



Film review: X-Men 2 (X-Men United)

Anti-racist religious education



RE TODAY AND NATRE WORKING WITH THE FREE CHURCHES GROUP
AND METHODIST SCHOOLS





X-Men 2 (X-Men United)

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What is this film about?

The film is an adaptation of the X-Men story 'God loves man kills' in which a group of heroes and villains who were all born with special powers join forces to stop a fanatic from exterminating them.

In the original X men comics, the X-Men represent Black Americans, and by the time this film was made, the X-Men stand for those marginalised and oppressed.

What age group and RE topic does it link to?

11-14s, 14s-16s

Discrimination, representation of religious groups in film (Nightcrawler is a Christian in both the film and comics) and erasure of religious themes when turning literature into film (the comic is more explicitly about faith interacting with discrimination).

What did you love about it?

The scene in question is an excellent example of how anti-racism is taught within a minority community as Mystique, a mutant whose power is to morph into other people but is naturally blue, speaks to Nightcrawler about why she chooses to remain in her true shape. Nightcrawler is a demonic looking mutant who cannot 'pass' as human and faces discrimination for it. He still regards discrimination as personal baggage and wishes away his identity, but Mystique explains the only worthwhile path is change.

This film popularised the phrase 'Magneto was right' shorthand for believing human nature is inherently tribal and the oppressed groups within society have every right to violent resistance as no other method will be effective. Opposing views are expounded by the likes of Professor X in the comic and others are voiced too (just like Nightcrawler and Mystique) thus encouraging readers or viewers to recognise that BAME racial and religious opinion is not monolithic.

If you could only show a clip, which clip would you use?

Nightcrawler And Mystiques Conversation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXtccnXt21Y>

Also, a page from 'God Loves, Man Kills' the original comic, in the panini pocketbook available in some school libraries (the page number is 172). Also, review page 118 with a trigger warning: that page contains an image of a lynching of 2 black children.

Why does this film have great potential for anti-racist RE?

The comic 'God Loves, Man Kills' and the scene from the movie X-Men United both have the potential to encourage conversations about racial discrimination, othering and exoticism



through a lens of familiar popular culture. People already know what mutants are and can quickly be shown a few panels of a graphic novel and scenes from a movie.

Are there any warnings or issues for particular age groups?

The film is a 12A.

Two or three RE activities to set when pupils have seen the film/clip:

1. First: ask the class how might a mutant like Nightcrawler regard their faith differently to a human and why would it be different? Have some of the more interesting ideas written on the board. Given that mutants serve as a racial allegory can any of the parallels be true of racial or religious minorities and what does that tell the students about how they have been othering or exoticising people of racial and religious minorities.
2. Second: the clip shows the discussion between an older and younger mutant, why is the younger mutant wrong and the elder right? Why is the elder wrong and the younger right?
The clip favours the views of the elder mutant, Mystique the Shapeshifter, who could 'pass as a normal human' – which the younger, Nightcrawler, would love to do. Nightcrawler realises that other people's perception of him is not his fault or his task to change. Society needs to change: a very important insight for any people in minorities who might experience hate speech and hate crimes.
3. Third: the panels from the comic ['you dare call that thing human'] are of a religious fundamentalist pastor with a platform targeting Nightcrawler: what tools do such people use to target minorities? Emotional manipulation, mob mentality and denying a platform for response are all witnessed on the page.

Check it out here: <https://imgur.com/a/bfHR3#7ueHaxq>