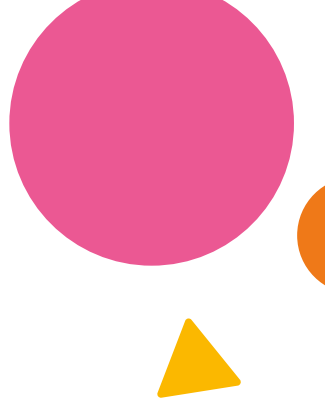


BBFC Guide to
Discrimination

BBFC Guide to Discrimination



Language or behaviour that was once commonplace may now be deemed inappropriate or offensive. Although we cannot predict what any individual person may find offensive, our widespread public consultations involve a diverse mix of people to ensure our standards reflect the views and expectations of UK audiences today.

Our content advice warns viewers of potentially offensive material relating to discrimination, so they can decide if it is right for them or their families. Parents, in particular, are concerned about exposing children to discriminatory language or behaviour which they may find distressing or repeat without realising it is unacceptable. Some language or behaviours are therefore not permitted at U or PG in any circumstance, or are wholly dependent on context.

A key factor when classifying discrimination is whether the behaviour is implicitly or explicitly criticised. Content with immediate and clear condemnation is more likely to receive a lower rating.

Discrimination that is not clearly criticised or is accompanied by violent behaviour is likely to result in a higher category. We may also find content to be unsuitable for classification if it promotes discriminatory behaviour.

We also look at older content that may include language and behaviour that is no longer acceptable in society.

Our research, however, has revealed that people recognise older films and series as 'products of their time'. We therefore consider when the content was made or if it has a historical setting that may provide context. The intent behind the language, behaviour or portrayal can also play an important role in the classification decision.

Language can also be reclaimed over time, and so certain terms may be containable at a lower age rating today if they are used in a self-referential or reclaimed context.

To find out more, see the case studies included in this guide for examples.



Shaped By You.

Our latest guidelines consultation
involved 12,000 people.



To find out more about our age
ratings, content advice and new
Classification Guidelines go to
bbfc.co.uk/about-classification

How each age rating deals with Discrimination



Universal

U-rated content is suitable for audiences of all ages, although not all U-rated content is aimed at children.

Children's content should be set within a positive framework and should offer reassuring counter-balances to any violence, threat or scary scenes. Generally a U is unlikely to unsettle a four-year-old, although it is impossible to predict what might affect any particular child.

Discriminatory language or behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable unless clearly disapproved of.

Parental Guidance

General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children

PG-rated content is suitable for general viewing. A PG should generally not unsettle a child aged around eight, although parents and caregivers should be aware that some scenes may be unsuitable for more sensitive children.

Discriminatory language or behaviour should be clearly disapproved of. Some language or behaviour may be permitted if justified by context (for example, reclaimed, historical, lack of discriminatory intent).



12A/12

Cinema content classified 12A and video content classified 12 contain material that is not generally suitable for children aged under 12.

No one younger than 12 may be permitted to attend a 12A cinema screening unless they are accompanied by an adult. Adults planning to take a child under 12 to a 12A should consider whether the main feature is suitable for that child. To help them decide, we recommend that they check the BBFC's content advice for the film in advance. No one younger than 12 may rent or buy a 12-rated video.

Discriminatory language or behaviour must not be endorsed by the content as a whole. Such behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable if accompanied by violence, unless clearly condemned.



15

Suitable only for 15 years and over

No one younger than 15 may see 15-rated content in a cinema. No one younger than 15 may rent or buy a 15-rated video.

Discriminatory language, themes and behaviour are permitted, but must not be endorsed by the content as a whole.



18

Suitable only for adults

No one younger than 18 may see 18-rated content in a cinema. No one younger than 18 may rent or buy an 18-rated video.

Adults should be free to choose their own entertainment. Exceptions are most likely where material or treatment appears to us to risk harm to individuals or, through their behaviour, to society. For example, the detailed portrayal of violent or dangerous acts, or of illegal drug use, which may cause harm to public health or morals.



Case studies



PG

Hidden Figures

discrimination theme, mild bad language

Based on a true story, *Hidden Figures* follows three African-American women who worked at NASA in the late 1960s. Despite being immensely skilled mathematicians and engineers, the women have to battle gender and race discrimination to ensure their invaluable contributions to the Space Race are recognised.

At PG our guidelines dictate that discriminatory behaviour should be clearly criticised. In the film, for example, there is a sequence in which one of the women, Katherine Johnson, is challenged by her manager for being away from her desk for too long. She reveals that, due to segregation, she has to walk long distances to find a toilet that she, as a Black woman, is allowed to use. Learning this, her manager desegregates the toilets, setting an example for his predominantly white team that Katherine is not to be treated differently.

We also consider a film's setting as part of our classification decision. Our research has shown that people recognise behaviours were different in the past and a historical setting

provides valuable context that can, in some cases, enable a film to be passed at a lower rating. *Hidden Figures* takes place in the 1960s and enables younger viewers to learn about what women of colour experienced at that time.

The historical context also reframes how certain terms are understood. The film features use of the terms 'coloured' and 'negro'; discriminatory uses are clearly criticised, but others are presented in a matter of fact way that reflects how those words were used in 1960s America. Given the historical setting and condemnation of derogatory uses of the words, in this case they are containable at PG.

Although discrimination occurs, the stronger moments are interspersed with scenes focusing on the women's successes through their extraordinary ability and determination. Their story is ultimately an inspirational one of triumph in the face of adversity, and with such positive messaging, a largely gentle and playful tone and clear criticism of historic discrimination, we classified the film PG for discrimination theme, mild bad language.

FILM

Classification date
10/12/2016

Director(s)
Theodore Melfi

Genre(s)
Drama

Approx. running minutes
121m



12A



Blinded By The Light

racist language and behaviour, moderate bad language

In the 1980s a British-Pakistani teenager, Javed, discovers and is empowered by the music of Bruce Springsteen. Set against the frightening rise of the National Front political movement and his own family struggles, *Blinded By The Light* explores how music can empower and unite people in the face of racism and adversity.

In *Blinded By The Light*, two British-Asian men are attacked by those taking part in a National Front march, resulting in some bloody detail. Elsewhere, British-Asian characters are bullied and treated poorly, including being subjected to abusive language through verbal insults and hateful graffiti.

Where scenes of discrimination involve associated acts of violence, they are treated more cautiously under our guidelines. This can sometimes result in content receiving a higher age rating, unless there is clear contextual justification and condemnation for the violence. Although parallels can be drawn

between the events in the film to those occurring today, the historical setting contextualises the violence as a result of the National Front's rise and provides a degree of distancing for modern audiences from the events on-screen.

When violence occurs, it is brief and without strong detail, and instances of discrimination are spread out across the story, separated by scenes of a more gentle and uplifting nature. Perhaps most importantly, the film's message is overtly disapproving of racist behaviour, with audience sympathies strongly aligned to the British-Asian protagonist.

Overall, the tone of the film is reassuring and light, exploring how sympathetic values exist in music felt across generations and all over the world. This, combined with the very clear condemnation of the racist behaviour and language, allowed us to classify *Blinded By The Light* 12A for racist language and behaviour, moderate bad language.

FILM

Classification date
31/05/2019

Director(s)
Gurinder Chadha

Genre(s)
Drama

Approx. running minutes
112m



12A



Close

suicide references, homophobia, upsetting scenes

Close focuses on two young teens, Leo and Remi, whose friendship is tested when Leo fears the judgement of other students at school. The film explores how, at a critical time in a young person's development, tiny actions can have huge unexpected consequences.

A touching coming-of-age story, *Close* leaves the question of whether Remi and Leo's relationship was purely one of friendship or romance. They are at an age in which the distinction between the two is only beginning to become evident as they become more aware of their sexuality.

A pivotal moment in the story sees Remi and Leo's classmates ask whether they are a couple. Leo is quick to deny this, but the two still face teasing and bullying which Leo struggles to overcome. The homophobic behaviour the boys encounter, including infrequent use of the slur 'faggot', leads Leo to distance himself from Remi. Although Leo intends the separation to be temporary until the playground

bullying subsides, Remi takes the rejection painfully and personally, leading to a terrible tragedy.

The boys' experience of discrimination is integral to *Close's* story. The film examines Leo's reaction to the bullying he and Remi experience, and he later feels guilty for his instinctive response and not challenging the bullies. This implicitly criticises those who propagated homophobic attitudes, as well as those who failed to challenge such behaviour.

Another important factor in the film's classification is the extent and context of the homophobia: discriminatory language and behaviour is infrequent, and there is no associated violence or threat.

Ultimately, the film addresses the devastating damage discriminatory behaviour can have on people, especially children. The sensitive treatment of these issues allowed us to classify the film 12A for suicide references, homophobia, upsetting scenes.

FILM

Classification date
13/12/2022

Director(s)
Lukas Dhont

Genre(s)
Drama

Approx. running minutes
104m



15

A Fantastic Woman

strong language, discriminatory behaviour

Directed by Chilean filmmaker Sebastian Lelio, *A Fantastic Woman* received critical acclaim upon its release in 2018 and went on to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It follows a transgender woman, Marina, who struggles with her grief following the sudden death of her boyfriend.

In the wake of her partner's passing, Marina faces hostile and discriminatory behaviour from his relatives who did not approve of him dating a trans woman. At 12A/12, our standards allow for some aggressive discriminatory language or behaviour to occur, as long as it is clearly condemned. Although *A Fantastic Woman* aligns the audience with the protagonist and provides clear disapproval of discrimination, some sequences were too sustained and intense to occur at 12A/12.

For example, in one distressing sequence, she is verbally and physically assaulted by members of the family, leaving her traumatised. The scene is prolonged and features a gang dynamic, and includes

multiple uses of discriminatory language as well as threats of further physical and sexual violence.

The film is also set in modern Chile, meaning that there is no mitigation provided by a historical setting; instead, it feels realistic and immediate, increasing its potential to distress vulnerable viewers.

While some films examining discrimination utilise an uplifting tone and disperse the challenging material between lighter or more humorous sequences, *A Fantastic Woman* is a tonally subdued drama. A focus on realism throughout sees the protagonist facing both overt and implicit discriminatory attitudes in everyday life, providing little relief. Despite providing disapproval of discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, the film's conflation of language, violence and threat in a transphobic context exceeds our guidelines at 12A/12, and we therefore classified it 15 for strong language and discriminatory behaviour.

FILM

Classification date
02/01/2018

Director(s)
Sebastian Lelio

Genre(s)
Drama

Approx. running minutes
100m

BBFC Classification Guidelines. Shaped by you.

We provide age ratings and content advice for films and other content in line with our published Classification Guidelines.

With more content more accessible than ever before, it is imperative that our age ratings and content advice provide a trusted guide that people can rely on when choosing what to watch, whether at the cinema, on DVD and Blu-ray or on Video on Demand (VoD) services.

Every four to five years, we speak to thousands of people from all over the country to explore what matters to them when it comes to classification. In our most recent guidelines research, 12,000 people took part – the highest number of participants we have ever consulted – providing us with a very robust set of findings to help ensure our standards continue to reflect the views of UK audiences. Here's what we found:



Classification Guidelines

To read the latest edition of the full BBFC Classification Guidelines, visit our website at bbfc.co.uk

87%

of parents agree with BBFC age rating decisions all or most of the time

97%

of people see a benefit to age ratings for some or all audiences

Trust in BBFC age ratings has grown to

90%

among parents/caregivers in the last five years

85%

trust BBFC age ratings to indicate whether content is suitable for themselves or their family

81%

of people want consistent age ratings across cinema, DVD and Blu-ray and Video on Demand/streaming services

99%

recognise at least one BBFC age rating symbol (78% recognise them all)

About the BBFC



The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) is the independent film and video regulator for the UK. We are here to help everyone choose age-appropriate films, videos and websites, wherever and however they watch or use them.

We do this primarily through our widely recognised and trusted age ratings and content advice.

Every BBFC age rating decision and every piece of content advice is based on our Classification Guidelines, which we refresh every four to five years through an extensive consultation with thousands of people across the UK. This gives us an unmatched insight into what audiences find acceptable for different age groups.

The result is a transparent, well-understood and trusted classification system that gives people the best information to help them choose what to view and to protect children and vulnerable adults from harmful content.

We are not-for-profit and are funded through the fees we charge for our services.

We classify:

- films, trailers, advertisements and other content for theatrical (cinema) release on behalf of local authorities who licence cinemas under the UK's licensing legislation¹
- video works distributed on physical media under the Video Recordings Act 1984 (VRA)
- video content distributed on Video on Demand and streaming services (VoD) under a voluntary, self-regulatory service
- commercial and internet content distributed via the UK's Mobile Networks under a voluntary, self-regulatory service

As well as being based on consultation with thousands of people across the UK, our guidelines incorporate other relevant research, expert advice and our accumulated experience. The guidelines, and our practice in applying them, pay particular attention to changes in audience expectations, attitudes and concerns and to changes in the law.

Here, and throughout the guidelines, we take video content to include films, programmes and other content released on DVD and Blu-ray and on VoD services.

We take responsibility for applying the guidelines to all content submitted to us, to ensure their application and interpretation is consistent, fair and reasonable. From time to time, issues may arise that are not addressed directly in the guidelines. Where such issues occur, we will deal with them in line with the standards expressed and implied in these guidelines. The guidelines are not a legal document and should be interpreted in the spirit of what is intended as well as in the letter.

We will provide, on request, guidance on the interpretation and application of these guidelines.

¹Since 31 March 2016 the BBFC has sub-contracted the assessment of cinema advertisements for commercial goods and services to the Cinema Advertising Association, while retaining responsibility for classifying, on behalf of local authorities, films, trailers, public information films and charity campaigns, and other cinema content.

Our guiding principles

To protect children and vulnerable adults from potentially harmful content

To empower consumers, particularly parents and those with responsibility for children, to make informed viewing decisions

To enable content to reach the widest possible audience appropriate for the theme and treatment

To support the right of adults to choose their own entertainment as long as it remains within the law and is not potentially harmful

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