



Superhero content that is actually cinema

Speaking of hope, I believe it is natural that we talk about Superman next. Despite being as iconic as Batman, the character has lacked many good outings on the big screen besides the 1978 film. However, Superman has always had great adaptations in the medium of television.

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

"Profound" isn't a term that people usually use when it comes to superhero media. With acclaimed filmmaker Martin Scorsese's very blatant and constant criticisms of the genre and the fact that people are truly beginning to feel superhero fatigue in a post-*Avengers: Endgame* world, it's easy to see comic book adaptations as something less than profound. While it is mostly always the formulaic films which get the attention, there are actually many superhero adaptations which are very profound in their own right and wholeheartedly deserve to be in the discussions of what is considered "cinema", as Martin Scorsese would put it.

Firstly, I would like to get the most obvious choice out of the way, which is *The Dark Knight Trilogy*. Indeed, Christopher Nolan brought his unique directorial style and presented a very grounded and genre-bending take on Batman. These movies have

been praised to death, so I will not be delving deep into them. However, I will be talking about the most recent adaptation of the Caped Crusader, that being 2022's *The Batman*. Being a standalone film that isn't tied to any shared universe, director Matt Reeves managed to make an exhilarating crime-thriller film which focuses on the detective aspects of the hero. The film explores themes of class conflict and social hierarchy, as well as trauma and grief. In every way, it serves as an evolution of the grounded portrayal of Batman as seen in *The Dark Knight Trilogy*. We see one of the most nuanced portrayals of Bruce Wayne, as he learns to overcome his self-consuming quest for vengeance through perseverance and more importantly, hope.

Speaking of hope, I believe it is natural that we talk about Superman next. Despite being as iconic as Batman, the character has lacked many good outings on the big screen besides the 1978 film.

However, Superman has always had great adaptations in the medium of television. The most recent *Superman and Lois* best exemplifies this and is perhaps the most realistic and mature take on superheroes to ever come out.

The series follows Clark Kent and Lois Lane as they try to raise their two teenage sons, one of whom has inherited his father's powers. Rather than resort to the overt "cynicism equals realism" approach of shows like *The Boys* or even the last big screen appearances of Superman starring Henry Cavill, it portrays a wholesome family man hero who faces all the regular challenges that come with being a loving father and husband. Besides exploring themes of family and belonging, the show tackles sensitive topics such as mental health and grief, unlike any other superhero adaptation before it. The narrative and character-driven nature of this show make it an underrated gem and set it apart from the CGI-battle heavy superhero content which is usually seen.

Switching gears from DC to Marvel, while the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is mostly the reason for all the criticisms the superhero genre faces, Marvel has produced movies and shows tangential to or predating the MCU that could be considered "profound". Netflix's *Daredevil* comes to mind, as it is objectively one of the best crime dramas of the past decade. The titular hero, Matt Murdock, is a visually impaired lawyer whose disability goes hand-in-hand with his powers. He helps others and fights against the underbelly of organised crime, both as a vigilante and as an attorney. The setting and narrative of the show as well as the multi-faceted characters make it a truly captivating watch.

Besides the above, Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man Trilogy*, particularly *Spider-Man 2*, as well as the recent *Spider-Verse* animated movies deserve honourable mentions, as those films managed to emphasise the dichotomy of being superheroes unlike most other modern superhero

films and had relatable heroes with strong supporting casts. Shows such as *Smallville*, *Doom Patrol*, and *Legion* showed the heights the genre can achieve with their unorthodox presentations and compelling character writing. Then there are films in the X-Men franchise like *X-Men: Days of Future Past* and *Logan* which also had groundbreaking storytelling that exceeded most other superhero projects.

Perhaps I have missed some superhero adaptations which could be considered "cinema". But overall, the current failings and oversaturation of the genre shouldn't deter audiences from movies and shows that are actually compelling. If you are facing superhero fatigue or looking for alternatives that actually try something unique, you should give the aforementioned movies and shows a try.

Sabil Sadat Zahir is a student at BRAC University.

How to overcome the fear of public speaking

ROBIAH AREFIN IBN MAHMUD

If your palms are sweaty, knees weak, arms are heavy every time you speak in front of a crowd, you're not alone.

About 25 percent of people suffer from glossophobia, the fear of public speaking, making it one of the most

common phobias. Yet, public speaking remains a valuable and often indispensable skill in almost every sphere of our lives, whether that be presenting our master's thesis or delivering a moving speech for our best friend's wedding.

Glossophobia is essentially a form of performance anxiety: just as we are afraid to

sing off-key on stage, we're afraid of stumbling on our words and being humiliated by others. As social creatures, it is a basic instinct to seek validation from our fellow human beings. Naturally, the fear of messing up in front of them and being mocked and belittled as a result is very potent.

Thus, the first step to overcoming this fear is recognising it is irrational. While we may hyper-fixate on the way we say things in our head, most people notice or care very little, instead choosing to focus more on *what* we say. Given that a vast majority of people aren't articulate orators, a few awkwardly phrased sentences are expected. Try remembering the last time you saw someone having a verbal mishap in public – you probably can't.

However, knowing is not the same as believing; it has to be backed up with practice. Like any other phobia, the way to improve is through systemic desensitisation, which is a fancy way of saying *just do it*. By gradually exposing ourselves to scenarios where public speaking is required, we

can incrementally convince our sympathetic nervous system – the part that triggers our fight-or-flight response – that crowds do not represent a threat, thus neutering the fear response.

It is important to go slow. Start with speaking in front of a mirror or video camera to get a feel for it. Then move on to small crowds of people you feel safe around, like close friends and family members, and keep scaling up. It's important to remember that progress is non-linear, so it's okay to settle back into more comfortable environments if you feel too overwhelmed.

Once you're somewhat used to the ordeal, joining activities which involve public speaking like debate and Model UN could be a great way to speed up improvement. Clubs and organisations provide communities that offer constructive feedback, opportunities for regular practice and positive encouragement. However, some organisations could also promote toxic competition, leading to a hostile environment that is counter-productive to progress. So, picking the right communities to join is crucial.

There are of course some neat tricks you can use to sidestep your anxiety

and appear more confident. Before you deliver your speech, memorize it front to back. Then give mock speeches before different audiences to perfect your delivery. By the time you begin your real speech, you'll have entered a flow state where you're too focused on what you'll say next to even notice the crowd. On stage, try looking at an object like a clock or a door at the far end of the room or maybe find a familiar face and deliver the speech to them. This helps drown out the audience, allowing you to feel more comfortable.

Sometimes, the fear of public speaking coincides with other psychological issues such as anxiety. In these more extreme cases, seeking professional advice is a more optimal solution. However, never resort to any medications without consulting a psychiatrist first as they can have unintended consequences if consumed without a prescription.

While public speaking is important, it's not the end of the world to not be the best at it. In the end, all that matters is that you're confident in your own skin and can communicate effectively with others. Eloquence is just an optional cherry on top.

Robiah is a former A-Levels student of Mastermind English Medium School

