

Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story

2023 · History · 1 season

Overview

Characters

Episodes

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The romance that started it all. Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story, streaming...
Mar 23, 2023

Where to watch

Netflix
Subscription

Ratings

IMDb 7.6/10

Rotten Tomatoes 95%



It is no secret that before Meghan Markle the royal family could never have imagined the possibility of a black queen. When creating Bridgerton Shonda Rhimes rewrote that script. It is important to note that this paper will be focusing on Rhimes' spinoff of the show that highlights Queen Charlotte titled "Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story". However, the character of Queen Charlotte plays an important role in both shows. In Bridgerton, she is not only queen but royal matchmaker for members of high society. Meanwhile, the spin off features her at a much younger age when she was the one undergoing a "match" to King George III. In the opening of the series "Lady Whistledown" (the narrator) gives the disclaimer that the series "is not a history lesson" but instead "fiction inspired by fact" (Victorian 2023, 1)(Mojo, 2023).

Shonda Rhimes an african-american woman herself, is known for her work as a screenwriter and television producer. Most famous for the 21 season television series Grey's Anatomy. Rhimes frequently showcases diversity in her work (Marta Rocchi, and Elisa Farinacci 2020, 30). While she aims to portray strong, and diverse female figures in her work

she puts equal emphasis on casting diverse people in her roles. Which is why it is no surprise that when she created her hit television series “Bridgerton” she chose to make the queen of England (Queen Charlotte) a woman of colour. However, Rhymes doesn't stop there as she casted people of all different races to play members of high society in eighteenth century London. Interestingly, some historians have also argued that there is historical evidence suggesting that the real Queen Charlotte may have had African ancestry. Historian Mario de Valdes y Cocom traces her lineage to Margarita de Castro y Sousa, a member of a Portuguese noble family believed to have Moorish roots, which has led some scholars to speculate that Charlotte herself may have been of mixed heritage (Valdes y Cocom 2017). Although this claim is debated among historians, it adds an interesting historical context to Rhymes’ decision to portray Queen Charlotte as a Black woman.

The topic of race in the British Royal family in today's day and age has become so rampant due to former actress turned royal Meghan Markle. So much so that the term “Black Majesty” was coined by Nicole Wilson (Yelin, and Clancy 2021). Although Markle will likely never be queen she is the only person of colour to have joined the royal family to date. Her lack of power in the monarchy is exactly why Rhymes' interpretation of Queen Charlotte as a black woman holds so much significance (Kehinde 2020, 1). Other than differences in facts due to Rhymes “Fiction inspired by fact” (Mojo, 2023) Queen Charlotte in the series and Queen Charlotte in real life share many similarities even appearance (see image above); with the main difference being the pigment in the skin. I believe Rhymes did this intentionally as an attempt to continue to break down racial barriers as she is known for (Marta Rocchi, and Elisa Farinacci 2020, 30). The British Royal family has a long history of racism (Wilson 2020, 1). Rhymes' choice to cast a black woman to play one of the most powerful people in the monarchy highlights a significant juxtaposition of racial stereotypes and hundreds of years of racial inequality showcased by british royals. The series shows us people of colour (poc) in positions of power in unconventional ways. The British monarchy at the time of the period piece was the pinnacle of power in England. By placing female women of colour in historically white roles Rhymes highlights intersectionality breaking down racial and feminist barriers. The character of queen Charlotte is a strong, beautiful, powerful, determined, intelligent, feminist, woman of colour, and leader. In the original series Lady Danbury is the first to mention race as she gives a gentle reminder that it was not until King George III fell in love with a black woman that British society overcame racism (The Courtauldian 2023). Meanwhile the real royal family appears to fail in accepting women of colour into the family (Kehinde 2020, 3). This moment shows cultural and historical significance as in the series the way Lady Danbury describes it this shift happened rapidly whereas in real life Meghan Markle has yet to be accepted by the Royal family (Yelin, and Clancy 2021). Highlighting a substantial difference from the norm.

Both of these series showcase women of colour in a position of historically white power. Smashing down systematic racial and sexist hierarchy. As a whole, seeing more representation of women and people of colour in the media aids breaking down barriers and showcasing to you that women and people of colour deserve to be successful and powerful. Regardless of what historians have to say about the authenticity of the series, Rhymes makes

it clear from the very beginning that the show “is not a history lesson” but instead “fiction inspired by fact” (Victorian 2023, 1)(Mojo, 2023). For Rhimes to base the entire series off of the concept of fiction that is inspired by fact. Who is to say that Charlotte along with many of the other members of high society featured cannot be people of colour.

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