

In Marvel's *The Defenders*, use of specific colors through lighting and costuming illustrates individual character traits of the four main protagonists and highlights elements of their narrative arcs, reinforced by other aspects of filming. Eventually, through the interaction and mixing of colors this pattern develops with the characters to show their progress as a team.

Each character in Marvel's *The Defenders* is assigned a specific color that both symbolizes aspects of their character as well as their motivations. The first character introduced is Danny Rand, the Iron Fist; his designated color is green. Here, green represents Danny's prosperity as well as his connection to nature. His immense wealth and privilege is a point of contention and conflict when initially meeting with Luke Cage. It also motivates his first confrontation with Alexandra, the series antagonist, as he uses his company's connections to gain a meeting with her board. The natural element of this color comes into play more as a symbol of his abilities and training. As the Iron Fist, Danny's source of power has deep spiritual influences, partly inspired by ideas taught by the Buddhist faith. On its own this element has powerful results, but paired with other elements it amplifies the audience's perception of Danny's situation.

In the pilot episode, other camera distorting elements are introduced. During his dream, the water effect over the camera prompts the beginning of the nightmare and the hazy, frantic camerawork of the following scene is accentuated by the green lighting. These makes the scene feel dream-like and the green lighting relates the camera distortion to his own wounded spirituality after the massacre at Kun'Lun (the monastery he was trained at) that he is having his nightmare about.



*Danny's introduction*



*Danny's hazy dream sequence*

The next character introduced is Jessica Jones, represented by the color blue. A critical character arc for Jessica from her individual show was recovering from the trauma at the hands of her abuser, Kilgrave. Kilgrave is also known as the Purple Man, so her transformation from purple to blue between the two shows signifies his defeat and her movement away from that part of her life. The color blue is often used to symbolize sadness. Again, this represents both Jessica's past trauma and her current and generally unhappy life. In addition, blue is associated with tranquility, health and healing. *The Defenders* uses blue not to signify Jessica has healed, but rather that she has not. In the pilot episode audiences see that Jessica has not recovered completely from her trauma with Kilgrave and still relies on alcohol as a coping mechanism, she is first introduced in a bar bathed in blue light. Because of these lasting reverberations from her past trauma she harbors an extremely low opinion of herself and does not consider herself worthy of the title "hero". Her lack of confidence in herself and apparent resistance to join *The Defenders* later becomes an important plot element in this show. The last element of Jessica's character that is bolstered by the presence of blue is her profession. The dark blue and cooler tones are associated with elements of mystery. This reflects her role as a private investigator and hints at larger film noir aspects relevant to her character. In this specific episode we see her act cold, pessimistic, and distant towards her peers, at least initially, while focusing on solving a case.

The theme of paranoia in her PI work is accentuated by POV and voyeuristic shots of Jessica. In specific shots during the pilot episode the audience is put in a place of observance over Jessica. This is further supported by the mysteriousness of the blue and Jessica's paranoid actions seem justified.



*Jessica's introduction at the bar*



*Voyeuristic over the shoulder tracking shot*



*The camera watching Jessica from around the corner*

Luke Cage's appointed color is yellow and bright orange. Yellow is associated with warmth, happiness, and energy. Luke's first scene is of his release from prison. Especially in this pilot episode, his motivations lie in his want for a fresh start, leaving his old life behind. Yellow characterizes his outlook on life at this point in the narrative. Building off of the presence of yellow, some orange is introduced to reveal other aspects of his daily life. An orange jumpsuit is a symbol of prison, the life Luke has just left behind. Orange can also be categorized as less aggressive version of red, signifying Luke's community role in Harlem as compared to Daredevil and Hell's Kitchen. Luke is seen as a local hero, easily recognizable and accessible, whereas Matt as Daredevil is more mysterious and unknown. Yellow is also a bright, eye-catching color. In this episode and in prior *Luke Cage* episodes, audiences often see Luke wearing a dark hoodie. Besides the cultural significance of a bulletproof black man in a hoodie, lining the dark hood with a pop of yellow hints at Luke's struggle to start fresh and protect his city. This is emphasized through other aspects of filming used to portray him.

Throughout this pilot we also see Luke through many canted angles. This, paired with the yellow, hints at his skewed perception that he will be able to leave his old life. These camera angles also reinforce the association of yellow as eye-catching. In certain shots, such as the scene where he saves the grieving mother, the direct angular yellow line accents his role as the neighborhood's infamous "Harlem's Hero" as both he and the shot stand out.



*First shot of Luke in both orange costume and yellow lighting*



*Canted angles and bright yellow lighting*

The last Defender to be introduced is Daredevil, or Matt Murdock. His designated color is red. Besides the obvious connotation between red and the devil, red stands for passion, love, war, blood and anger. Matt exhibits all of these characteristics - he is a martyr for his cause. It was his his passion for justice, love for his city, and anger against corruption that led him to become Daredevil . He goes so far as to give his life for city as in the last episode he is presumed dead. Matt is also the character with arguably the most internal conflict and strife over his double life, exhibited through the color associated with pain and suffering. However, the color red also corresponds with love and desire. This symbolic use of red is especially displayed through Matt's love interests. The character of Elektra, who in the last season of *Daredevil*, died in

Matt's arms. Resurrected in *The Defenders*, even without her memories, Elektra is clearly linked to Matt through her costuming and use of red lighting. The bright red lining of her coat and arm sleeves hints at their romantic and tumultuous relationship as well as its painful end.

Red is paired with other camerawork to align viewers with Matt's red-tinted view of the world. In the cafe scene with ex-girlfriend Karen, shots of Matt placed in the final third of the frame are used for emphasis. Audiences are prompted to focus on the space outside of his ears instead of his gaze. The framing aligns perspectives with Matt who relies on his hearing to see. Paired with the red lights in the diner, this hints at his perspective on past romantic feelings for Karen and his pain over their rough ending. One influential element of costuming are the red-tinted glasses Matt often wears, as he does in the diner scene. These strongly imply that these red associated emotions are how he views the world.



*Matt's use of red lighting*



*The diner scene and Matt's red-tinted glasses*

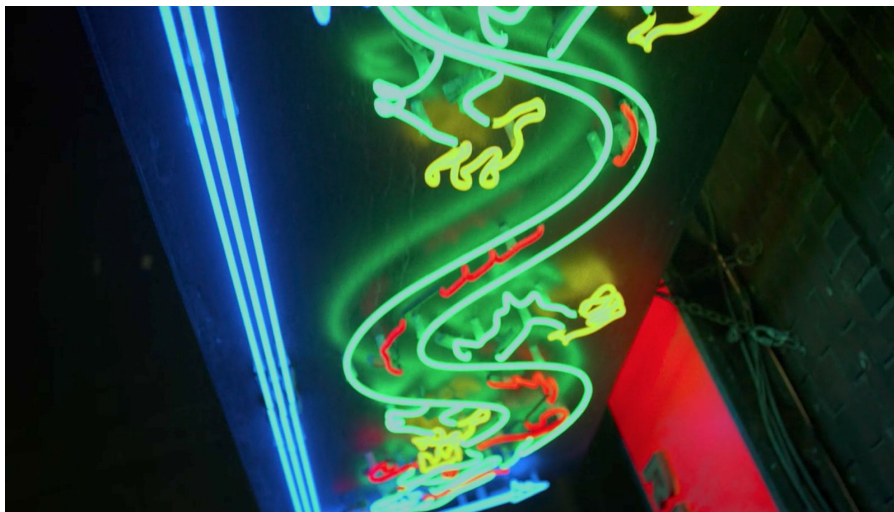
As the series continues, the evolution of the use of these colors mirrors the development of the characters. As The Defenders begin to interact with each other, their colors start to merge. Assigned colors are less noticeable and some colors are combined as two or more characters work with each other. This directly symbolizes the formation of their team as well as their growth and acceptance toward being “heroes”. *The Defenders* needed to bring together four characters from each of their separate shows into one. Practically, the show uses strong, individualized colors to help viewers know which character they are watching and effectively organizes a show with multiple converging plotlines. These specific colors of green, blue, yellow and red all express certain traits and motivations of the characters they represent. By episode four when The Defenders have all finally met and fight together for the first time, they regroup at a Chinese restaurant, thus beginning their journey as a team. Here, their colors start to mix and merge. As these colors integrate together, so does the team. The show’s continuing use of color to separate characters gets less noticeable and individualized. Colors start to show on characters they are not assigned to. This change signals to the audience that they are no longer watching four separate narratives, but The Defenders as one team.



*Blue and red as Jessica and Matt meet for the first time*



*Green and yellow as Danny and Luke talk together for the first time*



*The symbolic colors of the Chinese restaurant where they first all meet together*





*Integration of their colors as they meet at the restaurant in episode four*



*Colors become less noticeable and individualized by the season finale*