

Walt disney and fairy tales

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Are the Disney tales having a good or bad effect on children? Fairy tales are very old; many of them had been orally passed on through the centuries, and evolved a lot. This kind of story, initially intended for children, often involved some fanciful creatures or extraordinary adventures. Fairy tales might include a moralistic stance or warning against dangers but always have an ethical undercurrent to the story, a “ lesson” to be learned. In this paper, we are going to discuss the good and the bad effects of Disney fairy tales on children.

Walter “ Walt” Elias Disney was an American producer, very popular for recycling old fairy tales by turning them into famous cartoons. He adapted those stories for children. Fairy tales have both negative and positive effects on children but positive effects outweigh the bad ones. Walt Disney has often been criticized for the movies that he made. People have found some dialogues racist or sexist. Despite that, nobody can deny that Disney movies have been parts of everyone’s childhoods, and that children have learned a lot by watching them.

In these following lines, we will try to demonstrate whatever Disney fairy tales teach children to be tolerant, teach children to be safe, and the importance of listening to their parents or guardians, or if Disney fairy tales have bad effects on children, teaching them some bad way of living. Even if racism and discrimination are still important problems in our actual society, fairy tales can teach children to become more tolerant. In our society, acts of brutality and hateful speech are common, and often “ engendered by increasingly young children. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), children between 2 and 5 years of age

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start to become aware of race, ethnicity, gender and disabilities. (They can accurately identify “ Black” and “ White” when labeling pictures, dolls and people.) Children learn stereotypes and attitudes about race from their parents, caretakers and the world around them (Linn & Poussaint, 1999). This world includes television, books, the Internet and, of course, movies and fairy tales. Actually, modern cartoons are more and more violent, and awful things are seen on TV or in daily life.

However, each Disney movie gives a lesson of tolerance. Let’s take for example the Disney movie Lady and the Tramp his fairy tale takes place in the 1950s and stages two main characters with two different ways of life. The “ Lady” is a female dog that lives in a sumptuous house, and had good manners. The “ tramp” is a wandering male dog that does not have any education. At first blush, anybody would think that they would never meet each other, let alone fall in love. Indeed, in most people’s minds, persons coming from different standards of living cannot be together, especially during that time.

Despite that, Walt Disney decides to show the viewers that even if two are different, it is possible to be together, and to be in love with each other. For children looking at this Disney movie, it can be a real lesson of tolerance. Indeed, it shows that even if they do not look the same, even if they are black or white, they are still equal. It is really important to teach children tolerance, especially in our actual society, due to the many ethnic problems that we face, not only with skin color, but also with religions or cultures.

Let's look to another example, *The Beauty and the Beast*. This fairy tale is focused on how physical appearances are present in our minds. "Classics such as *Beauty and the Beast* emphasize the importance of character and attitude over physical appearance" (Kung, 2011). The 'beauty' named Belle, meets the Beast, once a handsome prince turned into a hideous beast by an enchantress. This curse will be cancelled only if the Beast finds someone who will love him in spite of his appearances. The Beauty would have to fight her first judgments about the Beast to finally discover his inner beauty.

This fairy tale teaches children not to judge people based on the way they look, but instead on what is inside them. In our society, it is important to teach children not to focus on differences, but on similarities. "Given the influence the Disney ideology has on children, it is imperative for parents, teachers and other adults to understand how such films attract the attention and shape the values of the children who view and buy them (Giroux, 1995). " Disney movies also teach children to be careful, and safe.

According to Minot Pettinato, many Disney programs show children the importance of being safe and listening to your guardians » (Pettinato, 2011). Actually, when fairy tale characters are not listening to their parents, they often live through many bad adventures. Regarding the *Little Mermaid* the 28th Disney movie, released in 1989, Ariel, a mermaid, daughter of the King Triton, ruler of 'Atlantica' is totally fascinated by the human world. Ariel is said to be the first Disney heroine to display "more modern and unconventional" looks (Yzaguirre 52.) She meets a boy Prince Eric, and falls in love with him.

Her father, King Triton, told her to forget about this boy but she disobeys. She went through many troubles just because she wanted to find her lover, without listening to her father's advice. Henry Giroux, a famous cultural critic, describes her as “ a cross between a typical rebellious teenager and a Southern California fashion model” (Hoisington, 233). Everybody has to imagine this beautiful California Girl, completely free and carefree. Ariel is exactly this beautiful girl straight out of a teenager magazine, urging you to live wild by only following your passions.

Even so, the story of The Little mermaid proves that this rebellious life is not so idyllic. If we take a look to another Disney movie, such as Pinocchio, the scenario is the same. Pinocchio rebelled against his father's advice and became lost and kidnapped. At the end of both movies, the two main characters, Ariel and Pinocchio, understand why it was important to listen to someone older, and take into account advice that they give. Morals like this inform children to listen to advice given by their parents and to stay safe. Nevertheless, some researchers have shown that Disney movies have some bad effects on children.

Because they identify with the main character, children learn that to achieve their higher goal in their lives, they have to be attractive. Liz Grauerholz, an associate professor of sociology at Purdue University researched the bad effect of fairy tales and shows: “ From early childhood, girls are read fairy tales about princesses who achieve vast riches simply because their beauty makes them special. ” Children have to understand, that is not true, genuine

beauty is not a true argument in the real life, children are not going to have the best job of their life, only because they are beautiful.

They have to understand they need to work at school, have a diploma, and be really smart to really have what they want. Grauerholz also says parents need to be aware that some stories tell children that unattractive people are more likely to be evil and reinforce traditional gender roles that may be confusing for today's young women. In fact, in our society, we try to teach to our little girls to be independent, and do not wait for someone for anything. However, in every Disney fairy tale, Princesses or girls need to be saved by a man. That is not a good example for little girls. They have to learn they do not need anyone to find job, to have a house, or to succeed in their lives. Even though some people find Disney movies useless and unrealistic, it is still a good way to teach life to children, with clear images, and examples. Children can identify with the Disney movies' main characters, and transpose different morals to their own lives. Racism and discrimination will never be avoided, but we can help children to understand why it is a bad thing, by showing them Disney movies that state this problem. Modern racism includes not only skin color or religions, but also standard of living or physical appearances.

In our everyday life, friendship and love values are tarnished, with socials networks for example. Indeed, with Internet, It is now really easy to become friends with someone, and then forgot him the day after. However, it is fundamental for children to learn real value of relationships. Disney movies can be helpful for parents who want to teach to their children the importance

of friendship and love in our daily lives. Nowadays, the world is getting more and more unsafe for everyone, especially for children who have no defense method.

With all the Internet facilities, a child could easily be influenced by an evil-minded person. This is why it is necessary for parents to inform their children about the importance of obedience, by showing them Disney movies. To conclude, even though some people think that they are unrealistic and they are bad, Disney movies can be a good way to teach important ideas and values of life to children. In fact, there is always the lesson behind each movie, but you also have to talk to your children, showing them the good way to live because movies cannot be the only way of learning.

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