

# The disneyfication of beauty and the beast folklore



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The later Disney revisions follow this same formula, even though young adult women's values have changed. Modern values override the archetypal storyline in *Beauty and the Beast* as well. Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve wrote the first version of *Beauty and the Beast* in 1740. Disney has made many changes from that original. For example, there is a battle in the end of the Disney movie instead of a journey. Disney made the final scenes a fight between two guys over girl, diminishing her role.

In the original version, she has returned to him after a visit to her family, deciding to return to him out of a sense of duty, and a love she does not realize until she fights through the forest and reaches him. Again, the meaning is lost in the Disney retelling. Disney tries to return to the archetype and in the end, as the Beast lay dying, she does declare her love for him and he transforms into a prince. Belle seems like a good role model, she reads and sees through Gaston's handsome exterior, but she still is demeaned into a prize to be protected and won by the end of the movie.

Structurally, we've lost Beauty as hero: she who instigated the action by asking for a rose no longer asks for a rose; she who almost killed the Beast with her lack of perception but instead saved him by developing perception becomes an observer of two guys fighting over a girl. May the best man win. He does, but the woman has lost in the process. It's not enough to pay lip service to women's intelligence by propping a book up in front of a gorgeous female or showing her disdain for a macho suitor, when she's been denuded of her real power.

Doesn't all this reflect an ongoing condition in our society? Some of us don't like what we see here because we are seeing what's happening to us.

(Hearne, 102) Belle does not request her father bring her a rose, and he does not take a rose from the Beast. He simply goes in an open door after being lost in the woods and is held prisoner for trespassing. Belle is no longer the dutiful daughter, going to the Beast as payment for the theft of a rose, but takes her father's place because he is sick.

Yes, that does seem noble, but doesn't her later action seem a bit like Stockholm syndrome, if she is indeed a prisoner to begin with? Belle is repeatedly rescued by others both by Mrs. Potts and by her son, Chip, again demoting her from the role of hero. Young women in the 1700's were often sent off to arranged marriages that seemed frightful. This story taught them that they could learn to love and leave their families and childhoods behind. Disney uses a chase scene to get Belle back to the Beast instead of allowing her to make the trip out of duty and love.

Other critics have complained that Disney has created an abusive situation, not a love story. Some argue that young women will think they can change a man who acts like a beast and will end up abused. In the original story, the Beast looks terrible and frightening, but he is really kind and gentle. The message of the story is that you should not judge someone by what they look like. An ugly outside can hide a loving heart. Disney changed this. The company decided to create a Beast with a 'very serious problem'.

Disney's Beast terrifies his household and frightens Belle, his prisoner. The Beast does not attack Belle, but the threat of physical violence is present. In

the Disney movie, Belle changes the character of the Beast. Her beauty and sweet nature change him from a beast into a prince, from someone who is cruel to someone who is kind. So the movie's message is very different from the fairy tale. The movie says, if a young woman is pretty and sweet natured, she can change an abusive man into a kind and gentle one. In other words, it is a woman's fault if her man abuses her.

This is another dangerous message for young girls because it is not true, if Belle lived in the real world she would almost certainly become a battered wife. (<http://www2.gol.com/users/bobkeim/Disney/diswomen.html#beautybeast>)

However, I think Walt is in the clear on this point. The Beast isn't a man who acts abusively; he is really a BEAST, transformed by an enchantress. I think the critics focus too much on the 20th century meaning of the word beast. Even the Disney critics in the Mickey Mouse Monopoly documentary agree with me,

And Belle does not approve of or submit to the Beast's abuse or violent rages-she refuses to eat or come out of her room; she is attracted to his sweetness and kindness only after he begins to transform himself. The terms of his curse require that he learn to love another and earn her love, an explicit acknowledgment that it is he who must change his unforgivable behavior. And it's also clear that Belle rejects the macho masculinity of Gaston; in fact, his sexism and aggressiveness make him the villain of the movie.