

# [***Conservatives and liberals alike can't stop talking about this scene in '3 Body Problem'***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BN6-5WB1-DY7V-G098-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; The new Netflix series "[*3 Body Problem*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/21/entertainment/3-body-problem-review-game-of-thrones-producers/index.html)" isn't really about China's Cultural Revolution or US culture wars. The science fiction epic, adapted from Liu Cixin's Hugo award-winning novel,is more concerned with big theoretical questions, like how humanity might respond to an impending extraterrestrial invasion.

But that hasn't stopped viewers from drawing parallels between the [*brutal period of China's history*](https://www.cnn.com/2014/06/04/world/asia/china-maoist-scars/index.html), depicted in the show's opening, and present-day American ***politics***.

"3 Body Problem," from "Game of Thrones" creators David Benioff and D.B. Weiss along with Alexander Woo, starts out with a harrowing scene set in Mao Zedong's China in 1966. A physics professor, accused of teaching counter-revolutionary concepts, is brought onstage before a raging mob and beaten to death.

Such incidents, in which "class enemies" were publicly humiliated and tortured, were common throughout the decade-long Cultural Revolution, which sought to silence Mao's perceived opposition and ended with his death in 1976.

The series' first season, whose eight episodes hit Netflix on March 21, debuted at No. 2 on the streamer's top 10 shows and has since climbed to the top spot. Though subsequent seasons of the show haven't yet been confirmed, the showrunners [*have said*](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/3-body-problem-benioff-weiss-netflix-thrones-interview-1235783117/) they envision the story unfolding over four seasons.

Despite the show's ambitious, intergalactic scope, it's that first scene that seems to have elicited the strongest reactions. As US audiences took in the highly charged opening, which has also [*sparked controversy and debate in China*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/22/style/china-reaction-netflix-show-3-body-problem-intl-hnk/index.html), some were quick to share what they saw as the subtext.

"Just watched the opening scene of Netflix's 3 Body Problem depicting a Chinese cultural revolution lynching, and it is scarily reminiscent of where Woke is taking us: no freedom of speech or thought, toe the party line or be eliminated, don't even think of counter-revolution," one user wrote on X.

"To understand what the left is doing, I suggest watching the opening of the Netflix series 3 Body Problem," another person on X wrote. "The scene of the Cultural revolution demonstrates what is taking place. Learn history or be doomed."

But while some conservatives heralded the scene as a metaphor for the supposed authoritarianism of the left, some liberals and progressives reached an entirely different conclusion.

"To understand what the right is doing, I suggest watching the opening of the Netflix series 3 Body Problem," one user responded to a conservative post on X. "The scene of the Cultural revolution demonstrates what is taking place. Banning books in schools & libraries that don't conform to their way of thinking. Then cry 'Freedom.'"

Another person on X wrote,"Just watched the opening scenes from '3 Body Problem,' set in the Cultural Revolution, and the anti-science set in America is a lot like that."

That viewers from opposing ends of the political spectrum would come away with such differing interpretations is perhaps unsurprising. As [*CNN's Brian Lowry*](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/politics/state/game-of-thrones-politics/) wrote in 2017 about the discourse around "Game of Thrones," ***politics*** and pop culture have become so intertwined that people tend to see what they want to see in art - regardless of its intended message.

Though the story is rooted in a very real moment in Chinese history, the Cultural Revolution is merely the catalyst for one character's loss of faith in humanity. Disgusted and disillusioned, she makes a decision that puts the entire planet in danger.

"3 Body Problem" quickly moves on from the Cultural Revolution to the ripple effects of that perilous decision, raising deep, thought-provoking questions in the process: How do we respond in the face of an existential threat? What role will technology play? And how powerful is our resolve to survive?

Some critics, meanwhile, see the overall story as an allegory for the [*climate crisis*](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/03/25/3-body-problem-tv-review-netflix?utm_source=twitter&mbid=social_twitter&utm_social-type=owned&utm_medium=social&utm_brand=tny) - a real-life threat that many on the right continue to downplay.

Artists can't control how their work is perceived. But take it from the series' creators: They say the opening scene isn't sending some kind of coded message about what constitutes accountability or censorship.

"This isn't a commentary on cancel culture," Benioff told [*The Hollywood Reporter*](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/3-body-problem-opening-scene-netflix-china-us-conservatives-1235858922/).

"But we do tend to move in cycles in terms of human history, and we're going through a certain period of the cycle right now. There are many very significant differences between the current time and the Cultural Revolution. But there are also some similarities," Benioff said.

"It was never something where we were like, 'We should do this show because we want to make a commentary on that.' But it is interesting that the parallels are there and are hard to ignore."

By Harmeet Kaur, CNN

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