

A bettelheim analysis of disney's pinocchio essay sample



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Bruno Bettelheim utilizes a psychoanalytical framework in analyzing the elements of fairy tales thereby providing greater value to children literary works beyond their creative and entertainment value. Under this approach fairy tales are treated as channels through which people express their universal fears and desires which are often repressed into their consciousness that in turn results to psychological imbalances. Thus, fairy tales serve as instructive reflections for both children and adults on how to cope with such repressions and free one self from distorted emotions. Walt Disney's version of " Pinocchio" is one such story in which many people can relate to the psychological experience of the characters.

The conception of " Pinocchio" per se immediately reflects the repressed desire and atypical behavior of Geppetto (Pinocchio's maker and father) to have a son. In Collodi's original text of the story, Geppetto was distressed, depressed and desperate since the death of his wife who has died in childbirth along with their child. Disney's version of the story however disregards if not trivialized Geppetto's mourning about his family's death. The familial loss and grief of Geppetto served as the context that prompted him to sculpture this artificial wooden puppet and treat it as his own son. Thus, the preliminary conception of Pinocchio already manifested an aberrant or deviant condition of a distraught man entrenched in deep anguish and perpetual despondency. Similar to any person in grief and with the strong desire to bring their loved ones back to life, Geppetto also held on to this despairingly determined faith that a father's love can be transformative. And indeed with the help of a benevolent fairy, the wooden puppet was brought to life.

At this point, the initial setting of the story of Pinocchio directly reflects the delivery of “pleasing and wish fulfilling images”, which Bettelheim used to criticize fairy tales. In this instance, Geppetto’s psychological problem was successfully addressed and cured by an unrealistic and impossible occurrence when his fantasy of having a child made out of wood was realized by wishing upon a falling star. This creates a distortion of reality of how to face problems by facing one’s grief and accepting one’s loss. Furthermore, the transformation of Pinocchio into a real boy at the end of the story serves as a culmination of a fantasy as a happy ending, which can further keep children out of touch with reality and drive them to hold on and live in impossible fantasies.

The conception of Pinocchio was ultimately initiated by Geppetto’s selfish desires and interests of having his own son which will rescue him from his depression and melancholy without due consideration to its consequences or ill effects to other people. When Pinocchio was brought to life by the fairy, Geppetto’s fantasy and dream was fulfilled. The fulfillment of his dreams however translates to the Calvary of Pinocchio who was brought to life without conscience or without soul. While Geppetto becomes happy for having a son, Pinocchio has to contend with a miserable and discriminated life of being a living puppet in a human world. As Bettelheim points out, fairy tales tend to be one-sided and do not reveal so much of the selfish side of human nature as personified by Geppetto in his selfish act of creating a child for the sake of his own happiness with disregard to the sacrifice that his “puppet” son will undergo.

While Pinocchio is given life, he still remains a wooden puppet. And he must earn the privilege of becoming a real human by proving traits of bravery, honesty and selflessness. As a living puppet, Pinocchio also reflects the typical terrors that people generally fears. These are the fear of being ridiculed at, being vulnerably exposed and being alienated for being different. As social animals, social acceptance or belongingness is one of the most important needs of humans, which incidentally falls in the third level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This fear which is typified by the marginalized sectors such as ethnic minorities, homosexuals, disabled people and the aged, among others, is a common social ill that continuously plagued modern society.

And consistent with Bettelheim's framework, the hero, Pinocchio, went out of the world to explore and find himself. He ended up in Pleasure Island, where he learned vices like gambling, drinking, and smoking, which are openly depicted as bad or evil. As criticized by Bettelheim, fairy tales tend to simplify the delineation of good and evil in its stories which is not entirely clear in reality. Instead of condemning such acts as absolutely evil, Pinocchio's engagement in the adult vices for instance can be interpreted as the hero's longing to transition from being a child or a boy (or a puppet) to an adult, which or a part of the human development process. (Maxwell, p237) In another explanation, Pinocchio's engagement in vices or deviant behavior can be caused by his severe emotional disturbances such as his alienation from society for being a puppet. (Bettelheim, p 67-68).

Ethical dilemmas also exist in the world because the distinction of what is right and wrong is not absolutely established. For instance, state operated <https://assignbuster.com/a-bettelheim-analysis-of-disneys-pinocchio-essay-sample/>

lotteries have not been absolutely labeled as immoral because while it is a form of gambling, it helps give substantial contribution to charity and in financing public services of the government that makes it morally acceptable. Meanwhile, the delinquent boys who got caught in the vices in the Pleasure Island were condemned by literally being transformed into donkeys. Thus, the story also puts final judgment to people who have become delinquent without due process of understanding their predisposition that drove them to doing vices and without providing any opportunity for changing or reforming their character. This scenario does not reflect our modern justice system that puts premium on reformative justice.

Bettelheim's analytical approach to fairytales helps magnify the psychological and philosophical messages, themes and implications of the stories that add value to the importance of children's literature. As shown in the analytical discussion of Pinocchio, the story provides for an understanding of the true consciousness of human existence as well as a means for understanding and achieving psychological maturity.

Works Cited:

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