Happily Ever After in the media?

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EDT180B
May 9, 2008
How does the prevalence of Disney's fairy tales affect our vision of women?

WARNING: These fairy tales may contain language and imagery that is detrimental to your child. Use appropriate judgment when allowing your children to view and absorb the content of these stories. Be certain to remind them that they have potential to be strong, confident, independent women. They need not emulate the subservience of the characters shown.
Once upon a time there was a beautiful young girl who wanted to grow up to be just like Cinderella. She pranced around the house in a crown and a fancy dress, knowing that her evil stepsister could never keep her from being a member of royalty. She had an undying faith that when she grew up, her strong, handsome prince would rescue her on his white horse. They would ride off into the sunset and have an extravagant wedding. And, of course, they would live happily ever after.

Dear Reader,

The paragraph above contains a plethora of stereotypes that are fed to us beginning at a young age and then normalized throughout the years. This is an appalling detriment to women and men alike. We are fortunate enough to live in a relatively progressive society, making it even more mind-boggling that the unsuitable themes present in fairy tales can still be perpetuated.

Theoretically, that young girl would eventually grow up. She would learn that being beautiful does not mean that she is incapable. She would learn that a man does not need to rescue her, and even if he did, he would most likely not be riding a white horse during said rescue. This grown girl would also realize that an extravagant marriage does not always lead to happily ever after. She would know that marriage takes work. Hard work.

However, some girls do not have those revelations. In fact, I’ve heard many of my friends say things like, “Someday my prince is going to come,” or other phrases of the sort. These same friends also watch shows like The Bachelor or Joe Millionaire. Do not get me wrong; I see the need for fairy tales. Pretending and fantasizing is an important part of childhood. But when these illusory elements are modernized and authenticated as a part of our adult society, they become detrimental.

Strong, independent women are not shown in fairy tales. Princesses never have jobs. Marriage is their only goal in life. Moreover, their lives are solely defined by the handsome men in the story. I do not mean to sound cynical because I am not. I watch Disney movies; I sing along to the songs; I think it’s cute when the girls I baby-sit dress up like Belle and Cinderella. I see a place in our culture for fairy tales. But, more importantly, I see a place for empowered women.

Sincerely,

Tori Grinberg
DICTIONARY OF FAIRY TALE TERMS

CHARACTERS

Prince (noun):
1. Handsome savior for distressed females
2. Heir to substantial estate
3. Strong owner of a white horse
   *The handsome prince saves the princess from a life of loneliness.*

Princess (noun):
1. Brunt of mistreatment who is naturally beautiful with fair skin and a petite figure
2. Rescuee of the aforementioned handsome prince who is desperate to be married
   *The handsome prince married the poor girl, making her a beautiful princess.*

Father (noun):
1. Widower but likely remarried
2. Trigger to a considerable sacrifice made on the part of his daughter
   *The girl’s father is unable to protect her from his new wife.*

Mother (noun):
1. Angel because of a tragic death
2. Protector of mistreated daughter
   *The girl’s mother was so kind and sweet natured.*

Step-Mother (noun):
1. Money-hungry, evil new wife to the father
2. One who mistreats her step-daughter because of jealousy
   *The evil step-mother makes the girl wear rags and clean the floor.*

Step-Sister (noun):
1. Evil daughter of the father’s new wife who is just as jealous and evil as her mother
2. Ugly rival of beautiful girl
3. Desperately wants to marry the prince
   *The evil step-sister pretended that the glass slipper fit her foot so that the handsome prince would want to marry her.*

Evil Supernatural (noun):
1. Element with ability to place curses
2. Evil factor that usually has motives of revenge or jealousy
   *The evil supernatural element places a curse on the man to turn him into a beast.*

Fairy Godmother (noun):
1. Watchful eye over the girl; protector of her best interest
2. Can be the spirit of the dead mother
   *The fairy godmother turned a pumpkin into a carriage to take the girl to the ball.*
ELEMENTS

Spell (noun):
1. Negative curse put on a character in the story
2. Enchantment that is usually broken with a kiss or rescue
   The spell of eternal sleep was broken when the handsome prince rescued the sleeping girl with a kiss.

Elegant Ball (noun):
1. Dance where the prince tries to find the perfect wife
2. Event where girls compete for the handsome man's affection
   The girls wore their fancy dresses to the elegant ball in hopes that they would impress the handsome prince.

Rescue (verb):
1. Moment where the man saves the girl
2. Leads to a rapid falling into love and an immediate marriage
   The prince rescues the helpless girl so that they can fulfill their lives through marriage.

White Horse (noun):
1. The method of transportation by which the prince performs his rescuing of the girl in trouble.
   The prince rode in on his white horse to sweep the beautiful girl off of her feet.

Marriage (noun):
1. Ultimate prize/goal for all female characters
2. End result for the prince and the girl (who becomes a princess)
3. Results in the princess coming into the prince's family money
   The prince and princess had a beautiful marriage and then lived happily ever together in the prince's castle.

COMMON PHRASES

“Once upon a time...”
1. The beginning of the story

“Someday my prince will come.”
1. Words uttered by the girls because they do not feel like they can be happy or contented until the prince comes to rescue them.

“And they lived happily ever after.”
1. The end of the story
2. Comes after the prince rescues the girl from a life of lonely single-hood and agrees to marry her.
The Truth about Fairy Tales
Inspired by Mkeel McBride

1.
Of everything that I loved about being a child
Pretend play was my favorite. Of course, at the top
Of the world-of-pretend are fairy tales.
When we were little
The role of Cinderella went to my little sister,
The prettiest of the friends.
Belle went to the friend who liked to read.
Snow White went to the caretaker of the group
And Sleeping Beauty went to the friend
Who didn’t want to admit it, but really needed a nap.

2.
I guess I forgot to mention my role. I was the servant
That the princesses acquired with their admission to
Royalty. My specialty was grass spaghetti with mud meatballs.
They reveled in their royal stature,
Marked by Burger King crowns. And I reveled
In the legitimate excuse to play in the mud.

3.
Fairy Tales can still propel adults back to their childhood.
On a particularly bad day when you spill your coffee all over,
Get a bad grade, step in a puddle and get a parking ticket,
A little happily ever after can do the soul some good.

4.
Like I said, the realm of fantasy is a crucial facet of
Childhood. And it’s even important to return back to that
As an adult – occasionally.

5.
The truth about fairy tales is that they’re not real.
They’re charming stories about fictional characters
And magical elements. The truth about fairy tales is that
The themes can not be internalized as an adult.
The truth about fairy tales is that happily ever after
Is possible. It takes work, not the wave of a wand.
Sleeping Beauty Uncovered

Logistically speaking, how could a kiss (regardless of how passionate) wake someone from eternal slumber? Not to mention, after several years of nothing but sleep, I find it hard to believe that any princess, in spite of her high level of refinement, wouldn’t have some foul morning breath. I guarantee that any prince in his right mind would make her brush her teeth before he put his royal lips anywhere near her. And I don’t know about you but I’m still hoping that good ole Sleeping Beauty wakes herself up, gets a degree, goes to the sperm bank and lives happily ever after on her own merit.
Which Disney Princess Are You?

1. What is the most important quality in your Prince Charming?
   A) Romantic; willing to make my dreams come true
   B) Tough, strong and I like him to have a little dangerous streak
   C) Hardworking and independent
   D) Handsome and a human, I don’t ask for much

2. What’s your dream house?
   A) A beach house; I love being by the ocean
   B) A castle; I want everyone to know I’m a princess
   C) A modest home as long as my family is close-by
   D) A house in the forest

3. If you could have any form of transportation, what would it be?
   A) I don’t need it. I have everything I want right here
   B) Horse drawn carriage
   C) I’d just prefer to use my legs and walk
   D) A white horse big enough to fit me and my man

4. What kind of pets would you want to have?
   A) Mice
   B) A crab, a fish and a seagull
   C) An abundance of forest creatures
   D) Household objects that can talk

5. What’s your favorite past time?
   A) Bird watching
   B) Exploring and finding hidden treasures
   C) Reading
   D) Cleaning and tidying up

6. What are your parents like?
   A) My dad is nice but my step-mom is controlling and mean
   B) My step-mother is evil and conniving
   C) My dad is amazing but he depends on me for everything
   D) My dad means well but is very demanding

7. What’s your dream date?
   A) A romantic walk along the beach
   B) An elegant ball; I love to get dressed up
   C) A hike in the woods with a romantic picnic
   D) A romantic dinner followed by a poetry reading
FIND YOUR SCORE:
1. A - 1  B - 3  C - 2  D - 4
2. A - 4  B - 1  C - 3  D - 2
3. A - 3  B - 1  C - 4  D - 2
4. A - 1  B - 4  C - 2  D - 3
5. A - 1  B - 3  C - 4  D - 2
6. A - 1  B - 2  C - 3  D - 4
7. A - 4  B - 1  C - 2  B - 3

If your score was between 7 and 11, you’re most like Cinderella! You’re a hopeless romantic and you want your Prince Charming to be equally as romantic. You’re all about the glamour. You like to be the center of attention but in a classy way like traveling in your horse drawn carriage. You revel in the fact that people know who you are and that you’re a princess, as they should! You worked hard to get where you are by being obedient to your stepmother and stepsisters until your fairy godmother finally made you beautiful enough for a prince to marry you. And now that gorgeous prince will made all of your dreams come true!

If your score was between 12 and 17, you’re most like Snow White! You are a caretaker at heart, as demonstrated by your dedication to the dwarves. You are the embodiment of charming elegance. You like to cook and clean; a true mothering type. You want your man to be as hardworking as you are, but in a manlier way. It’s no big deal if he’s a slob, that’s why you’re there: to clean up after him. You love to be surrounded by nature and to be immersed in the animal world. Now that your prince rescued you from your evil stepmother, you two can ride off into the forest together!

If your score was between 18 and 23, you’re most like Belle! You are sophisticated and a true intellectual. You are well-read and well-spoken and expect that of the people around you. It seems like your ability to forgive is endless. You like your man to be strong and even a bit difficult. You can tame even the beastliest of men with your kind heart; that dangerous streak doesn’t intimidate you. Your parents can ask a lot of you and you often have to make personal sacrifices for them but do it with a smile on your face. Once you release your man from his life of anger, you can dance the night away together!

If your score was between 24 and 28, you’re most like Ariel! You have such a strong sex appeal. You would give up anything and everything to find the man of your dreams, even your family and voice. Nothing compares to true love. You are adventurous and love exploring in hopes of finding hidden treasures. You’re very active and love to put your legs to good use. Your father is strict and demanding and you’re independent enough to make your own way, regardless of what he wants. You know that he loves you but not as much as your Prince Charming will. Now that you only have each other, you can live happily ever after!
The Reality of Reality Television

By placing the word "reality" in the title of the genre, it implies an inherent guarantee of authenticity. The damage caused by reality television is unspeakable because both men and women truly believe it to be real. It is not. How can something that is edited and altered also be real? With regards to women, the most detrimental shows usually involve dating and marriage.

The Bachelor is a modernization of traditional fairy tales, arguably making it one of the most detrimental and regressive shows on television with regards to defining societal principles about love and marriage. Every single candidate is at a standard of beauty that is far from an accurate representation of reality. Women and men viewing the show on television are then socialized to wholeheartedly believe that real women look like that, and more importantly, that cultural "beauty" should be the most important characteristic when choosing a woman as a life partner. Beauty as the primary quality in choosing a partner is prevalent in fairy tales as well. Female rivalry is a staple in fairy tales and that has translated into the realm of contemporary fairy tales as well. Inherent in the show's structure, is the need for competition among females. Twenty five women are pitted against each other to compete for the love of one man. Furthermore, the editor is given countless hours of film to mold into 40 minutes of viewing pleasure for the American public. In addition, the man in The Bachelor is taking a proactive role in choosing his wife, while the woman merely sits, waits, and hopes for the best. The normalization of the woman as purely reactive to a man's behavior is an absolute atrocity but is also a derivation of the process found in conventional fairy tales.

A similar "reality" show that ran at the time of the early seasons of The Bachelor was Joe Millionaire, which further normalized the seemingly innate need for women to marry. Furthermore, the morals of women in general were being questioned and mocked on national television. These women, like the women in fairy tales, are basically waiting for Evan, "Joe Millionaire," to rescue them from their miserable world of single life. The concept of the show is this: tell women that they're competing for a wealthy prince; the filming took place in a castle and they went on a multitude of romantic dates; at the end of the show, it would be revealed that their "millionaire" was, in reality, a construction worker. So essentially, the show revolves around whether women marry for love or money, yet another mockery of women. In fairness to the show, this too is a derivation from traditional fairy tales, an accepted and celebrated form of story telling. The portrayal of "reality" is so devastatingly unreal, yet it is through the media's representation of reality and modernization of fantasy, that we derive our own definition.
Cinderella Uncovered

Whoever thinks that riding to a ball in a converted pumpkin pulled by enchanted mice would be elegant has lost their mind. And I’m not sure if you’ve ever worn heels, but they are not comfortable. I can not imagine the pain that her feet would feel as a result of dancing in glass slippers all night long. The girl could have used some Dr. Scholl’s. It’s no wonder that she left one of her slippers behind. There is no way she would have been able to run all the way back to her rags with her feet in such excruciating pain. And, hey, the foot pain didn’t work out too badly for her in the end.
BACHELOR REVEALED

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF ABC’S HIT SHOW, THE BACHELOR

THE SELECTION PROCESS:

How did you think of the concept for The Bachelor?

Well Survivor was really popular so we decided to try a reality show about love. We knew that it’s every girl’s fantasy to be like a princess so we thought we’d make a modern day reality fairy tale. We start the show off by saying “Once upon a time there was a charming young bachelor searching for a woman of his dreams,” and at the end of the show, he gives a ring to “one woman who captures his heart” (Camacho, Yep 338). The Bachelor was one of the top 25 shows in the Fall 2003 television lineup in the US (AllYourTV 2003) so obviously the idea was a good one.

How do you pick the bachelor?

We wanted to make sure that he’s charismatic, good looking and wealthy – every woman’s dream man. That way not only would the 25 contestants fall in love with him but the women watching at home would, too.

How did you select the women to participate in the show?

Most importantly, they have to look good in the hot tub (Camacho, Yep 339). We like for them to be good looking and thin. Since we’re trying to create a modern day fairy tale, it’s only fitting that the women look like princesses.

USING THE CAMERA:

How is the camera used to your advantage?

We use “the camera focusing on the women’s breasts, buttocks, and legs as they dresses, entered and left the pool, or disrobed to catch the bachelor’s attention” (Camacho, Yep 339).

We also “created situations for the women to expose their bodies such as pajama parties, water rides in an amusement park, and interactions in hot tubs and pools. In a number of these shots, the women’s faces were absent or de-emphasized” (Camacho, Yep 339). By having the camera focus on those key areas of the woman’s body, we can add a sexual element into the perception of the dating atmosphere.

FANTASY DATES INCLUDE:

- Romantic getaways with the bachelor (and sometimes other girls)
- Champagne
- Hot tubs & Jacuzzis
- Fancy outfits & ball gowns
- Ability to win over the bachelor and receive a single red rose before the ceremony
- The feeling of being just like Cinderella & Prince Charming
EDITING Process
What is the editing process?
Because we have so much footage, we edit out a large portion of it. We try to include most of the important elements in terms of plot development. One thing that we can do is create a cause-and-effect where there may really be none. We can show certain facial expressions or one-liners anywhere in the show, even if that's not where they were really intended in the original context. For example, when a girl comes home from a date and is bragging about it to the other girls, we can edit in negative facial expressions from the other girls that may have been from another conversation all together. The important part is that it looks seamless when the editing is complete.

CUTTING Process
How do you choose what is important enough to air?
Good TV is all about drama. People don't want to see a bunch of people getting along with each other and falling in love. Like I said before, we have a lot of footage so we usually include the material that is more interesting. We tried to “[highlight] ‘cat fights’ and open displays of rivalry among the women” (Camacho, Yep 339). We also included a lot of the flirtatious or sexual elements because those are also interesting for the viewers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
What kind of behavior is typical in the house of girls?
Usually it's pretty uneventful. For the most part they all get along and have a kind of bond or connection because they're in this stressful situation together. There are obviously some fights between them but it's certainly not as much as it seems when watching the show on television.

How can readers of Cosmo apply to be a contestant on the show?
If you want to be rescued by your Prince Charming, you can go to abc.com and either apply online or mail in an application. A picture must be attached and the questionnaire filled out honestly and then hopefully you'll live happily ever after!
Femininity, in her blond-haired, blue-eyed perfection, rises every morning feeling refreshed and ready to start her day. She always trods right downstairs to make her husband, Charming, breakfast in bed. While the bacon is frying and the bagels are toasting, she squeezes oranges to make fresh juice, Charming’s favorite. Once he’s finished eating, she pulls up the sheets and neatly makes the bed. Nobody likes a messy room. After making sure that Charming leaves for work on time she takes their two teacup poodles, Belle and Cinderella, for their morning walk before going to the grocery store to get supplies to make dinner for her prince, Charming. She’s feeling a little spontaneous so she picks up some wine to go with dinner. She’ll probably have one glass but never any more that that; being intoxicated is unladylike and unattractive.

Upon finishing up at the store, Femininity heads home. As she pulls into the driveway of their castle-like estate, she sees her next door neighbor, Elegance, watering the flowers. She invites her in for tea and the best friends chat all afternoon about their favorite things: cooking, cleaning and caring for their husbands. At three o’clock it’s time for Femininity to begin making dinner. She prepares roasted duck with a cherry glaze, grilled asparagus and cherry tarts for dessert. Charming likes to always have a three course meal. Once it’s finished, she hurries upstairs to change into a little pink dress that drapes perfectly over her petite figure. She glides down the stairs just as Charming arrives home on his white horse to rescue her from the perils of being alone all day. Needless to say, they lived happily ever after.
The Beauty of Good Editing

25 girls picked to live in a house together
And compete for the love of one man,
The Bachelor,
For all of America to see.

She is innocent and virginal.
Her beauty is effortless and natural.
She’s a caretaker at heart.
    He’s watching her with heartfelt adoration.

She is overtly sexual.
Her breasts are pouring over
The deep V of her shirt.
A seeming invitation to be touched.
    His mouth falls open, gawking.
    When she speaks, his eyes are not on her eyes.

She reveals during a talk with just the girls
That she cannot cook
And doesn’t like to clean.
    The screen flashes to him.
    On his face:
    A look of disdain.

So tell me, how real is this reality?
The Little Mermaid Uncovered

I understand that the seaweed is always greener in somebody else's lake. But could it really be green enough to leave your family and to permanently lose your voice? Luckily, as Ursula so poignantly reminds me (and young girls everywhere), men don't care about a woman's voice. In fact, it's probably better in the long run, if women never speak again, right? Based on the fact that Eric tries to kiss Ariel without ever hearing her utter a word, love is not based on personality, sense of humor or intellect. Love is apparently based on silence, submissiveness and a really good pair of legs.
Parent who thinks Disney Princesses are harmless:

Disney Princesses
Are a staple of childhood

Regardless of what they think when they're young, girls will eventually know it's just a fantasy when They grow out of it.

It's just a show.
Where people search for love.

They go on fantasy dates.
They are awarded red roses from him.

-- How romantic!

Feminist who thinks Disney Princesses are harmful:

Disney Princesses

Perpetuate negative stereotypes of women.
Girls think that they need to be rescued by a man to be complete

They won't grow out of it.
Because it's not just shown when they're young.
  They think their Prince will come.
  They want to live happily ever after.
  They want the glass slipper to fit.
Shows like The Bachelor modernize these fantasies into reality.
But let me guess,
It's just a show.

Where women compete for the love of a man in hopes of being rescued from the misery and loneliness of singledom.

They wear fancy dresses.

It sounds like a dream come true..
Ha! How romantic..
And you're right, I'm sure they'll grow out of it.
Just like you did.
Thick, long, luscious hair that is falling and flowing freely down her back. Big, blue eyes and lashes that are perfect for batting – the only way to attract a man. Her succulent lips were just barely parted, the implication solely sexual. Full, voluptuous breasts Pouring over the seashells would attract any man. No wonder she didn’t even have to speak. Her petite waste is so tiny compared to the sexy curve of her hips. All of this on her supposed sixteen year old body. If a picture is worth a thousand words, what are we saying to our children?
I confess:
I do not want this –
But more than that, I don’t want
To disappoint you.
I love you
But it’s all happening too quickly.

I want to be with you, to share a life
With you. But I also need my own life.
I don’t want to just live off of your money;
I want to make my own.
Maybe I could start a line of shoes
Since clearly my glass slipper was
Memorable, to say the least.

As a princess, I’m ashamed to
Even say this but
A castle seems too extravagant.
Can’t we start off in an apartment
Like other 20 some-things?
And I want to ride away in our
Chevy Cavalier, not your white horse.
To be honest, I’m not much of a
Horse person in general.

I don’t want to wear a crown.
And I don’t want to wear a gown.
In fact, I’d love to wear a jersey –
And not the pink sparkly ones.
I don’t want to have to cook for you
And I don’t want to only eat salads.
I want to watch the game and share
A bucket of fried chicken.
I’m sorry. That is not very royal of me.

I don’t want you to rescue me.
I want to save myself.

I love you and I want you to be happy
But this is not my happily ever after.
Beauty and the Beast Uncovered

The beast physically and emotionally abused Belle. But she saw a gentle side of him that no one else could see. So she stayed and she endured. And in true happily-ever-after fashion, her love and undying kindness made him change from abusive beast to handsome prince. So tell me: what kind of message is that sending? That if you stay with your abusive man, he'll eventually change into a handsome prince too? That he'll magically stop abusing you and you can dance the night away? Furthermore, Belle is considered the feminist of fairy tales. Why? Because she could read.
Feminism wakes up every morning in her luxurious king size bed. Alone. She presses snooze at least twice before finally waking up. She wears a neutral colored pant suit to work every morning with her frizzy hair pulled tightly back in a low, messy pony tail. Feminism never wears makeup. She lives in a large house which she paid for herself—something she is very proud of. She works at least 10 hours a day, Monday-Friday, and she brings her work home with her on the weekends. Feminism’s last date was months ago with Indecency. She ordered a cheeseburger and French fries only to look over and see her neighbor, Femininity, picking at her tiny salad. She now tells herself that since work is so time-consuming, she does not have time to date.

Feminism’s arch-enemies, Femininity and Elegance, have been spreading rumors about her sexual orientation. They tell all of the neighbors that she is a man-hating, family-hating lesbian. This is simply not true. Not only is she not a lesbian, but she hopes to get married and have a family someday. Not that any men will be interested in her with all of the rumors circulating.

Every Monday she watches Monday Night Football with her good friends, Sin and Disgrace, while Femininity and Elegance watch The Bachelor. This does not help with the rumors but that doesn’t seem to bother Feminism. The neighbors can talk all they want; Monday Night Football is a nonnegotiable for Feminism. She cannot cook so she orders the Sampler Platter from Applebees. Sin and Disgrace always bring the hotdogs and Budweiser. This may come as a shock but Feminism lives happily ever after, too.
Congratulations, Graduate!

This certificate entitles you to breast augmentation to make you perfect

To: My beautiful princess, for your graduation  Number: 18302573021

Authorized by: Walt Disney Corporations

Face lifts also available for the poorly aging twenty-some-things.

Not redeemable for cash. Must be used for artificial enhancements

Cosmetic Surgery Companies: here to serve girls who are barely legal
Snow White Uncovered

First of all, why are seven dwarves hanging out together in the middle of the woods? There is no way in these days of full inclusion that they would be able to be relegated to the back of the forest. On top of that, if I were Snow White, there is not a shot in hell that I would want seven little men to protect me from someone as conniving and determined as her evil step mother. Not to mention, one of the dwarves’ names is Dopey. How intimidating and protective could he really be? Well, it’s a good thing she has her “innocence” to save her from the wrath of the evil women in her life.
Layer Dip of Eternal Disappointment in Love

Ingredients:
1. Innocent young girl
2. Glass slippers
3. Beautiful ball gown
4. White horse
5. Handsome prince
6. Evil step-family members*
7. Pressure of marriage
8. Helplessness
9. Bunches of reality television

*Can be substituted with jealous girls of the same age as the innocent young girl

1. Spread innocent young girl thinly across the bottom of a rectangular baking dish.
2. In separate bowl, mix glass slippers, beautiful ball gown and white horse together until it looks magical and enchanting. Spread on top of innocent young girl.
3. Firmly press handsome prince on top of innocent young girl and magical elements.
4. Distribute the evil step-family members (or jealous girls) evenly over previous three layers. It doesn't matter whether they're family or peers - the important part is the female rivalry.
5. Dice up the pressure to be married so that it can be interspersed across the entire dish. Season it with the need to be rescued and layer it onto the dip.
6. Sprinkle the helplessness over the whole dish.
7. Add a dash of reality shows, such as The Bachelor, to taste.

Serve with high expectations and endless pressures. This dish is a crowd pleaser; I guarantee the baking dish that once held just the innocent young girl is sure to be empty by the end!
Thick, knotty hair that is pulled back in a bun. Big, blue eyes and slender lips that were just barely parted, the implication of hunger. Full, plump breasts pouring over conservative, plus-size dress. No wonder she was married to an ogre. Her waist, stomach and hips are so substantial that they’re not even shown. If a picture is worth a thousand words, what are we saying to our children?
The Definition of Love

This has to be love;
True, undying, everlasting love.

I saw him from a distance
And knew that it was
Love at First Sight.

Actually, it was more like
Love at only sight
Since we haven’t actually spoken
Yet.

But he has all the qualities
Of a good husband –
He’s handsome, strong and wealthy.
What more would I want in a man?

It’s probably best that
We haven’t spoken yet.
Guys don’t fall in love with full disclosure.
We have a deeper, unspoken bond –
Tangible magic,
An undeniable spark,
Physical chemistry.

And once he is overcome by my
Beauty and selflessness
He’ll wake me from the half-living state
Of being single with a passionate kiss.

Soon after, we’ll have an extravagant wedding,
Sealing my place as a royal princess.
We will live Happily Ever After
With our physical chemistry and beauty
As the glue to our effortless union.

This is love;
True, undying, everlasting love:
Disney-style.
They were fighting. Again. They were always fighting. In her mind, she was always right. In his mind, he was always right. Their communication was so drastically dissimilar that sometimes it was difficult to determine the root of the disagreement. She kept everything inside where insignificant events had the resources to be cultivated into hatred and resentment that wasn’t there originally. This was a process, of course. But he was oblivious throughout. Until it was too late. After the anger had escalated to new heights, she exploded into a rage that slapped him across the face, a sucker punch of sorts. She shrieked at him about everything that he does wrong. His deep voice bellowed desperate defenses at her accusations. She said she needed to be alone afterward. He slept on the couch.

The entire night she lay awake, resenting him for sleeping and willing him to come back to bed. He thought she needed to be alone. She said she needed to be alone. The next day, the silence still lingered between them. He walked by and she just barely reached out so that her hand graced his. It was so slight that it could have been disregarded as accidental. But it was enough. The clash was over. They would be content together. For awhile. Until the progression began again. He didn’t understand what upset her. She couldn’t understand why it was so hard. Isn’t marriage supposed to be happily ever after?
Pocahontas Uncovered

Forget the fact that John Smith was a heartless murderer. I'm sure that love would conquer all. Well, it may not have been love, but there was surely some conquering going on to the Native Americans. But I guess in all of his blond-haired, blue-eyed perfection, how could Pocahontas not have overlooked the fact that he slaughtered her family and took their land? All kidding aside, why couldn't Disney have invented a fictional European to rescue the helpless Native American girl? They could at least make an attempt to appear like they aren't simply rewriting the history shown to millions of children. Not to mention, Pocahontas probably would have died of smallpox for her love. How romantic.
THE FOLLOWING STORY IS A VARIATION OF THE TRADITIONAL TALE OF CINDERELLA. I FOUND A CONVENTIONAL RENDITION OF CINDERELLA AND SIMPLY REVERSED ALL OF THE GENDERS. NOTE THE DIFFERENCES WHEN READING:

Once upon a time there lived an unhappy young boy. His father was dead and his mother had married a widower with two sons. His stepfather didn’t like him one little bit. All his kind thoughts and loving touches were for his own sons. Nothing was too good for them - toys, shoes, delicious food, soft beds, and every home comfort. But, for the poor unhappy boy, there was nothing at all. No outfits, only his stepbrothers’ hand-me-downs. No lovely dishes, nothing but scraps. No rest and no comfort. He had to work hard all day. Only when evening came was he allowed to sit for a while by the fire, near the cinders. That’s why everybody called him Cinderel.

Cinderel used to spend long hours all alone talking to the cat. The cat said, "Meow," which really meant, "Cheer up! You have something neither of your stepbrothers has and that is good looks." It was quite true. Cinderel, even dressed in old rags, was a lovely boy. While his stepbrothers, no matter how splendid and elegant their clothes, were still clumsy, lumpy and ugly and always would be.

One day, beautiful new suits arrived at the house. A ball was to be held at the palace because the princess was looking for a suitable mate. The stepbrothers were getting ready to go and prove their worth to her. Cinderel didn’t even dare ask if he could go too. He knew very well what the answer would be: “You? You’re staying at home to wash the dishes, scrub the floors and turn down the beds for your stepbrothers.” They will come home tired and very sleepy. Cinderel sighed, “Oh dear, I’m so unhappy!” and the cat murmured “Meow.”

Suddenly something amazing happened. As Cinderel was sitting all alone, there was a burst of light and a fairy appeared. “Don’t be alarmed, Cinderel,” said the fairy. “I know you would love to go to the ball. And so you shall!” “How can I, dressed in rags?” Cinderel replied. “The servants will turn me away!”

The fairy smiled. With a flick of his magic wand Cinderel found himself wearing the most beautiful tuxedo he had ever seen. “Now for your coach,” said the fairy: “A real man would never go to a ball on foot! Quick! Get me a pumpkin!” “Oh of course,” said Cinderel, rushing away. Then the fairy turned to the cat. “You, bring me seven mice, and, remember they must be alive!”

Cinderel soon returned with the pumpkin and the cat with seven mice he had caught in the cellar. With a flick of the magic wand the pumpkin turned into a sparkling
coach and the mice became six white horses, while the seventh mouse turned into a coachwoman in a smart uniform and carrying a whip. Cinderel could hardly believe his eyes.

"You shall go to the ball Cinderel. But remember! You must leave at midnight. That is when my spell ends. Your coach will turn back into a pumpkin and the horses will become mice again. You will be dressed in rags and wearing clogs instead of these glass shoes! Do you understand?" Cinderel smiled and said, "Yes, I understand!"

Cinderel had a wonderful time at the ball until he heard the first stroke of midnight! He remembered what the fairy had said, and without a word of goodbye he slipped from the Princess's arms and ran down the steps. As he ran he lost one of her shoes, but not for a moment did he dream of stopping to pick it up! If the last stroke of midnight were to sound... oh... what a disaster that would be! Out he fled and vanished into the night.

The Princess, who was now madly in love with him, picked up the shoe and said to her ministers, "Go and search everywhere for the boy whose foot this shoe fits. I will never be content until I find him!" So the ministers tried the shoe on the foot of every boy in the land until only Cinderel was left.

"That awful untidy boy simply cannot have been at the ball," snapped the stepfather. "Tell the Princess she ought to marry one of my two sons! Can't you see how ugly Cinderel is?"

But, to everyone's amazement, the shoe fitted perfectly.

Suddenly the fairy appeared and waved his magic wand. In a flash, Cinderel appeared in a splendid tuxedo, shining with youth and beauty. His stepfather and stepbrothers gaped at him in amazement, and the ministers said, "Come with us Cinderel! The Princess is waiting for you."

So Cinderel married the Princess and lived happily ever.
COMMENTARY:

The change in interpretation that comes from the simple act of changing genders is remarkable. It's a seemingly insignificant alteration that transforms the meaning and subconscious absorptions from the part of the reader.

A staple in traditional fairy tales is female rivalry and/or jealousy. When the male characters have a struggle, it's in a valiant way, such as a battle to save the princess. It's certainly not a result of jealousy. In the first paragraph of the reversed-gender story, the stepsons are self-indulgent and materialistic. In an attempt at consolation, Cinderel is assured that he is more beautiful than his stepbrothers, an awkward sounding achievement for a male. It's shocking how narrow our societal views have become with regards to gender roles. It's expected that women are acquisitive and admired for beauty alone. Likewise, it's expected that men are admired for strength and bravery.

In the third paragraph, the princess (instead of the prince) is holding a ball to find her ideal mate. In several forms of modern media, the male takes the proactive role in finding a partner. In fairy tales, he is the one who holds a ball; he is the one who displays bravery to rescue the female. In The Bachelor, he is the one making the decisions; he is the one for whom they compete; he is the one with all of the control. In the reverse-gender version, it's surprising to see the female with a proactive role since we're accustomed to her taking the reactive role.

There are two other differences, but these are a bit more trivial. Firstly, the image of a man cleaning and tidying about the house is virtually unseen in modern forms of media. I cannot think of another instance in which the male character in a fairy tale was sweeping, cooking or performing any household task. Secondly, the supernatural element is rarely male. The fairy in the reverse-gender story is a male which is also unheard of in the realm of fantasy.

One crucial theme of fairy tales has, in fact, held true, in spite of the gender substitutions: physical appearance is valued over emotional worth. Cinderel (and Cinderella, in the original version) are not praised for their character, intellect or benevolence; they are commended for their beauty. And ultimately, their exterior is what wins them “true love.”
The Modern-Day Cinderella

Once upon a real time lived a happy teenage girl named Cinderella Smith who loved playing and watching sports. Cinderella was a dedicated Cleveland sports fan, through thick and thin. She was the captain of her high school basketball team and earned straight A’s. Cinderella came from a big family; she had two older brothers and a younger sister. Her oldest brother was divorced with two children and the other brother was a senior in college and wants to be a kindergarten teacher. Anastasia, the youngest in the family was also a talented basketball player and really looked up to Cinderella. The girls were only a year apart so they had all of the same friends at school, too. The Smiths demanded a lot of Cinderella; she was expected to be on Honor Roll even throughout basketball season, to do chores around the house and to take care of her nephews on the weekends. Her parents didn’t have a lot of money so they expected Cinderella to maintain a job so that she wouldn’t have to be dressed in rags. Cinderella never complained; she was happy to help out.

The winter dance was an important tradition at their high school. During the day, the girls played in a basketball game against a neighboring rival school and then everyone went to the dance at night. The girls won the game and were prepping for the dance when Anastasia’s date called and cancelled. He told her that the beautiful Sleeping Beauty had won his affections over the previous weekend with her grace and elegance. Anastasia and Cinderella were neither graceful nor elegant. They were intense, athletic, spoke like truck drivers and preferred jeans and a tshirt to a dress. Because of this, they were accustomed to being the “best friend” to the guys in their school. The Sleeping Beauties of the world were always chosen as the girlfriend above the Smith girls. Cinderella was confident and strong willed so it didn’t bother her but it saddened Anastasia, especially on the night of the winter dance. Cinderella hated seeing her younger sister upset so she called all of their friends and decided to go to the dance in one big group as opposed to with their individual dates.
Before leaving for the dance, they were repeatedly told by Cinderella’s parents to be home by the stroke of midnight in order to make curfew.

The group had a blast at the winter dance until they heard the first stroke of midnight. Cinderella ran into the locker room to grab her gym bag and bolted out to the parking lot. In all the confusion, one of her tennis shoes fell from the bag. A college recruiter who had been at the game recognized the shoe as belonging to the incredible basketball player she had had her eye on all afternoon. She had to find her and invite her to play for her team in the fall. The recruiter would not be contented until she found this girl so she went door to door making girls try on this tennis shoe. When she made it to the Smith house, Cinderella recognized the recruiter from the game and did not want to speak to her. The college where she coached was hours from home and Cinderella didn’t think she could stand to be that far away from her family. Anastasia sensed her discomfort but talked her into trying on the shoe and of course, it fit!

Cinderella decided to attend that college in the fall and Anastasia joined her the following year. Cinderella eventually graduated from college and went on to recruit for her alma mater. And, of course, she lived happily ever after.
Happily Ever After in the Media?

So who are feminists? Do they have short, spiky hair and wear baggy clothes? Are they lesbians who despise men and families? Well, not exactly. That’s the obsolete and inaccurate definition and representation of feminists. In this day and age, in our modern and fairly enlightened society, speaking in relative terms, we should move past the stereotypes of feminism. We must abandon all negative connotations of a feminist and also deserts any and all stereotypes, negative and positive, that we have accumulated over the years.

Theoretically, shouldn’t femininity and feminism work together? Doesn’t the idea of feminism originate from those who are feminine? So where along the way did the two diverge? Femininity is seen as the female ideal in the media. Feminine equates to beauty, obedience and grace. Feminism, on the other hand, is shown as masculine, unattractive and indecent. We have been socialized by the media. We absorb these images and internalize them when we should be questioning them. We see Cinderella with her petite and womanly features; she is kind, patient and beautiful – the embodiment of femininity. She is obedient and subservient. The strong willed women in fairy tales (typically the stepmother and stepsisters) are ugly, jealous and conniving. So if those are your two choices, which would you rather emulate?

I am a real woman. My friends are real women. The people around me are all genuine, successful, naturally beautiful women. We are business executives, doctors and lawyers. We are mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. If we can effectively juggle all of these lives, why are we still seeing one-dimensional stereotypical women? Why is beauty still defined as the petite princesses? Why is it imperative in traditional tales and their modernizations that we marry and are subservient to our husbands? This is not reality. I am a feminist. But I wear makeup, fitted clothing, read Cosmopolitan magazine and want a family. Society has changed and is continuing to change; the current stereotypes and assumptions must be airbrushed out. We are not all girly princesses. We have aspirations beyond marriage. We can be feminine feminists. When will the media catch up?
Dictionary of terms (4, 5): I thought this was an effective way to introduce my sarcastic tone while also giving some background information to the elements of fairy tales and how they could be construed as negative.

The Truth about Fairy Tales (6): I was inspired by the poem we read in class by Mekel McBride but I changed the tone a little bit with mine. Rather than being about why I loved something, I simply did the truth about fairy tales in general. I was then able to discuss the positive aspects of fairy tales in childhood and adulthood. At the end of the poem I was able to convey my thoughts on the truth behind fairy tales.

Repetend (7, 11, 16, 20, 23, 28): I did a “princess uncovered” as my unifying element. It gives background on the princesses while also having the humorous and sarcastic tone that is present in several pieces in the paper. I tried to offer some logical suggestions or criticisms of these six popular Disney movies. The image of Cinderella’s castle is a watermark on these pages because it’s a recognizable Disney image and can draw attention to the unifying element throughout the paper because I think that they give a strong message.

Which Disney Princess Are You? (8, 9): This is a quiz to show you which Disney princess you are. Some of the questions have real answers and some of them have answers used to make a point. The idea for this came from an article that I read called “Bridal Fashion Week – How to Look like a Disney Princess Bride.” There were several wedding gowns designed with the Disney princess’s character in mind. They characterized the personalities as “glamorous,” “romantic,” “sophisticated,” etc. So I had the idea to make a quiz to see which Disney princess you would be. Certain questions were supposed to make a comment about the movie. For example, the question about the parents does not have a possible answer of “I have great parents” because that is not an element seen in Disney movies.

The Reality of Reality Television (10): This was the first time that I introduced the idea of Reality TV as a form of fairy tales. This is an expository piece in that it was research based but I certainly allowed my opinion to show through because this will be continued throughout the paper.

The Bachelor Revealed (12, 13): I formatted this like a popular magazine article. I used research that I did about the show. The direct quotes from my research are cited and placed in italics. Everything else is created by me but always with the research in mind. The format of this allowed the negative factual evidence about The Bachelor to be shown in a more creative way. I was also able to further delve into the editing process and how that portrays the women.

Quality Pieces (14, 21): The first one that I did was Femininity. She is stereotyped and almost directly modeled after the Disney princesses. I know it’s hyperbolized but that’s part of the appeal. Seven pages later I come back to it with the same font but personify Feminism. This is also stereotyped but with a purpose. I wanted them to be
noticeably opposite so that I could make a commentary about that at the end of the paper. I also pitted Femininity and Feminism against each other to an extent in preparation for the commentary at the end.

The Beauty of Good Editing (15): This refers back to the information that you were given in the expository piece and then again in the interview. In my research the issue of cause and effect was brought up. The editors have the ability to create cause and effect when there is none. The idea for my poem came to me in a feeble attempt at writing flash fiction in class so I went with it (and wrote about it again in my Self Assessment #3). I tried to show not only the cause and effect but also the images that viewers are shown about how women are supposed to act.

2 voice poem (17): For this poem I drew upon research from two different venues. The first piece of research was about body image with regards to the media. Because Disney appeals to a younger audience, it’s found to be more detrimental because people thrive off of imitation during those years. The second piece of research was about the ideals of love that Disney portrays but from the lens of a parent. Because Disney is so popular, I figured that the majority of parents would find nothing wrong with the messages conveyed. But there are obviously other parents who do not agree with these messages. I also ended with a fairly sarcastic comment that fits in with the tone throughout.

Visual Element (18, 25): I used pictures of arguably the sexiest traditional Disney cartoon character and the ugliest princess. I embedded prose poems in them that commented on the messages sent to children with these pictures and princesses.

Prose poems (18, 25): I used straight description with loaded words and images to comment on the messages sent to children. There was rich language but it was not a narrative. I wanted the picture to be present so that the reader would get a visual to compliment the language.

Certificate (22): This came from the same research about body image. The research showed that as sexual media images are shown and referenced to children and young adolescents, they’re internalized. This is seen when young girls (with their parents’ permission) are attempting to get plastic surgery. The article also stated that some parents will get their daughters breast augmentations as graduation gifts so I thought that making a gift certificate with sentiments from Disney would convey that point.

Recipe (24): This came from the research that discussed messages conveyed about love. I also read a study that stated the necessary elements of a fairy tale so I combined them to make a recipe poem. I thought the layer dip worked effectively because it showed everything being piled on the young girl and I think that’s certainly a metaphor for our society’s treatment of adolescent girls.

Definition of Love (26): This idea came when watching the CBS video on Ken Brewer. He just picked a word and started writing about it. I figured I should try that
but keeping my MGP in mind. I chose love and essentially, this is what came out. I tried to use the language of fairy tales while also displayed the absurdity of it.

**Flash Fiction (27):** This is probably the most serious (in terms of tone) piece in my paper. Because it's supposed to leave the reader questioning, I reverted back to the sentiments portrayed about love. The vast majority of the piece makes no reference to Disney, but rather to the relationship between man and woman. I tried to poetically portray the emotion and struggle and relate it to Disney at the very last line to leave the reader questioning the statement.

**Reverse Gender Cinderella (29):** With all the discussion about gender roles, I figured I had to address the role of men. I took a conventional version of Cinderella and changed the gender of every character. I alert the reader to the difference at the beginning so that you can start to formulate ideas. I then make a commentary about gender roles in fairy tales.

**Modern Cinderella (32):** I saved this for the end because I thought it was important to have the background knowledge. This is the modern day Cinderella. I wanted to make her strong and confident without being rigid. I read a book full of strong female protagonists as the main characters. The majority of them were heroines in a greek-goddess sense. For example, they were the queens of the forest. While I appreciated the strength conveyed, I wanted my fairy tale to be modern in every sense.

**Closing (34):** I used the paper's title for this piece to point to its importance. This is aimed to refer the reader back to the quality pieces about Femininity and Feminism while also drawing upon the rest of the paper. I wanted to leave this strong social commentary for the end, not only as a wrap up, but something to leave the reader with in hopes that you question the stereotypes perpetuated in the same way that I did.
WORKS CITED:


