

Comparing classic literature to the lion king

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



The first animated film with sound was the 1928 Disney film Steamboat Willie. Since then, animated movies have been cranked out due to the admiration they receive from children. Disney is known world wide for their animated films. People love them because of their feel good story lines, astounding use of animation, and largely, the music incorporated into the movies. My generation especially has grown up watching what could arguably be considered " Disney classics" such as Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, and The Lion King.

Although most people still consider Disney films to be more than appropriate for children, some take a deeper look into possible underlying plots that reveal material that may no longer be deemed acceptable and " G-Rate". Robert Gooding Williams, the author of *Disney In Africa And The Inner City: On Race And Space In The Lion King*, argues that *The Lion King* depicts urban decline in the United States. " *The Lion King* marks the elephant graveyard as inner city.

It uses Whoopi Goldberg's and Cheech Marin's voices to represent the speech of two of the three prominent hyena characters as Black English and Latino slang respectively," (Gooding-Williams). He views *The Lion King* to be degrading to some races with inappropriate themes. Matt Roth, another scholar, argues in his article *The Lion King A Short History of Disney-Fascism*, that Disney supports monarchism and fascist themes due to the story line of *The Lion King*. *The Lion King* echoes all of its fascist themes: hatred of gays, communists, and minorities, and the glorification of violent male initiation and feminine domesticity all set in a bucolic suburban environment under the strong leadership of an all-male state," (Roth). He argues that Mufasa, the

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King, rules as a communist or monarchist because all animals in the beginning of the movie bow down to him instead of fleeing from a predator as they would in reality (The Lion King). Annalee Ward, author of the article The Lion King's Mythic Narrative argues that The Lion King is a biblical narrative that can teach children good moral values.

Ward uses the example of Simba, Mufasa's son, returning home to save the Pride Land from evil, or Scar, Mufasa's wicked brother, and compares it to the prophecy in the Bible of Jesus returning to save humanity from evil. Although all of these scholars have valid argument that have clear correlations to the movie, an argument that was not presented was how closely The Lion King's story line matches that of a famous Shakespeare play. I argue that The Lion King does not necessarily have an underlying plot that can only be perceived as our society, but instead is simply based off of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

The overall theme of both Hamlet and The Lion King is about responsibility and revenge. The death of the princes' fathers leaves both characters extremely downhearted. Hamlet Jr. and Simba both go through a confusing and mournful stage after losing their fathers. At one point in both plots, both Simba and Hamlet Jr. run from their responsibilities although both characters know what they need to do to avenge their fathers deaths. Another key part of the plot is that the two characters both see their father's spirit, which is a turning point for them to avenge their fathers. Mufasa and Hamlet Sr. also have striking characteristic resemblance. Both of the kings were killed by their own brothers. As kings, they both ruled their

kingdoms with peace and prosperity and were well liked (McElveen). As deceased kings they approach their sons in spirit, but neither tell their son directly to kill their murder (McElveen). Although Hamlet Jr. actually does kill his uncle Claudius, Scar is killed by the pack of hyenas that at one time served him as their leader and king. Not only do the protagonist allude to each other; the villains in Hamlet and The Lion King can also be compared to each other.

Scar and Claudius, brothers of the kings, are both in pursuit to take over the throne. Once they have succeeded in killing off their sibling and taking over the throne, both enjoy the comfortable life of being a king. Claudius holds banquets in his own honor, and marvels at all his materialistic things. Scar allows the hyenas to hunt the Pride Land until every source of food and water has been depleted to almost non-existence while he lounges in his cave eating more than his fair share of food (McElveen). As far as secondary characters goes, The Lion King's Timon and Pumba allude to Hamlet's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Both pairs of characters act as a relief from the main focus in the story in both works (McElveen). Timon and Pumba introduce a carefree style of living (also famously known as "Hakuna Mata") to Simba while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are friends that Hamlet Jr. enjoys life outside of the royal house (McElveen). A lot of today's entertainment can be related back to older literature. A lot of today's literature can also be related to theories on societies, the bible, etc. When experiencing a new piece of literature, music, or film, it is important to keep an open mind.

All of these things are considered to be a type of art and art is supposed to be open to interpretation. When interpreting The Lion King and other pieces, there are no wrong answers, just difference in opinions.

Works Cited

1. The Lion King. Dir. Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff. Perf. Jonathan Taylor Thomas and Matthew Broderick. Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1994.
2. Videocassette. McElveen, Trey. Hamlet and The Lion King: Shakespearean Influences on Modern Entertainment. Rep. N. p. : n. p. , n. d. 17 Apr. 1998. Web. 19 Apr. 2013.