**Already seen 'Black Panther'? Here are some references you might have missed**

**Elahe Izadi**Washington Post

"Black Panther" is a mass-appeal superhero movie, breaking box-office records with its dazzling special effects, heart-pumping fight scenes and charismatic characters brought to life by a predominantly black cast. It also tells a story laden with some pretty complex and specific references that you may or may not immediately notice. Here are a few things to know after watching "Black Panther."

**The Oakland connection**

While most of "Black Panther" takes place in Wakanda and South Korea, we get to see Oakland, California, in 1992 and in the present day. The Bay Area city, which serves as some Wakandans' American home base, is a fitting choice for the film. While Harlem is the American city used in the comics, it was a personal choice for writer-director [Ryan Coogler](http://www.chicagotribune.com/topic/entertainment/movies/ryan-coogler-PECLB0015373-topic.html) to use Oakland, his home town, as the connection instead. The first scene that Coogler wrote was the opening scene that takes place there in the early 1990s, he told I09. "Writing it was a test of what this movie could be." "The interesting part about being black is until you open up your mouth, people don't know where you're from," Coogler told the outlet. "I thought it would be cool if you start on the scene in Oakland. You have these two black dudes, they talk and (you go) 'Oh, it's two black dudes from Oakland.' And then at some point the guy switches and starts talking with the African accent. 'Oh s-, wait, this dude's from Africa?' You realize, 'Oh yeah, I can't tell the difference. He (looks like) the same people you know.'"

Co-writer Robert Joe Cole added that starting in Oakland "was never a question. That was Ryan. That's his heart. That was where that was going to be." Oakland is also the birthplace of the Black Panther organization, which began there in the 1960s before it became a nationwide phenomenon. One of their most popular community programs - providing free breakfast to children -- started in the California city in 1968.

In "Revolutionary Suicide," Black Panther co-founder Huey Newton explained the origin of the party name: He had read about how people in a Mississippi county, who had armed themselves "against establishment violence," adopted the black panther as a symbol for their political group. He then suggested to fellow founder Bobby Seale that they do the same. "The panther is a fierce animal, but he will not attack until he is backed into a corner; then he will strike out," Newton wrote.

**Afro futurism**

The design and vision of Wakanda connects clearly to Afro futurism, which refers broadly to a fantasy genre and cultural aesthetic. It often combines elements of science fiction, magical realism and actual histories to explore the present state of the African Diaspora as well as its place in the future. Cultural critic Mark Dery coined the term in the 1990s, but you can spot Afro futurism long before -- such as the Parliament Funkadelic Mother ship of the 1970s -- and through today, with Janelle Monáe's more recent android alter ego.

Now, Afro futurism’s biggest avatar may become the "Black Panther" movie and the mythical nation of Wakanda, which is technologically advanced and full of imagery that includes nods to specific African cultures. Costume designer Ruth Carter has said she looked to certain tribes, such as the Masai and the Suri, for inspiration, and combined futuristic elements. "Afro punk and Afro futuristic fashion is a good analogy for some parts of Wakanda," she told Forbes.

**Killmonger's final wishes**

After the defeat of Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan), T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman) tells Killmonger that Wakandans may still be able to save his life, thanks to their advanced technology. Why bother being kept alive, Killmonger responds, just so he can spend the rest of his time imprisoned? Instead he gives clear instructions: Throw his body into the sea, just like his ancestors before him who knew the bottom of the ocean was preferable to a lifetime in bondage.

Killmonger's wish directly references the horrors of the Middle Passage. Facing enslavement and its myriad horrors, some Africans attempted suicide aboard slave ships, including refusing to eat and jumping overboard. Suicide became a rebellion -- one that European captors tried to prevent with cruel tactics, including force-feeding and torture. (This history has also inspired other Afro futuristic stories. The '90s electronic duo Drexciya developed a mythology out of imagining what happened to unborn children of enslaved pregnant African women thrown overboard; "Drexciya" is envisioned as an underwater civilization, a black Atlantis, created by the babies who adapted to life underwater.)

**About those Tolkien White Guys**

In major Hollywood movies, black characters are often relegated to supporting roles, or their narratives are in relation to the white characters (or the stories are told themselves with the concept of a white audience watching, referred to as the "white gaze").

"Black Panther" flips that construct. There are a couple of white guys in the movie. [Martin Freeman](http://www.chicagotribune.com/topic/entertainment/martin-freeman-PECLB0000007975-topic.html) and [Andy Serkis](http://www.chicagotribune.com/topic/entertainment/andy-serkis-PECLB0000005394-topic.html) (who also had roles in movies based on J.R.R. Tolkien novels) play characters from the comic books and appear in the movie to serve the broader story with black people at its center. Serkis plays the villainous black-market arms dealer Ulysses Klaue, who looks down on Wakandans as undeserving of their precious metal, and represents the plundering of African resources. Freeman is American CIA operative Everett K. Ross, who is tasked with buying a sample of vibranium.

Ross has a condescending attitude toward Wakandans and then morphs into an ally after shielding Nakia ([Lupita Nyong'o](http://www.chicagotribune.com/topic/entertainment/movies/lupita-nyongo-PECLB0015424-topic.html" \o "Lupita Nyong'o" \t "_blank)) from a bullet. But later, especially as Wakandans fight among each other over their place in the world, Ross' continued presence could make you wonder: Why is he still around, since it's not really about him? Well, at the very least, he's a helpful foil. The audience gets to see him utterly baffled by Wakanda's advances, which T'Challa and the others aren't trying to prove to him anyway. And he's the butt of some cathartic, comedic relief.

In one scene, as several Wakandan leaders debate, he tries to chime in. He's promptly shushed by Shuri and called a colonizer, and not able to get a word in edgewise.

Now, how many times have we seen that in a big-budget movie?