

Gender roles and relationships between men and women in petrified man and snow wh...

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Gender has always been a controversial topic among humans and will continue to be this way. This has been shown through many works of literature through many generations and societies. The Petrified Man by Eudora Welty, and Snow White by Brothers Grimm, are two works of literature that I will discuss that show these controversies through old literature. Petrified Man and Snow White effectively portray gender roles, norms, and relationships between men and women in the societies discussed in these stories. Although both of these stories are quite different from each other, they portray these relationships and gender roles in many ways.

Petrified Man contains three main women characters, Leota, Mrs. Pike, and Mrs. Fletcher. This short story does not portray typical accounts of gender roles and norms. The women in this story have strong roles in their society unlike the men. Leota works at the beauty parlor and is known for her gossiping which is a typical stereotype for women. Once the gossip starts about her own customer, Mrs. Fletcher, things take a turn. Leota informs Mrs. Fletcher that Mrs. Pike has been discussing the fact that Mrs. Fletcher is pregnant which should be a private topic and not discussed with the whole parlor. Beauty parlors are where women go to feel relaxed and pretty not to go to be gossiped about. Once being discussed about; Mrs. Fletcher no longer feels the excitement for her pregnancy which is something every woman should be able to feel excitement for. A theme that ties into gender roles in this story is popularity. Leota is not as close with Mrs. Pike as she makes them seem to be and this is all for the looks of popularity which is also another typical norm for women that they all want to seem popular. Men are not seen as strong and independent in this short story like they are

typically portrayed as. The women in this story all show their true colors to the audience than how they try to make themselves out to seem by gossiping about anything and anyone. The men in this story do not work and rely on the women for income and support. This may be the author, Eudora Welty, trying to show a point through her own story that without women, men would not be able to thrive. Later in this story, Mrs. And Mr. Pike are reading one of Leotas magazines in which they see a familiar face, Mr. Petrie. They are surprised to see that he is wanted for \$500 for raping several women. Leota is upset when she realizes that she could have turned him in for the reward money and tries to convince Mrs. Pike to not turn him in but Mrs. Pike refuses. Although men are not shown in this story, Welty makes sure they are discussed amongst the women. Through the talk of the men, it is noticeable that the women are dominated by the men's thoughts and how they view themselves. Leota adores her husband, at least that is what she makes sure others think, even though he is out of work and they are financially unstable because of it. She also allows the rapist; Mr. Petrie dominates her life because she was not the one who was able to report him as the rapist and get the money. Mrs. Fletcher also lets her husband dominate her life along with everyone else. She is tempted to not have the baby anymore and Leota tells her that her husband would be unhappy and may beat her if she were to do such a thing and Mrs. Fletcher denies. The story ends with Mrs. Pikes son, Billy boy, taunting the women about their wealth and intelligence informing them that he may too grow up to be a bad man.

Brothers Grimm portrays gender roles and expectations in Snow White effectively throughout this story. This story was written in the 19th century and has been rewritten many times since then. This particular version by Brothers Grimm contains more harsh imagery and expectant gender roles than the famous Disney version. This version of Snow White portrays the typical housewife and beauty scenario. The queen, who is also Snow White's evil stepmother, comes to despise Snow White because her mirror informs her that Snow White is the " fairest one of all". Women do not typically handle well being told that another is much more beautiful. This is also true in today's society that women strive to be the most beautiful. The queen takes on a typical jealous gender role of a woman once being told that she is no longer the " fairest one of all" which leads her to find revenge in Snow White and act in a crazy manner. Women are expected to look beautiful at all times especially in the society which this book was written during. Since the queen was no longer the most beautiful by the mirror who is viewed as a man, she viewed that as losing because she wanted to be the best and most beautiful. Not only does the queen take on the typical gender role of a woman, Snow White does as well. Snow White takes on the feminine gender role that women are kind, beautiful, and powerless. The queen insists that the huntsman finds Snow White and kills her but once he finds her, he decides against it because of her beauty and innocence. Once she finds the dwarfs house, they decide to let her stay because of her beauty as well. This portrays a materialistic relationship between men and women because if it were not for Snow White's beauty she may have been killed by the huntsman or been turned away by the dwarfs. Once the dwarfs found Snow

White, they came to a deal that they would offer her protection in exchange for her doing housework for them. The dwarfs state “ if you keep house for us, cook, make the beds, wash, sew, knit, and keep everything neat and tidy, then you can stay with us, and we’ll give you everything you need.”

(Brothers Grimm 85) This portrays the relationship between men and women that women must do all of the housework which is still seen in today’s society. The story ends with the evil queen coming to find out that Snow White has too become a queen which leaves the evil queen scared and powerless. The queen had been jealous the whole time wanting revenge on Snow White but once she sees that Snow White gains power she knows she can no longer hurt her and she no longer has power.

Brothers Grimm, in their story Snow White and Eudora Welty in her story Petrified Man, effectively portray the images of gender roles, norms, and relationships between men and women in these societies and how it has led to these roles still being seen today. Petrified Man is a great example because it shows the opposite of the typical norms one usually sees and reads about because the women are working while the men stay home doing nothing. Although it does show this unusual norm, this story shows typical gender roles as well such as men dominating women’s thoughts and lives. Women are also seen in this story constantly gossiping and worrying about what others think of them which was typical for women then and now. Snow White effectively portrays gender roles and relationships between men and women in that beauty and competition is a major part in a woman’s life which can lead to jealousy and anger as seen through the evil queen. The dwarfs demand Snow White to do all of their chores in exchange for her

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protection which expresses the typical gender role that women do the housework. Overall, these stories effectively portray the gender roles, norms and relationships between men and women, and they are still seen today.