THAT PASSED

and how!



Funnily enough, this is a story of Alice Bechdel's life, based off of her graphic novel autobiography. It is a story of her life and her tumultuous relationship with her father and her discovery of her sexuality. It includes really specific memories, like when she met her college girlfriend and her father not at all reacting to her coming out. There are more than two named female characters, and they rarely ever talk about men, and never about romantic relationships with them. In addition to this, it includes her father's relations with younger men and his almost predatorial ways. It's a really heavy show, but it definitely passes the Bechdel-Wallace test.

One of the most well known musicals of all time, and also one of the biggest spectacle pieces on Broadway today, this musical has two female leads who are named – Elphaba and Glinda, also known as the Evil Witch of the West and the Good Witch. The musical also has many other female characters and there is a romance factor but the main story is just the prequel to the popular children's story The Wizard of Oz. Within the musical, the majority of the songs have nothing to do with romantic love. In fact, one of the songs is literally about platonic loathing. The musical passes this test with flying colors because the main relationship the progresses is the platonic best friendship between Glinda and Elphaba.



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MOVIES THOUGHT TO HAVE PASSED *but do not pass*

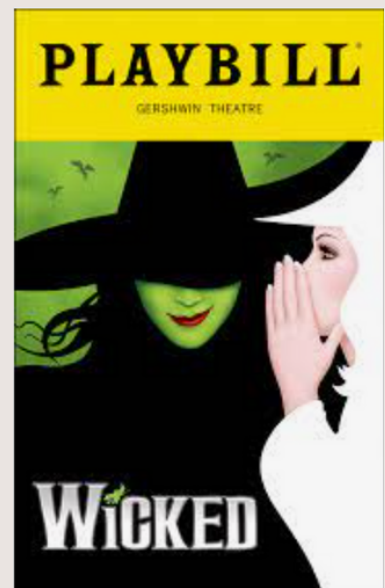
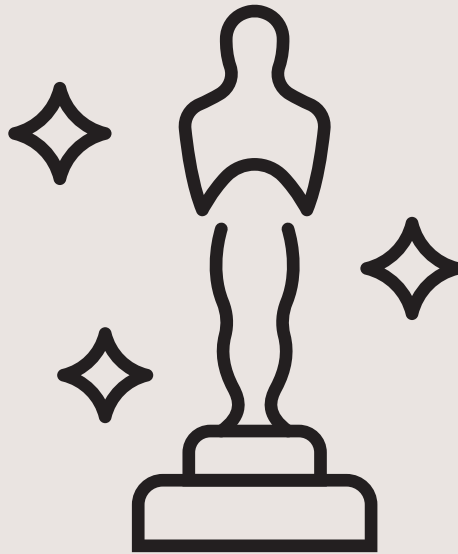
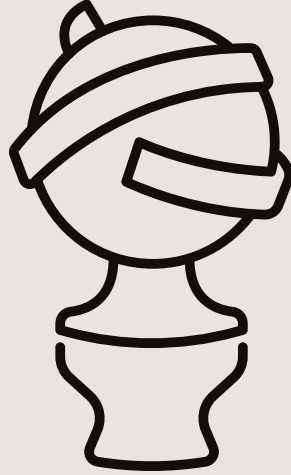
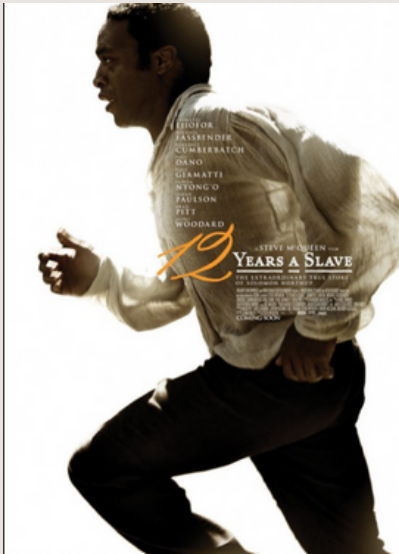


*Except Deathly
Hallows Part 1!*



BEHIND THE SCENES

Award Winners



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THANK YOU
for reading!