**Revision-IYOW, WC, Imagery, SS**

**Black Panther review – Marvel's thrilling vision of the afrofuture**

4/5stars

The latest big-screen superhero story is a subversive and uproarious action-adventure, in which African stereotypes are upended and history is rewritten

Director Ryan Coogler and co-screenwriter Joe Robert Cole tackle the superheroes of colour question with this surreal and uproarious movie version of Marvel’s Black Panther legend, in which the sheer enjoyment of everyone involved pumps the movie with fun. It’s an action-adventure origin myth which plays less like a conventional superhero film and more like a radical war film. But it’s the futurism that gives [Black Panther](https://www.theguardian.com/film/black-panther) his distinctive power.

Chadwick Boseman plays T’Challa, a prince with a sensitive, handsome, boyish face and something introspective, vulnerable and self-questioning in his style. After the death of his father (shown in [Captain America: Civil War](https://www.theguardian.com/film/captain-america-civil-war), from 2016), T’Challa succeeds to the throne of the fictional African state of Wakanda, which lies west of Lake Victoria, on territory that is occupied in the real world by Uganda, Rwanda and northern Tanzania.

Wakanda is, on the face of it, dirt-poor as well as mountainous, jungly and inaccessible. But the point is that the Wakandans have deliberately cultivated the west’s [condescending stereotypes of Africa](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/feb/03/marvel-black-panther-chadwick-boseman-michael-b-jordan) as camouflage, to prevent outside interference. For beneath the foliage, Wakanda is a secret city state with more flying cars and suspended monorails than you can shake a stick at. It’s a hidden world of supermodernity – though it is nonetheless the land that democracy forgot. And all powered by the hidden element known as vibranium, which supplies limitless energy, and is harnessed by T’Challa in the armoured bodysuit he wears as Black Panther.

But there are problems in Wakanda, not all stemming from the film’s few white characters: CIA man Everett Ross (Martin Freeman) blunders like a careless elephant into Wakandan power politics, and white South African career criminal Ulysses Klaue (Andy Serkis) plots to steal their vibranium. The Wakandan exile Erik Killmonger (Michael B Jordan) wants to take over T’Challa’s throne and overturn his quietist approach, take advantage of Wakanda’s technological superiority, stand up for racially oppressed African Americans and black people everywhere, and establish a new Wakandan empire of righteousness on which the sun will never set. Our first view of Erik is when he is visiting an exhibition of looted African artefacts in the “Museum of Great Britain” in London.

This setup teases us with its resemblances to Thor and Asgard, as well as its inversions and theme-variants on the Lion King myth, yet it is very much not about a wicked uncle killing a noble king. The vibranium is vitally important; absurd, of course, but very much aligned with all those other natural resources that somehow only enrich people outside Africa: gold, diamonds, rubber and the coltan in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that we need for our smartphones. Deadpan, the film allows us to register the difference between T’Challa and Erik as an African and an African American – Erik being burdened by the traumas and injustices of American history in a way T’Challa is not.

And where do we go after this? Does Black Panther get to be another subordinate bit-part player in future Marvel ensemble movies? I hope not: I want stories where Black Panther takes on people outside Wakanda. The intriguing thing about Black Panther is that it doesn’t look like a superhero film – more a wide-eyed fantasy romance: exciting, subversive and funny.

**Questions**

1. How does the writer's word choice in paragraph 1 demonstrate that he has a positive view on the film? Pick two examples and explain. (4 marks)

2. How does the writer use sentence structure in paragraph 2 to provide context for the reader? (2 marks)

3. Explain in your own words the difficulties Wakanda pretends to face (Paragraph 3). (3 marks)

4. Explain in your own words what Wakanda is truly like (Paragraph 3). (2 marks)

5. How does the writer's use of imagery in paragraph 4 make clear his opinion on Martin Freeman's character? (3 marks)

14 marks