

Cinderella analysis



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Cinderella and Her Many Variations The story of Cinderella is one that is universally known and has hundreds of variations. Each variation of the story provides insight into the time period it was written, the cultural influences. This paper seeks to analyze and compare of the concept of the power of the female protagonist characters in fairy tales of Cinderella from the 20th century and early versions.

The versions of Cinderella which will be discussed and analyzed within this paper are: Charles Perrault's 1697 *Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper*, Aleksandr Afanas'ev's 1855 *Vasilisa the Beautiful*, and Tanis Lee's 1987, *When the Clock Strikes*. This paper will attempt to elaborate on what makes the women in these tales powerful and how they execute their power. The different variations will help elaborate the cultural differences of the time the tales were written, comparing the modern age text and those of the past.

Furthermore, this paper will look at how the powerful protagonist uses her power through the tales and how the authors perceive it. Finally this paper will compare the morals and the messages that the tales provide to the reader. The theme of kindness is one that remains very prominent within each variation of the tale of Cinderella. Cinderella is found to be a kind and gentle hearted young girl who is tormented by her stepmother and stepsisters in all variations of the tale.

It is most obvious that there is an abundance of phrases that Cinderella states that provide evidence of her kind ways. Although in Charles Perrault's 1697 *Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper*, Cinderella expresses her profound kindness and goodwill when she forgives her stepsisters for all the torture

they have done to her, “ Cinderella raised them up and forgave them and kissed them and said she forgave them with all her heart and wanted them only always to love her. ” (Hallett 101).

This example of the protagonist, Cinderella expressing sincere kindness provides her to have ultimate power over her sisters and she exercises her power in the most genuine way. It can also be seen in the Cinderella story from Russia, Aleksandr Afanas’ev’s 1855 *Vasilisa the Beautiful*, where Vasilisa has to deceive The Baba Yaga, where she makes use of the power of her kindness and good wits and made friends with the animals of the forest, which in turn they helped her get what she needed without being harmed.

This is a battle of good versus evil, the protagonist against the antagonist stepsisters, in which good prevails. You could reflect that the tale is providing its readers with a message that, good things come to good people. This theme of kindness and the moral messages it provides the reader can be found amongst all variations of Cinderella. Charles Perrault was a French bourgeoisie during the 17th century at this time gold was extremely luxurious and women had very little power and more importantly there was little class mobility (Lang, Andrew).

The idea of a woman magically becoming wrapped in luxury and move into royalty gave insight into the time period in which the tale was written in. At this time in the 17th century, the French Revolution was occurring and its clear that Perrault’s Cinderella sends a message to readers that with the despair of the revolution you can find beauty and inspiration else where and remain positive.

This can be seen through the powerful female protagonist who goes from the life of a peasant to a life of royalty over night and in turn lives happily ever after. A powerful and subtly wise female would have been a rare idea at this time, but the moral that no matter the corruption that surrounds you, if you stay kind and positive good things will happen to you. Beauty is another element to the empowerment of the female protagonist within the tales of Cinderella. The powerful female protagonist in all versions is very described as very beautiful.

In Aleksandr Afanas'ev, *Vasilisa the Beautiful* the Cinderella like character Vasilisa was also very beautiful, “ Vasilisa was the most beautiful girl in the village; her stepmother and stepsisters were jelous of her beauty and tormented her...Vasilisa bore all this without complaint and become more lovelier and more buxom everyday while the stepmother and her daughtsers grew thin and ugly from spite...” (Hallett 103) As a result of the jealousy her beauty established it increased her power over her stepfamily, similarly to how it did in Charles Perrault's 1697 *Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper* when the stepdaughters were jealous of the Cinderella and the mysterious beautiful women at the ball. The protagonist females beauty in these tales aids to her power and control over the antagonist characters, of the tales whether for good or evil. When comparing the female protagonist character Ashella of Tanith Lee's *The Clock Strikes* to older and original versions of Cinderella, immediately you can see that this is a much darker tale. There is a major difference in the way the female protagonist executes her power. In this modern version of Cinderella, the female protagonist, a Cinderella like character named Ashella is out to seek revenge.

In Lee's "When the Clock Strikes", the line between good and evil is obscure, it is difficult to decide which characters are good and which are the evil ones, in contrast to the older versions of Cinderella from Charles Perrault or Aleksandr Afanas'ev where the powerful and beautiful female protagonist was very clearly a good character and the stepfamily was not. Lee's tale makes clear distinctions between physical beauty and its stereotypes, that beauty may only be skin deep. The message to its readers to be cautious of people's looks as they can use them to disguise their deception. This is a much different message given to the readers of this story in comparison to previously discussed tales.

It is clear that the powerful female protagonist of the tales of Cinderella has many variations dependant on the time period and the cultural influences. Kindness and beauty are two themes that stand out the most when analyzing the way in which the protagonist character achieves power and how she executes it. Finally the morals and messages that each tale provides are insightful for the reader but are also dependent on the variables of era and culture. Words, 1044 Bibliography Hallett, Martin, and Barbara Karasek. *Folk & Fairy Tales*. 4th ed. Peterborough, Ont. : Broadview, 2009. Print. Lang, Andrew. "Perrault Biography." *Perrault Biography*. N. p. , n. d. Web. 11 Oct. 2012. < <http://www.princeton.edu/~english/ENG335/perrabio.html>>.