Princesses In Fairy Tales Essay, Research Paper

Beauty and Splendor : The Ascribed Role of Princesses in Fairy Tales

Fairy tales have long been known as stories told to entertain children. Throughout the years, these stories have been passed along from one generation to the next as a method of teaching historical and moral lessons. However, we often do not give adequate attention to the stereotypes created with the common motifs in these tales. More often than not, fairy tales are based upon royalty and young women in fairy tales are obligated to become the ascribed role of princess. It is known that because of precedence,princesses must be adored and this is simply because of their outstanding appearance. By examining the fairy tales of Sleeping Beauty in the Wood , Perrault s version of Cinderella , and Pretty Goldilocks , it will be evident that the stories revolve around one-dimensional, narcissistic individuals, otherwise known as Princesses.In Sleeping Beauty in the Wood the princess is first introduced as a child who

had all the perfections imaginable . (Perrault, Sleeping 66) As well, after fairies had been summoned to serve her, each one gave her a gift: to be the most beautiful person in the world, have the wit of an angel, as well as wonderful grace in everything that she did. The author creates the portrait of a shallow character which has been blessed with cursory traits. It is important to note that the princess was not born with such characterisitcs, but

the fairies, looking out for her best interest and serving her, use their supernatural powers so that she might possess these apparently essential qualities. The complete story depends on and focuses around Sleeping Beauty s appearance. Although she has had misfortune and been pricked by a spindle and doomed to sleep for one hundred years, it is said that her swooning had not dimmed her complexion: her cheeks were carnation and her lips were coral. (Perrault, Sleeping 68) Again, the story is carried on the fact that the princess must live up to the expectations of being beautiful. The author feels it is important to let the reader know the status of her looks to ensure that she is till looking her best despite being under a spell. As the story progresses, the princess is subjected to mistreatment by the wicked Queen-Mother, yet in the end the beautiful looking princess prevails while the

ugly Queen-Mother is defeated. It is suggested that the unfortunate looking

Queen-Mother gets what she deserves by committing suicide and throwing herself into the cauldron of vipers and serpents. It is assumed that Sleeping Beauty s demeanor helped her to survive only to receive her King. The princess husband is only upset for a moment before being comforted by: his beautiful wife and children who soon made him happy again. (Perrault, Sleeping 77) Again, beauty can overcome everything whether it is misfortune or grief.

Another example of the role of princesses and the benefits reaped by

attractiveness is in Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper . At the beginning of the story it is stated that although Cinderella is mistreated by her step-mother and often called Cinderwench because of her dirty apparel, she was a hundred times handsomer than her sisters . (Perrault, Cinderella 79) It is important to note that Cinderella believed that she would not be able to attend the ball because of her lack of appropriate clothes, but again a

fairy godmother is able to use supernatural powers to ensure that she receive the things she needed to be presentable, to be beautiful. Cinderella arrives at the ball in her formal garments, she is received by a profound silence and a confused noise of Ha! How handsome she is! (Perrault, Cinderella 83) This shows that if she can flaunt her beauty it is surely appreciated by all. To add the continued importance of appearance throughout the story, the King himself old as he was, could not help watching her and telling the queen softly that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature.

(Perrault, Cinderella 85) This further supports the fact that Cinderella was appreciated only as a beautiful creature and not as a person. She was judged on her looks only, and was commended for her kindness to her sisters after marrying the prince for Cinderella was no less good than beautiful . (Perruault, Cinderella 86) This statement is based on all that is beautiful is good.

In the tale of Pretty Goldilocks the theme of women as beautiful objects is continued. The beginning starts Once upon a time there was a princess who was the prettiest creature in the world. (d Aulnoy, Pretty Goldilocks 214) Obviously the author created this as an introduction on purpose. The tale focuses on the pretty Goldilocks and he process in which she will choose one of the many admirers to be the humbled one to marry her. It is clearly explained at the beginning of the story that her radiant beauty was important, but it is also evident that Goldilocks based her own self-worth on her appearance. She was told a young prince was asking her hand in marriage, and she was primarily concerned that everyone should proclaim that she lived up to the name of Pretty Goldilocks . After ordering an admirer, namely Prince Charming, to perform certain tasks to prove his dedication to her, she tests him by asking him to fetch water from the Fountain of Beauty so she can never grow old and shall get prettier every year. (d Aulnoy, Pretty Goldilocks 228) Perhaps this shows that only a man who would be willing to help her stay beautiful is worthy of her hand in marriage. This further shows the future depends on her concern for attractiveness and not her subsequent marriage to

the Prince.

In conclusion, it is evident that fairy tales posess many gender-related stereoyptes. In fact, it may be that the stereotype of women as aesthetically pleasing objects was established in the telling of these tales over generations. The primitive formation of these tales allow for such narrow-minded ideas, however, as the genre succeeds and transforms the biased subjects must be focused on less conceitedness to ensure that our children today learn fair and good morals.