

<b>Title:</b>	<b>A Comparative Analysis of Cultural Appropriation in <i>Avatar: The Way of Water</i> and <i>Black Panther: Wakanda Forever</i> as Reflections of Postcolonial Sentiment</b>
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## Abstract

As time progresses, cinema has evolved from being a product dominated by the Western cultural sphere to a fair medium of art for people of any cultural origin. Nowadays, there is a visible shift in storytelling from a Eurocentric focus to protagonising non-West culture groups, the latter of which contributes to postcolonial representation. The blockbuster films have become one of the most popular examples. However, many critics point out the superficial and commercialised nature in such a shift and question the sincerity and success of the films as genuine reflections of postcolonial sentiments in public consciousness.

This essay serves as a literary criticism on *Avatar: The Way of Water* and *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, two of the sequels to world-famous blockbuster franchises for portrayal of minority cultures, by assessing how effective these two reflect postcolonial sentiments. The main assessment is through searching for cultural appropriation, or lack thereof, by four main recurring characteristics in postcolonial analyses: awareness of the Othering of non-West; role of language against colonial legacy; emphasis on a dualistic and/or unstable identity; stress on cross-cultural collaboration (Peter Barry 193-195).

By incorporating both the Postcolonial Theory and the concept of cultural appropriation, this essay argues that *Avatar: The Way of Water* perpetuates harmful indigenous stereotypes and contributes to cultural appropriation towards the indigenous peoples, thereby impairing postcolonial representations; whereas *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* mitigates the effects of cultural appropriation by crafting nuanced, deferential portrayal of the marginalized communities, thereby facilitating postcolonial representations. The ultimate goal of this essay is to encourage a more respectful and equitable cultural exchange worldwide through the works of cinema and beyond.

## Reflection

Before working on the capstone project, it had been a struggle for me to choose a topic that can reflect my university tenure as an English major, as well as my post-degree ambitions. Attending the various courses in the University, I have acquired a wide array of both literary skills and linguistic knowledge, as well as a passion for perceiving the world through differing outlooks. As such, I settled on delving deeper into the theme of Postcolonialism, a subject that has been dealt with in my previous coursework, and that speaks to me the most due to my multicultural upbringing.

This project is an enlightening and reinvigorating experience for me, since, in the process of researching and writing, I have become more acutely aware of the societal issues and cultural debates across the world, especially on the concept of cultural appropriation, a term widely (mis)quoted and employed in public discourse and heated arguments online. I hope that this project serves as a personal reminder to be more inclusive to different voices and, at the same time, remain critical before rashly jumping to conclusions when regarding the world at large.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Wilkinson Gonzales, who has been supportive of my work with invaluable advice and comforting reassurance throughout the semester.