

Cinderella: need men to go to the movies



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The story of Cinderella began in ancient China and has since been translated and recreated numerous times into stories, plays, and even movies. Perrault and Disney's versions of Cinderella took special interest to Louis Bernikow, in which she analyzed in her essay "Cinderella: Saturday Afternoon at the Movies". In the essay, Bernikow shows that "there are two worlds in the Cinderella cartoon, one of women, one of men" (270), and that the women in the story need men. In "Cinderella: Saturday Afternoon at the Movies", the women need men to secure social class, lift them from poverty, and give them a feeling of self worth.

In the essay, "Cinderella: Saturday Afternoon at the Movies", the author makes a point that women need men in order to secure their "ticket" to social class. This is shown by women in Cinderella constantly competing for a man which leads them into a trap of being obsessed with their appearance. "They are obsessed with their mirrors, straining to see what men would see" (271) because "class mobility is at stake" (270). This is what drives the competition between the women because there is seemingly no other way to achieve their goal. Even the magical fairy godmother cannot change Cinderella's social class permanently, for she can only grant this power until midnight. Bernikow shows in her essay that in order for a woman to gain permanent social class, she needs a man.

Just as only a man can secure a woman's social class, Bernikow demonstrates that a woman equally needs a man to lift them from poverty. "The rags-to-riches moment" (272) in Cinderella was only possible with the help of the Prince, a man. This point is extremely accurate with the Cinderella story and how "the young girl is lifted from a lowly powerless

situation by a powerful man” (273). If the Prince had not come and found Cinderella after searching high and low for the owner of the glass slipper, Cinderella would return the following day to being the household “ drudge”. This very accurately depicts that, in the woman’s world of Cinderella, a woman needs a man to escape poverty and powerlessness.

After a woman is lifted above poverty and engaged in a social class, the author agrees that men help give them a feeling of self worth. This feeling of self worth is magnified even more if she does not have to work. The only work that a woman must do in the story of Cinderella, according to Louis Bernikow, is balancing indolence and beauty. When this is the only work that a woman must do, it creates a mutual feeling of self worth between the woman and the man that provides for her. In “ Cinderella: Saturday Afternoon at the Movies”, Bernikow states that “ a man prides himself on having a wife who does not work; it increases his value in the eyes of other men; it means he provides well; it enforces conventional bourgeois ‘ masculinity’” (274). This conveys a feeling of love and worth to a woman, knowing that she has a man that cares and provides for her.

Cinderella does not have this commodity, and in return, must do dirty housework while her hateful stepsisters pursue a wonderful lifestyle that may only be provided by a man. In this pursuit, the stepmother is even willing to go to the extreme lengths of self mutilation in order for her daughter to have a chance with the Prince. This clearly shows that “ in order to survive, a woman must have a husband” (274). In “ Cinderella: Saturday Afternoon at the Movies”, Bernikow validates that there are two worlds in Cinderella, and that within these worlds, a woman does need a man. The <https://assignbuster.com/cinderella-need-men-to-go-to-the-movies/>

necessity of a man breeds competition and rivalry between the opposite sex because only a man can provide social class, extravagance, and self worth. The author points out that the women in Cinderella obsess over being pretty and that this in fact, is the reason why Cinderella is treated so poorly by her stepmother and stepsisters.

However, this is not only a story, but somewhat a reality that can be rooted back to centuries before Perrault and Disney.