

# Compare and contrast any two versions of a fairytale of your choice essay

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



Fairytales occupy a very important part of both children's literature and indeed their education. They can be fantastical and contain hidden morals which may be used by adults to warn children of dangers in society " the entire story is usually made to demonstrate a moral point" (Bottigheimer. 152). In today's society fairytales are often associated with the polished Disney movies, such has been the amount made, especially over the past decade or so. It is worth noting that this ideal is far removed from a lot of the traditional versions, and " are traditional narratives deriving mostly from oral cultures". These stories or tales started off as adults tales but were " adapted for publication with the genuine intention of making them available for children". Cinderella is one of the oldest and most popular children's fairytales, it has been incorporated into so many different versions and its appeal is not just restricted to western society but travels beyond all cultural boundaries and is truly universal.

It is in this era of television, video and indeed the cinema the modern story of Cinderella has evolved. The fact that there have been " hundreds if not thousands of literary, dramatic, musical, poetic and cinematic versions" of this rags to riches story shows its endearing appeal throughout the centuries. This appeal has even crossed over to adults' as we can see from films such as ' Pretty Woman' in which the lead character has Cinderella-like qualities. Common themes often associated with fairytales are love, heroism, loyalty, beauty (both aesthetic and inner), magic, tragedy, sibling rivalry and adversary. Due to the constraints of this essay I can explore only some of

these themes, using the ' Brothers Grimm' and ' Lin Lan ' versions of the story commonly known as Cinderella. (Tatar.

1999) No fairytale is complete without the theme of love. This theme is pertinent in the plot of all fairytales and the tale of Cinderella is no exception. The theme of love is evident in both the Brothers Grimm and Lin Lan version of this well-liked story. Both adaptations have a stereotypical happy ending with the heroine finding true love at the end of both stories. This happy ending presents itself in the Brothers Grimm version with the typical fairytale wedding in which Cinderella and her Prince are married. Similar to this, Lin Lan's version tells of how Beauty's true identity is revealed in the end to win back the heart of her love interest.

However, although both stories have a happy ending this true love does not come easy and there are many obstacles along the way. One contrast between the two versions is that Brothers Grimm version portrays the stepsisters as beautiful and their " features were beautiful and white" [117]. This explains why towards the end of the tale the Prince might believe that they might be his Cinderella. The Brothers Grimm attempt to portray that while all the sisters are quite beautiful it is only Cinderella that possesses inner beauty and that her two stepsisters, although beautiful, their hearts are " fowl and black". [117] Lin Lan's version is similar to the perception we hold today in which Beauty's stepsister, by virtue of her given name, Pock Face, is portrayed as being ugly, both aesthetically and in spirit.

One example of this is when Pock Face is sent to the scholar pretending to be her stepsister Beauty, the scholar is horrified by the sight of Pock Face and declares “ my wife was never such a monster” [129], but accepts the excuse that his love had contracted smallpox and been disfigured as a result. As well as the contrasting nature of aesthetic beauty in both tales, personality traits also differ significantly, particularly in regard to the heroines. In the Lin Lan version, the heroine has a more secure personality and plays an active part in reaching or defining her own destiny, she is the one who leaves home and bumps into her suitor. She does not sit back and allow her evil stepsister to steal her love.

She instead puts up a fight by firstly coming back as a sparrow and warning the Scholar, secondly, as a bamboo that gives Pock Face ulcers, thirdly, as a bed that sticks needles into Pock Face, and finally, as a spirit that enlists the help of an old woman to defeat her sibling and once more gain her suitors love. This shows that as well as her beauty she also has inner strength and determination. This is in stark contrast to the Brothers Grimm version in which it is the Prince who pursues his love, and the fact that Cinderella does not tell him who she is and runs away three times, this shows the insecurity of the heroine and highlights her fragile character. The customary portrayal of Cinderella is that she is as beautiful and as kind of heart on the inside as she is on the outside, is true in the Brothers Grimm version. Lin Lan’s version does vary slightly and doesn’t portray her as wholly good. This is shown in her disdain towards the suitors that ask for her hand in marriage before she meets the scholar.

She does not come across as angelic in the way she refuses the fishmonger, rice broker and oil merchant by pointing out their failings. Nor does she seem in any way saintly when she sends her stepmother Pock Face's roasted remains; I feel this is done in revenge for the stepmother killing and devouring her own mother (cow) earlier in the story. This shows a different side than the one we see in the Brothers Grimm version where asked by her father what she would like as a gift she replies that the "the first branch that brushes against your hat on your way home" [117] will do. This is in direct contrast to her stepsisters who are materially driven and ask for " Pearls and Jewels" [117]. Another common theme is sibling adversary.

On a point of comparison both tales involve evil stepsisters. In the Brothers Grimm version, Cinderella has two stepsisters who are portrayed as cruel and heartless and constantly taunt Cinderella because of her dirty and unkempt appearance. This cruel behaviour is conveyed when they order Cinderella to attend to their appearance prior to the ball, knowing that Cinderella herself will be denied the privilege of going to the ball. Similarly in Lin Lan's version there is also a stepsister. This stepsister adopts the role of the cruel sibling who mistreats her sibling. This is clearly portrayed when Pock Face orchestrates her sisters' death by asking Beauty to look into the well and then proceeds to push her in and ultimately this leads to Beauty's untimely death.

When Beauty comes back in her various guises her stepsister does all she can to keep her stepsister down. This is demonstrated when Pock Face kills the sparrow, cuts down the bamboo shoots and throws out the bed in her

attempts to suppress Beauty. Another universal theme associated with fairytales that lends itself to comparison in these two tales is the ultimate demise that befalls the evil stepsisters at the end of both stories. The Brothers Grimm tell of how the wicked pair have both their eyes pecked out as a punishment “ for their wickedness and malice” [122] and get their comeuppance for their wrongdoings towards Cinderella by the fact that they suffer “ blindness for the rest of their lives” [122]. In the Lin Lan version, Pock Face suffers an even more cruel demise when she firstly walks up a ladder of knives where “ her feet were cut to the bone” [131] and ultimately she jumps into a pot of boiling oil and doesn’t appear again. It is worth noting that Pock Face’s demise is self-inflicted as she is the person who decides on these tasks when trying to suppress her stepsister.

In this version of the tale the cruel stepmother also suffers death as a punishment for her treatment of Beauty. This differs from the Brothers Grimm where no such fate befalls the evil stepmother, in fact there is no mention of what happens to the stepmother following Cinderella’s wedding. Both tales reinforce the notion that if you are cruel in life it will ultimately catch up with you in the end and that good people are rewarded and bad people get punished. This also uses the perception that most fairy tales convey to us; the ideal of good always prospering over evil. The use of animals is prominent in both versions of this tale and indeed it can be noted that the heroine’s departed mother’s spirit is represented by the use of animals.

In Lin Lan's version the mother is reincarnated as a Cow and it could be argued that the Brothers Grimm use a little white bird to personify the late mother's spirit. These animals help the heroine achieve the various sorting tasks set out for her by the evil stepmother. In Lin Lan's version the cow meets a terrible end when the evil stepmother finds out about the help Beauty is receiving. She kills the cow and proceeds to eat it which represents another cruel act that Beauty is forced to endure.

Beauty is also transformed into a sparrow after her own death. In the Brothers Grimm version the birds do not endure the same fate as the Cow but are there to warn the Prince about the blood coming from each stepsister's shoe and they are also there at the end to peck out the stepsister's eyes and exact their own revenge for the treatment of Cinderella. The wicked stepmother is a character that is prominent in both versions. In both stories the heroine's mother dies and the father remarries but this new stepmother has no time for her new stepdaughter and does not treat her as she does her own children but instead treats her more like a servant and gives her cruel tasks to do. In the Brothers Grimm version the stepmother takes away her clothes and when Cinderella begs her to go to the ball that her stepsisters will be attending she mocks her " how can you go to a wedding when you're covered in dust and dirt? " [118].

When she pleads, her evil stepmother gives her a set of horrible tasks to do and even though Cinderella manages to achieve the near impossible task she is still denied the opportunity to go to the ball and the stepmother instead takes her own daughters and leaves the distraught Cinderella

behind. Lin Lan's version does not use a festival as the focal point but instead the theatre is used. It is the wicked stepmother's refusal to let the heroine attend these events that is common to both. The evil stepmother sets near impossible tasks for her stepdaughter and when Beauty manages to achieve these tasks the vile stepmother learns that Beauty was receiving help from her natural mother who is in the form of a cow and has the cow killed and eats it. This intolerable cruelty shows how heartless the stepmother is. The fact that at the end of the tale the stepmother is sent her own daughters remains as a dish is ironic and is payback for the killing of the heroine's mother earlier in the story.

Conclusion As with all versions of fairytales there are always certain differences and the two I selected to examine are no exception. However, I believe that the same essential moral of good triumphing over evil is portrayed in both versions. In the end the heroine succeeds and her evil stepsister(s) suffer the consequences of their cruel actions. Both versions portray the female lead as being beautiful but I believe that Lin Lan's version better portrays the character's inner strength and determination.

It is this determination that allows her to win out in the end. The use of animal symbolism is common to both tales and I feel this serves to further engage the interest of the child. Furthermore the role of the sinister stepmother is central to both plots; however, in Lin Lan's version the stepmother suffers more than her Brothers Grimm counterpart. The Brothers Grimm version appears to be more in line with the Hollywood perception that is commonly held today. I believe it is essential in our upcoming role as



teachers that we have the ability to critique various written versions of fairytales, and not just rely on the screen version that most of us are accustomed with.

As our classrooms are becoming ever more multicultural it may be beneficial to consider other versions of fairytales. I feel that this assignment has been a good preparation as I had never realised the various versions of the same story that exist and how these tales can be so contrasting but yet deliver the same moral meaning.