

The changes different societies and time periods make on "cinderella"



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Fairy tales serve as important tools in history by allowing countries and societies throughout time to share their cultural beliefs and values. As fairy tales circulate around the world, cultures adopt and adapt the basic story lines that may stem from the oral tradition to represent their societal standards. Europe is a popular location to find the origin of many fairy tales. “Cinderella” is a common fairy tale with perhaps the most adaptations from its Chinese origin in the ninth century. The most popular versions come from France, Germany, and the United States. Charles Perrault, a French author who laid the foundation for the creation of fairy tales, wrote one of the earliest versions of the classic fairytale in 1697. He was said to be the best French “poet, critic, and writer of fairy tales” (Charles Perrault). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, two brothers from Germany who are famous for their collection of fairy tales, wrote another adaptation of this tale in the early nineteenth-century, which includes a multitude of violent acts that directly reflect Germany’s economic condition during the time. They are possibly the most famous authors of fairy tales because “whether working together or independently, the Grimm brothers made unparalleled contributions to the disciplines of folklore and linguistics, inventing both fields of study and methodologies appropriate to those fields” (Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm). Published in the United States in the late twentieth-century, Walt Disney’s version of “Cinderella” is one of the most well-known today in Western cultures. Disney is a popular company known for its child-friendly movies, books, and theme parks. The lessons in “Cinderella” remain important today since countries all over the world continue to adapt its basic core values of friendship, violence and gore, and forgiveness.

An important yet common theme found in the classic fairy tale “ Cinderella” is friendship. Perrault uses the relationship between Cinderella and her fairy godmother to convey the importance and value of friendship and how friends will always be there for each other in times of need. Cinderella’s family treat her as a slave and make her to clean the house for endless hours, make her sleep in a straw bed, and supply her with rags as clothing. She can’t call any of her stepsisters’ friends as a result of the terrible treatment they make her endure. Cinderella sits in the chimney with the cinders and ashes because it is the only place she can go to keep warm and be away from her terrible family, so she is made fun of and is “ called Cinderwench” (Perrault 1).

Cinderella is ecstatic when her fairy godmother comes into her life because she sees her appearance as an opportunity to have a better life and to get away from her wretched family. When Cinderella wishes to attend a grand ball at the royal castle, the fairy godmother volunteers to magically transform rodents into majestic horses to take Cinderella to the castle, and “[she] gave each mouse, as it went out, a little tap with her wand, and the mouse was that moment turned into a fine horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse colored dapple gray”

(Perrault 2). Her actions show that she is kindly looking after Cinderella, her close friend, whom is always tirelessly slaving away in the house. The fairy godmother appears in Cinderella’s life as not only an authority figure but also as a friend who will continually be there when she is needed. True friends are similar in the sense that they will always be there for each other, no matter the situation or current circumstance. The concept of friendship in “ Cinderella” is characterized by French society during the seventeenth

century, and as a result of devastating conditions during the time, such as <https://assignbuster.com/the-changes-different-societies-and-time-periods-make-on-cinderella/>

disease and famine, people valued friendship and family life. The modern, twentieth century interpretation of “ Cinderella” centers greatly around the concept of friendship although it has been slightly altered in order to adapt to today’s society. In Disney’s version of “ Cinderella” she also has a fairy godmother who grants her wish to attend a grand ball, but the concept of friendship focuses more on the relationships between people and animals. Her friends, a handful of kind rodents, continually provide her joy throughout the tale as well as save her when her wicked stepmother locks Cinderella in an attic in attempt to keep her from meeting Prince Charming. Cinderella’s rodent friends save her by “ stealing the key to [her] door from [the stepmother’s] pocket and carrying it away” (Disney 26). This American adaptation of “ Cinderella” contains less violence and more pleasant concepts (like friendship) because it came about toward the end of the Great Depression, and Disney strove to create a story and a mood that would lighten people’s outlooks on society and life at the time. The basic core value of friendship remains strong in most versions of “ Cinderella” although different societies alter the classifications of a friendship. Another concept that changes based on societal standards is forgiveness. The adaptation of “ Cinderella” that the Grimm Brothers created in seventeenth century Germany centers on violence, gore, and unsettling imagery because this was the cultural normality for Germany at the time. In this version, Cinderella’s stepsisters cut off portions of their feet in an attempt to fit into the shoe that truly belongs to Cinderella, but each is sent home when “[Prince Charming] [looks] down, and [sees] that the slipper [is] indeed full of blood” (Grimm 166). By filling the slipper with blood, the Grimm Brothers create a dark tone that depicts how violence was a cultural normality in literature, oral stories, <https://assignbuster.com/the-changes-different-societies-and-time-periods-make-on-cinderella/>

and everyday life in Germany. If they had not added that extra detail, the gloomy atmosphere of this scene would not be fulfilled and it would no longer be an accurate representation of their society. Eventually, parents hid these gruesome fairy tales and other gorey pieces of literature from their children because disturbing imagery laced German culture, and they feared the possibility of their children growing up with thoughts of violence in their minds. Although parents gave their best attempt at keeping their children away from violence, it spread through Germany during a time of reform and “ many years constituted a continuous tug of war between many forces” (Herwig). Although the Grimm Brothers entice the readers with a dark and somber twist on “ Cinderella”, the modern-day Disney version of “ Cinderella” adapted and significantly decreased the amount of violence and gore found in the tale in attempt to help rebuild a happier, less destructive environment after the Great Depression crashed through the United States. The stepsisters cut off portions of their feet in the previous adaptation, but they simply cannot fit their feet into the shoe in Disney’s twist of the tale; this removes the majority of the gore found in the Grimm Brother’s version. Cinderella is cast aside and distracted by her stepmother while “ first Anastasia and then Drizella [try] to squeeze a large foot into the tiny slipper, without success” (Disney 26). She then appears with the other slipper and, after a series of failed attempts from the stepmother to get Cinderella to leave, then seamlessly slips her foot into the shoe. The appearance of gore and violence in “ Cinderella” is typically the result of a society’s economic condition and societal standards, so it will not always be present in the tale; similarly is the concept of friendship.

Forgiveness is a particularly concrete value that emerges in “Cinderella” on numerous occasions. Perrault includes the concept of forgiveness in his adaptation of “Cinderella” by allowing Cinderella to forgive her step sisters after all of their wrongdoings, such as forcing her to clean, cook, and wash dishes for them. When she marries Prince Charming at long last, her stepsisters “[throw] themselves at [Cinderella’s] feet to beg for pardon for all the ill treatment they made her undergo” (Perrault 5). Cinderella offers them forgiveness without hesitation and reveals that she “wanted them always to love her” (Perrault 5). Cinderella’s forgiveness of her stepsisters is a representation of France and how family bonds became stronger during the seventeenth century as a result of economic turmoil and unease. The modern, Disney version of this tale portrays Cinderella as a forgiving character with a caring heart. Although her stepsisters continuously torment her and force her to work as their maid, Cinderella remains the better person and does not allow their terrible behavior impact her actions towards them because she simply wants to be loved. In a rush attempt to return home before midnight, Cinderella lost her glass slipper when she left the grand ball at the royal castle. When Prince Charming comes to their house to ask all the women to try on the glass slipper that Cinderella accidentally lost while leaving, neither of Cinderella’s stepsisters can fit their feet in the shoe. She attempts to go try it on, but “the wicked stepmother [has] one more trick left. She [trips] [Prince Charming’s] servant, who [carries] the glass slipper, and it [falls] to the floor, where it [shatters] into hundreds of pieces” (Disney 27). Although she may not be happy with how her family treats her, Cinderella chooses to exemplify a positive attitude and constantly holds forgiveness in her heart. Her stepmother breaks the glass slipper, which is a <https://assignbuster.com/the-changes-different-societies-and-time-periods-make-on-cinderella/>

deplorable situation, but Cinderella still takes the high road and continues to forgive her family for their poor actions. Forgiveness characterizes this modern rendition of “ Cinderella” because the people living in America at the time had little money or possessions as a result of the Great Depression and the government; citizens needed to forgive the government for putting them in such a terrible situation. This core value is typically present in fairy tales in one form or another, although its use may be altered from society to society. As seen in the separate versions of “ Cinderella”, the concept of forgiveness is not always the same from year to year or from country to country, but it is usually a key value that characterizes a fairy tale.

Different societies and countries adapt “ Cinderella” to mirror common core values found in their culture, such as blood and gore, friendship, and forgiveness. The Grimm brothers are well known for their version of “ Cinderella”, which is an ideal representation of how common violence became and how families attempted to shelter their children from the prevailing gore in seventeenth century Germany. Charles Perrault’s adaptation of the same fairy tale focuses less on violence and more on the concept of friendship. This core value relates to society during the time Perrault’s “ Cinderella” appeared because disease and famine spread throughout France, killing many people, so others valued family and friendship. In similarity to Perrault’s version of this fairy tale, Disney’s adaptation contains friendship and lacks the same violence and gore that the Grimm Brother’s put in their story; Instead of violence and gore, Disney’s “ Cinderella” focuses more on forgiveness. This core value relates to the condition American society shortly after the great depression. Cultures from

different time periods change basic values in their fairy tales to fit the standards of their society and blend in. Without the desire to adopt and adapt literature from oral stories to classic novels, today's society would be extraordinarily different than it is today. We wouldn't have stories about mice magically transforming into horses, fairy godmothers, and princesses if one person had not started adapting these tales. Without the adaptation of stories, we wouldn't be where we are now.

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