

Around the World in 80 Days: BBC adaptation sparks inclusive thinking.

Aurinko Mutsuddy reports the impact of the inclusive casting in the reimagining of Around the World in 80 Days.

In the early years of filmmaking, the industry preferred to hire Caucasian, male actors to play the dominant roles in films. However, this norm is fading away; the BBC had a recent contribution to this in its reimagining of Jules Verne's 'Around the World in 80 Days'. The series premiered on BBC One on the 26th December 2021. The film was produced in the UK, France, South Africa and Romania, perhaps illuminating the large diversity that now graces the film industry. The cast of this series included Ibrahim Koma, David Tennant and Leonie Benesch, who were the main characters.

This series was one of many examples of non-traditional casting. In the novel, it would have been most likely that Passepartout was not black, however, the movie goes against that in this adaptation. Additionally, a woman is added as a main character. This is crucial to the film's storyline, as this addition of the new Ms. Fix results in a budding romance between her and Passepartout throughout the series. However, most people in the series scrutinise this relationship out of racial and gender discrimination, save the adventurer Phileas Fogg. This explicitly is a statement that relates to racism, which non-traditional casting is rebelling against. In addition to this, Ms. Fix, who was played by Leonie Benesch, did not originally exist in the novel. It is interesting that this is not the first time that a non-white actor has played the resourceful valet. In 2014 Jackie Chan famously played the french character as well. This was another large example of non-traditional casting.

The series clearly wants to embed a message within us. It states that anyone can act anything that they can imagine themselves to be. No matter your age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion or your identity, you are free to do what you want. The creators wanted to not represent just one demographic, but wanted to represent people the audience can relate to. You do not have to obey what society thinks is correct, you can choose for yourself, and that is the main message of the adaptation.

I believe that the idea of non-traditional casting should not be taken lightly. It should be heavily considered to do so. The film industry has always had some prejudice against diversity. As the adaptation demonstrated, non-traditional casting can make great movies and films. Thus, non-traditional casting should be implemented into more filmmaking studios.
