

# It happy endings knowing that the chances

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It is no secret that in modern day America more than half of marriages end in divorce, yet many still fantasize their fairytale weddings and happy endings knowing that the chances of staying together for the rest of their lives is slim. These early fabrications of happy endings develop in the minds of young girls during the period of time when gender roles start to be enforced. They are not only introduced through parenting, but in the media as well.

In past princess movies and stories, men have always been the people in power. They are the kings and Prince Charmings' that are supposed to sweep every princess off their feet and provide them a happily ever after in a luxurious castle. The princesses on the other hand are always shy, quiet, demure, poised, and need some kind of saving.

The resolution of these stories always end in the prince marrying the princess or beautiful maiden, thus completing his conquest and receiving his "award." Young girls, as they are more marketable towards these stories, have adopted these elements into their own romantic life giving them false expectations of real life relationships. Princess stories limit their mindsets and does not prepare them for what the average relationship brings in store. They also push outdated gender stereotypes in a society where most are trying to progress into an era where women aren't just "princesses." In *My Problem With Her Anger*, by Eric Bartels, the husband and wife power dynamics in marriage is showcased in an opposite manner than what is depicted in princess stories. Bartels' wife is portrayed as condescending. He claims that she never appreciates what he does and that she fights with him constantly, which breaks the stereotypical traits of a princess and princely

relationship. He shows this through his use of personal pronouns such as, “ we,” “ I,” and “ she,” when speaking about himself or his wife and the way he structures his sentences to extract a different reaction from the audience.

Eric begins his piece after his long day of work to come and find two leftover dishes that have been soaking in the sink for several days. His wife and children are already fast asleep, and the responsibility of washing these dishes falls upon him. He then notes that this is “ the dark heart of the divide between men and women.” To the audience, this sounds like a man who expects to have everything done for him, and overreacts when he sees something is left undone. The dramatic remarks made over two dishes further exemplifies that. Bartels knows his wife does more in the household than he does and even admits her life is harder than his. She raises the kids, cooks, cleans, maintains the house, and even works on top of that, yet he is not satisfied with the outcome of who gets the credit. He too feels as if he has given up “ freedoms” like drinking beer and hanging out with the guys.

This is an example of how stereotypical gender roles and priorities are set up in relationships. The husband thinks giving up his free time with his friends to help out at home is one of the largest sacrifices and losses in his marriage and then wonders why his wife gets frustrated all the time. He is selfish and may have become distant to his wife’s needs because he’s too worried about pitying his situation half the time. He believes his wife’s anger roots from becoming a mother.

He describes it as “ a level of fury unlike anything she has ever experienced. And that fury won’t be kept secret.” Since he has no experience with

motherhood, and rarely has any experience in communication skills with his wife as shown in this quote,” We don’t use profanity in front of the children, unless we’re arguing angrily. We don’t talk to each other disrespectfully, except when we’re arguing angrily.

And we don’t say bad things about each other to the kids, unless, of course, we just finished arguing angrily.” Bartels’ use of “ of course” in the last sentence leads the audience to believe this is something that happens rather often than not. Instead of having civilized conversations with his wife about what makes her angry and setting boundaries, they’d rather fight than talk it out, leaving Bartles in the dark about the problems in his marriage. Bartel’s wife is emulating many characteristics of the stepmother archetype in Charles Perrault’s Cinderella. The stepmother is always played out to be the villain in many stories and in most cases are always played by women, but for what reason? The audience never sees their side of the story, and these characters are rarely ever seen with their husbands. Instead, they are a force of their own. Jacqueline Schectman, author of Cinderella and the Loss of Father-Love, expresses that “ A depleted, isolated mother has less and less to give to her child, and raising one’s family alone may well evoke the witch” The mother in Perrault’s version possesses all the power because the father or man in the house is no longer emotionally or mentally fit for the job of power of the household.

Readers can infer from the text that she is cold, evil, and incapable of love. They can also make an argument that she had probable cause for these actions. The stepmother has an absent husband, a late husband, and is a

single mother on top of all this. This adds on to the false expectations that a princess story is bound to teach children, especially young girls. No one purposefully wants to become the villain in their own narrative, but it can unexpectedly happen despite all the fantasies behind the perfect fairy tale ending.

Princess stories give people expectations that most are unable to attain in real life because again, they are meant to be fictional. Charles Perrault's Cinderella and its Disney film counterpart is one of the main princess fairy tales that contributes to problematic aspects of society, as it includes many of the topics discussed, such as gender roles, power dynamics, which can all be tied back to modern day domestic abuse. Cinderella highlights key issues with gender roles and stereotypes. It is worth noting that Disney's adaptation is based on Charles Perrault's classic, written all the way back in 1697.

Clearly, times were different, especially in terms of gender norms and stereotypes. Although the tale is centuries old, it is interesting to discover that a few ideas viewers see in the film were actually rather prevalent during the 1950s. One major common thread between 1950s gender issues and gender in "Cinderella" is the belief that marriage is the ultimate life goal. Marriage was viewed as a sense of security and escape from one's family.

This idea can be seen when observing the film through a critical lens. Every eligible bachelorette wants to be married to the Prince, from Cinderella to her step-sisters. The whole existence of a grand ball that allows a slew of single females to mingle with the Prince and hopefully solidify a marriage proposal reiterates the idea that marriage is supremely important. Upon

getting married, women were expected to stay at home and perform household chores.

Some viewers are able to draw parallels within the film. There is an expectation of Cinderella to constantly perform similar tasks, like sweeping and sewing. When she doesn't do these things, there are consequences, suggesting that it is in a woman's best interest to do the housework expected of them. Although society has a long way to go, it is easier to notice the gender roles and stereotypes that have been brought to light in Cinderella especially when considering how society has progressed in equalizing women and men. For instance, it is worth pointing out that the idea that a woman's value is determined based on how they look.

This is seen in specific instances in the film, such as when Cinderella encounters her Fairy Godmother. Initially, Cinderella is dressed quite plainly in her house clothes. Her transformation into a glamorous and impeccably dressed young bachelorette reinforces the beauty ideal. If Cinderella were to attend the Prince's ball in her maiden attire, then her chances of making a good and lasting impression on the Prince would be slim to none. Another instance where viewers observe the value of being beautiful is at the ball. When the Prince first sees Cinderella, he immediately falls in love with her based on physical appearance. Other traits of Cinderella, such as personality, were ignored by the prince.

In princess stories, the princess gets everything done for her; her servants come to aid her in any situation. Many girls grow up thinking the same way until they've faced a hard reality, but if privileged enough are still able to

think this way until the day they get married, and in marriage then realize it's not what the princess stories had advertised. Women are told to “ deal” with what their husband gives them in life. They're supposed to take whatever comes at them but still manage to keep the image of a “ good woman.

” They have to be someone who takes care of their husband, the children, someone who never seems sad, cooks, cleans, and all while maintaining a good body. These are unrealistic qualities that a woman should have to uphold. Princess stories further argue that.

For example, we take Beauty and the Beast, a tale that is taken very lightly and is seen as a beautiful romance in the eyes of many, but in fact is in a way a promoter of abuse and is useful for illustrating how pop cultural messages in children's media socialize girls (and boys) to accept and overlook intimate partner violence. The film teaches girls that a woman should be patient and supportive of her abusive partner in order to help him change his behavior and turn into a beautiful prince. Such messages are harmful when, in reality, women and girls should be encouraged to leave abusive relationships and seek help if their partner is mean, violent, and coercive.

The beast is manipulative and a horrible entity. In the story, Belle is held captive in place to save her father and is locked away by the hostile beast. He's unpleasant, angry, and controlling. As the story progresses, Belle learns to love her captor despite his unapologetic and abusive treatment.

Belle gradually sees a softer side of him she thinks is worth being loved. In real life, this would not work out. In this story, Belle believes she can change the monster from his abusive and threatening nature to someone prince-like and chivalrous. In fact you can not really change someone that easily. This gives people the impression that if you try hard enough you are able to change someone into a better person in a relationship. This way of thought leads to not even realizing you are being abused in a relationship.

Abuse is so normalized in relationships that many do not even realize they are going through it themselves. By being the Belle in any relationship, I guarantee that 99% of the time the abuser will not change themselves into the prince simply because you have a sweet nurturing nature. Chances are that if we were to extend the story of Beauty and the Beast, the beast would probably go back to old habits and try to emotionally abuse Belle. Also, to add another point to this princess story, the prince was supposed to find true love by the time he turned twenty-one. Although there's nothing wrong with being in love at twenty-one, it's the fact that he has to find love at twenty-one or else there will be consequences.

At twenty-one, in modern America, people are not regularly at full maturity and are usually still college-aged. People are still working through school, getting through their jobs, and most of the time struggling financially. This is just another pressure on top of the list of many others that society imposes on its youth to grow up faster. This is similar to saying that if you do not find love when you're young, you are incapable of being loved later on, or that something is wrong with you. Multiple Disney movies support young



marriages; the majority of the princesses were married under the age of twenty-one. The oldest princess, which is Cinderella, is only 19 years old when she finds the love of her life. Snow White was the youngest princess to get married to her true love at the age of fourteen. This shows how women are told to get married at a younger age in society and are at an unfair advantage compared to the Princes.

They are both supposed to marry at a young age, but the princes are shown to be older, therefore able to experience unmarried life for a longer time. The age of when women are supposed to be married is younger than that of the men, which exemplifies an unfair gender role. Many girls go through their princess phase and wanting to have their prince, and it's a little alarming how they already know what they want through just a story. Princess stories do not promote diversity and keep up with modern day which limits a child's way of thought. Princess stories to this day have only been heterosexual relationships. We are changing as a society, and love is possible in many different ways. If children aren't taught to be more accepting of others, seeing only heterosexual relationships in media will make them close minded and homophobic. Society is able to see this with many young children.

They've never been exposed to any LGBTQ princesses or princes, therefore the idea of that seems like something uncomfortable to them. A question that may appear when researching a question like this may be, how exactly does the princess story influence children on certain topics. Today, we have tv, movies, books, and the internet. Children are getting more and more educated in the media as they are learning in school how to do so, and

exploring on their own. They can easily access these stories through different outlets. These stories have also been passed down from generation to generation, and have been told over and over orally, through books, and now the media, like Disney princess movies.

Although I believe princess stories are harmless in intent, they carry old-fashioned values that children, mostly emulate during their lifetimes and carry these false hopes in their life that lead to several problems in relationships.