

PERIODICALLY DRAMATIC

THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

NETFLIX'S
"BRIDGERTON" IS
FULL
OF SCANDAL...
BUT NOT OF WHAT
YOU THINK!

WHAT MAKES
"GAME OF
THRONES" SO
GOOD?

MERLIN

*Historical dramas
based on books:
Game of Thrones,
Bridgerton,
and more:*



PERIODICALLY DRAMATIC

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Dear Reader,

I have been tossing around ideas for weeks about whether I wanted to start a blog, have Instagram themes where I write about certain historical facts, write about historical art, among other considerations. When the idea to create an online magazine hit me, everything clicked. This is it. This is what I am supposed to do. Here at Periodically Dramatic, we talk and share our opinions about historical dramas, fashion, aesthetics, and more. I want to formally welcome you to what I hope will be a long-lasting magazine. Since this is our very first issue, it is very important to me! I want you to enjoy and leave comments! I hope that it brings you a little bit of light in the dark times we currently live in.

Stay safe,



Marina Hill, Editor-in-Chief

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Merlin: A New Twist on a Classic

by Elexis Grace / @timeperiodfilm

When I think about legendary tales, the first thing that comes to mind is always the Legends of King Arthur. Growing up, hearing the tales of Camelot was almost unavoidable. My family loved retelling the mythical adventures of King Arthur, Lancelot, and my personal favorite character, Merlin. That's why I was overjoyed when I discovered a series called "Merlin"!

"Merlin" tells the legends in a way we've never heard them before. In the first episode of the five-season show, we're introduced to the titular character, a young boy who's come to the kingdom of Camelot to be the royal physician's ward and apprentice. There's only one problem: Merlin possesses magic which is highly forbidden in Camelot. Merlin saves Prince Arthur's life and becomes his manservant, all while being forced to keep his powers hidden.

"I consider these legends sacred, but this adaptation is exceptionally refreshing."



This series is truly something to behold! For any lover of fantasy period dramas, this one is a must-watch. The cast is simply incredible and the characters are all very well developed. I consider these legends sacred, but this adaptation is exceptionally refreshing. It gives the viewer what the original legends didn't: diversity and strong, powerful female representation. The most notable antagonist of the series is Morgana. While she's a villain, you just can't help but root for her a little bit. She's strong and independent, and deep down, she has a beautiful heart.

Arthur's love interest, Gwen, has a more prominent role in the series. Gwen really stands out to me in this series. She's not just the wife of the king, as she's traditionally portrayed. In this series, she is the first person to fight for what she believes in. She's not afraid to stand up to the bully, and she certainly isn't afraid to knock him down if she has to. Her storyline is perhaps my favorite of any other character's. While quite a few storylines are changed up a bit throughout the show, the heart of the original tales that were first told almost 1,200 years ago still stands. It's no easy task to take on the Legends of Camelot, but this series did it right. I'll leave you with these final words: watch this show! ■

Game of Thrones



Ah, *Game of Thrones*. King of Cable, first of its name. Winner of Emmys. Breaker of interwebs. Even people who haven't watched a single episode have at least heard of it. We all know the catchphrases, can hum the theme song, or recognize the memes. I can think of few other fictional TV series that impacted pop culture so immensely over the course of its eight seasons and ten decades on the television (not iron) throne. It wasn't just a show--for several years it was *the* show.

But what some may not know is that the show was based on a fantasy book series, the as yet unfinished *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin. As is usually the case, readers proclaim the book is better, especially in the show's later seasons. However, as an avid fantasy watcher but not fantasy reader, I'm here to give you a 100% and completely unabashedly biased review on why this time, I think the show holds its own against the novels (well, at least the first few seasons).

The first book in ASOIAF (*A Song of Ice and Fire*) is titled *A Game of Thrones*, where we can assume HBO got the show's title. HBO's *Game of Thrones* pretty much runs parallel to the show in terms of plot; a rare gift in on-screen adaptations. In case you are magically immune to all things pop culture, the summary is this: "loosely based on medieval England's War of the Roses, warring noble families in the fictional Seven Kingdoms of Westeros fight a strategic and utterly cutthroat battle for the Iron Throne after the king's sudden death." The changes to the book's storyline itself are relatively minor, mostly centering around the chronology of events, or the age of many of the younger characters (more on that later). That's about where the similarity ends, however, because the show quickly takes on a life of its own as it portrays several key aspects much better than the book:

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ASOIAF is famous for switching points of view between characters. Many people find this a bit confusing since there are just so many characters... But I found this frustrating, not because I couldn't understand it, but because I found it rather like being able to read minds. It is one thing to read a novel from the perspective of one character, but of multiple characters, it's like having telepathy you can't turn off. Martin does almost too good of a job writing them because at various points, I really did feel like I was inside the mind of a bitter queen or a teenaged boy (which, please God, no). The show eliminates this problem, and thank the seven, because it was a real struggle to get through some of these characters' chapters, especially as there so many children in the story.



Setting and action are two key components to any fantasy story; world-building can easily be the difference between a cheesy sci-fi rerun and Lord-of-the-Rings Oscar material. Where the book was already well-done, the show takes it to another level and makes Westeros seem like an ancient world just a plane ride away, panning across endless skylines, crystal waters, rocky cliffs, and dusty parched deserts with all the verisimilitude of a nature documentary. This show is well-known for its cinematography and deserves the hype: "Game of Thrones" is shot in a variety of locations across many countries instead of only a Hollywood studio--and it shows.

Westeros, not unlike LOTR's Middle Earth, feels real. This in turn sets the tone for the action scenes: an almost impossible task in the book. Simultaneous action simply cannot be explained in a linear fashion, so this is one element a visual medium will always do better but GoT takes it a step further and adds in a few more fight scenes in places they should have occurred in the book, and even modeling characters' armor after real-life knights across multiple cultures.

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Speaking of which: costuming. The book is--perhaps surprisingly--detailed with quite an amount of clothing descriptions and I could clearly visualize what everyone wore, but there is nothing like seeing the real thing. Costume designer Michele Clapton certainly impressed with so much raw detail, so much continuity in what each House wears, their clothing reflecting their sigils and their homelands. The Lannisters wear gold damasks, the Starks wear plush furs, the Dothraki wear sturdy leather... Everyone's wardrobe isn't merely a pretty outfit. It makes sense and changes with them as they change and grow within the story.

As "Game of Thrones" follows the rise and fall of each family through its impeccable casting, it does something the book does not--makes these characters human (and leaving us wondering if they've ever even heard of a moral compass). Without seeing human expressions, characters can easily seem flat or cartoonishly bad, especially in a story as nuanced as this with so many morally gray areas. With an actor's single glance or change of tone, the show allows us to get a sense of these characters as real, complex people, exemplifications of neither good nor evil, but craftily displaying the complicated line we all toe. Although book 1 of *A Song of Ice and Fire* gives more background information, season 1 of "Game of Thrones" gives more character information and feels more akin to a period film than a fantasy series. This is a rare case where I have to say the book and screen adaptation are tied; you're in good hands with either. But I can't make any promises about your emotional state after you're finished. After all, *valar morghulis*. ■

THE ROOTS OF A NEW LIFE

by Marina Hill / @periodicallydramatic

The 2016 TV series "Roots" is a story of an American family enduring the tribulations of slavery. It begins with Kunta Kinte in his home country of the Gambia in Africa. Kunta is kidnapped, sold into slavery, and brought over to America.

This story is based on Alex Haley's 1976 novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Life*. This gruesome series gives the audience chills with its accurate portrayal of slavers' horrid actions. This series humanizes the treachery of slavery until it no longer feels like a lesson in a history book. It reminds the audience that this is a true experience. It is a fiction novel, but it accurately reflects the experiences of slavery.

Malachai Kirby does a phenomenal job portraying Kunta Kinte; it is surprising and impressive to learn that he has not acquired much acting experience before this. Forest Whitaker is also part of this series as he plays the famous character Henry—mostly known as Fiddler because of the instrument he plays.

The first edition of the book is over 700 pages long as it tells the life stories of seven generations of Kunta's descendants.

This TV series certainly has gruesome scenes that resulted in my fast-forwarding or muting of the volume, but there are also scenes of genuine love, happiness, and friendship. It has certainly granted me a new perspective and understanding of American slavery. ■



BRIDGERTON'S SCANDAL

by Marina Hill / @periodicallydramatic



This article includes spoilers for Netflix's show Bridgerton. If you want to preserve it, do not continue.

Bridgerton is a 2020 Netflix show about history's high society in London. It is based on Julia Quinn's novel series and can be described as a regency-era Gossip Girl. I was delighted when I watched the first episode. Daphne, played by Phoebe Dynevor, is beautiful and elegant. The Duke of Hastings, played by Regé-Jean Page, is handsome and brooding. I have not read the book series, which began with its publication in 2000, but watching the series left me with dozens of opinions. I was over the moon to learn that there would be a period drama starring people of color. As a woman of color who is infatuated with history, I've struggled to see myself in a genre of media I loved so much.

Upon watching the first episode of Bridgerton, I felt such joy. The people of colors' storylines did not revolve around their identity nor oppression. It is all I have ever wanted! I find myself immensely attached to the drama. Once I realize that I am so quickly drawn in and attached, I discover a new fact about myself: I struggle to feel any type of connection to a period drama that has no representation of people who look like me. I cannot name a period drama in which I feel genuine emotion and excitement for that is not inclusive. Therefore, I am ecstatic about Bridgerton.



"I struggle to feel any type of connection to a period drama that has no representation of people who look like me."

People of color who are history fanatics and love historical dramas are not granted the privilege of tossing aside a film or show because it does not fit their accuracy wishes or plot expectations. There are very few that come close to our desires and a large number of dramas that are inclusive have low ratings. Therefore, it is not popular in a community we are part of and we are left feeling ignored. This is not to insinuate that diverse period dramas are inherently low quality—it is because these productions do not receive adequate funding and creative attention.

And then the announcement in Bridgerton arrived: Miss Marina Thompson, a character who not only looks like me but shares the same name, is with child. I am left devastated. It's not to say that being pregnant is a bad thing. Of course not. However, in this era, being unwed and with child can utterly ruin a woman's reputation beyond repair. It isn't until I talk with a friend do I see that I am not the only one who feels this way. After I post about it on my Instagram story, I have multiple people sending me messages in agreement. There is no doubt that women, especially black women, are hurt by this.

There is a common misconception that black women and girls inherently know more about sex and sexuality. Meanwhile, Marina's white counterparts have no idea about the process of conceiving a child. There is a scene of Marina schooling Penelope about sex and even talking her out of her "childish dreams" to be a so-called adult like her. Black women and girls are not granted the chance to be innocent and childish.

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Before the series released, Bridgerton's Instagram account hinted a romance between Colin Bridgerton and Marina Thompson. This resulted in an uproar from Quinn's loyal readers. Colin is set to be with Penelope Featherington, Marina's distant cousin, in the books. The hatred toward Miss Thompson was swift and brutal. Comments called her disgusting, a stranger, a burden, a hindrance, and more. Now, it is certainly understandable to want no one to intervene with a couple you might love so much. However, the quick anger toward her makes me think: is it because of her skin tone? It is a burdensome question that all people of color suffer with.

This show avoids talking about skin color. In fact, the only mention of it is between Lady Danbury and the Duke of Hastings. It is said that prejudice ended because "the king fell in love with one of us." To write it plainly, this is a harmful idea. It is much better to avoid the conversation completely than to create a half-baked reason as to why people of color are present in high society. Not only is it realistic for black people to have been dukes and duchesses in this era, one cannot simply approach the topic halfway. As the child of a white woman and a black man, I can attest that the union between two people of different races does not, by any means, cure racism.

This lack of cure is extremely evident due to the lack of creative effort given to both Lady Danbury and Miss Marina Thompson. It is painstakingly clear that zero effort was given to the actress of Lady Danbury's wigs considering her hairline was exceedingly laughable. Now, take a look at the girls of the ton. Take a look at their dresses, then take a look at Marina's. The majority of the costumes I've seen her in pale in comparison to her white counterparts'. They are wrinkly, stiff, and boring.

In the beginning, I utterly adored seeing natural curls being embraced, but her hairstyles very quickly became lackluster and unkempt, further proving that women of color do not receive adequate creative attention. I would have rather had her hair be unrealistically curled, which says a lot coming from me considering my dedication to highlighting the beauty of natural curls.



Bridgerton is not a paragon of diversity in historical dramas by any means. There are no Asians in the show who are granted a speaking role nor are we granted any queer characters. There can be an argument for the artist, Granville, but we only see this in a setting that appears to be a *brothel*.

My favorite characters of the show remain to be Benedict Bridgerton, the modiste Genevieve, and Eloise Bridgerton. I find Anthony Bridgerton to be an utterly despicable character from the start. I lost all respect for him and Siena the moment they subjected a servant to be in the presence of them as they had sex against a tree. I also find Daphne to be a lackluster main character. Many side characters—Eloise, Benedict, and Marina—to have much more interesting and complex storylines. More people can relate to wanting to become more than what is expected of you and to fighting through your doubt to follow your dreams. Not many can relate to trying to decide whether to marry an asshole in order to save your reputation.

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However, I shall add that it is refreshing to see an interracial couple in a historical drama that doesn't revolve around their struggles in a racist society. It reflects a couple I know: my parents. It was a personal touch that I must give *Bridgerton* credit for.

In the beginning, when Marina Thompson had dozens of suitors at her feet, I was praying for her and Daphne to become best friends and a power team! As the most desirable women of London, they would have been unstoppable.

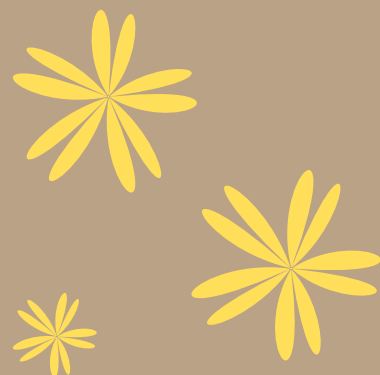
But, alas, I shall say it plainly: I came to resent Marina, too! Until I came to realize the creators of *Bridgerton* continuously made her out to be the villain. Penelope scolds Marina for trying to "entrap" Colin into a fraudulent marriage for the rest of his life because he's too good of a man for her. It is simply put: the true enemy here is *Penelope*. I adored Penelope at the start; she's kind, sweet, and adorable. However, her jealousy, truthfully, became pathetic. She had thoroughly convinced herself that Marina was an enemy and was scheming to bring Colin nothing but misery. She had promised Penelope that she would make a good wife to Colin, but that isn't good enough for her.

I kept thinking to myself: *Penelope, move on!* However, she had intentionally revealed that Marina was pregnant, utterly ruining her reputation beyond repair. All the while, she pretended to be there for Marina and comfort her. And yet, Marina is quite literally described as a "scheming hussy," by Lady Featherington.

I truly do not believe Lady Featherington to be a villain nor an enemy. She might have insulted Marina, but it is clear that she has done everything to help her situation in an unforgiving society. The insult was the only time she rejected Miss Thompson after the scandal was revealed. All the while, Penelope, Phillipa, Prudence, and Daphne all got to experience high society and balls without being encumbered with the thought of pregnancy.

There are a number of people hurt by *Bridgerton*'s portrayal of their only young black girl. It is *their* reputation that is now beyond repair. ■

***"It is simply put:
the true enemy here
is Penelope."***



DID YOU KNOW?



The casting of Golda Rosheuval as Queen Charlotte in Netflix's *Bridgerton* was factually correct. Queen Charlotte was of African descent.

DID YOU KNOW?



Charlotte Forten (1837-1914) was from one of Philadelphia's most prominent families. She was a poet, an abolitionist, and highly educated.



In Loving Memory

PAUL A. MCGREEVY

AUGUST 8, 1941 - JANUARY 3, 2012

