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ONCE UPON A GENDER ROLE:  
RE-ENVISIONING THE STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN FAIRY TALES

by

Itzel Evelyn Garduno-Jaramillo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education  
in the College of Education and Human Performance  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Rita Buchoff

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## **ABSTRACT**

Education constantly promotes equality and diversity, however, if the literature we read our students is not doing so, is education doing its job? This question extends as far as females versus males and in fact, this thesis further pursued this issue by taking a look into common fairy tales that have been popularized in modern society that contain stereotypical gender roles and qualities of females that we try to steer away from yet have not.

After doing research into fairy tales and then analyzing Little Snow White, Little Briar Rose, and Cinderella by The Brothers Grimm, I was able to find common stereotypes and compare them to modern fairy tale characterizations of females and thus plead the case for stronger females in the fairy tale genre of texts.

My research revealed that fairy tales were an influence in the lives of children and that females were regarded as only needing to be beautiful, naive, and lack assertiveness. This showed that females felt the need to be this way in order to find the happily ever after and in society both men and women have been impacted through this literature.

The thesis provides a re-envisioned fairy tale of my own showing the combined research in a short story of how females can be strong and be feminine as well. A lesson plan has also been constructed to help point out characteristics in the story, “The Paper Bag Princess” which is one of the modern tales analyzed as well in this thesis.

So, I leave you with the notion that it is most definitely not just a man's world. This world is shared with the opposite gender and its time in education that we do as we preach by providing those experiences to children through literature.

## **DEDICATIONS**

I dedicate this thesis to my amazing mother, to whom I owe the world. Truly a supportive mother who always told me to aim for the stars and who never let me settle for good but to want to be great.

Though this next person was never truly a physical participant in my life, I want to dedicate a part of this thesis to my grandfather Eleuterio Jaramillo, a man I only wish I could have known. We met when I was six months old and knowing that he stood for education and hearing how much we were alike is enough for me to know we'd be the best of friends.

To my ever-wonderful siblings who pray I stop finding new ways to cause more work for myself, but who will never stop supporting me.

And to my boyfriend, Tony, for truly making my life a fairy tale full of love every single day.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not have been what it is without the support of my committee chairs Dr. Sherron Killingsworth Roberts and Dr. Rita Buchoff. They countless times helped push me in the proper direction and Dr. Roberts certainly relieved the pressure of creating this thesis. Dr. Roberts was there as I was at the end of my rope in the first semester believing this would not be possible. Her maternal and professional demeanor was what I needed many a time and I was never turned away. I cannot explain the appreciation I have for her and with that, I say thank you, Dr. Roberts, for proving me wrong and showing me I could complete a thesis!

As for Dr. Buchoff, she constantly provided me with that reality that this would be something I needed to go out and get for myself. Whenever asked she was there to help me out and to keep me grounded as well as the reason I met deadlines. Thank you, Dr. Buchoff for gladly taking me in under your guidance both as a professor and for this thesis. A true inspiration for sure.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As Hans Christian Anderson once said, “Life itself is the most wonderful fairytale of all.” That quote is true; we have this chance to live out our lives and every day can be truly beautiful. Some people enjoy thinking about Prince Charming coming to save a damsel in distress, but what if females start to depend on a male to rescue her? I ask the readers of this thesis to ponder this question as they read the following vignette of my childhood.

At four years old, I knew I wanted to be this independent woman one day, and believe it or not I figured it out through fairy tales. My favorite tale was the popularized 1997 film titled *Anastasia* that was based on the historical missing Anastasia from the Romanov family. Whenever people asked what princess I wanted to be, Anastasia was always the answer, not Cinderella, or Sleeping Beauty. The best line I can remember was that I told people I wanted to be a college student, not a princess. My parents would laugh of course and so would others, however, I was not kidding around.

I really looked up to Anastasia, I thought she was powerful and that is because that was the way she was portrayed. She was witty, strong mentally and physically, as well as beautiful. In the film, she doesn't wait around for a prince and in fact, marries a “commoner”. She made things happen for her while still knowing what was truly important. At the age of four, I knew that, that was what I wanted people to think of me.

Growing older that film truly stayed with me and I lived my life according to it in a sense. My family was a traditional Mexican family meaning most of them thought I needed to be nurturing, aspire to only be a mother, and live in the kitchen, it was just the way things were done. That was the final eye-opener to what I had experienced earlier in life, young girls did not have stronger females to look up to and without even knowing it, wanted to be just like those fairy tale females.

As mentioned above, I have always known the strong kind of woman I wanted to be. Fairy tales gave me this sense of fantasy and have made me into a hopeless romantic. Even though I believe in them, I do not agree with how they portray females. I want to have it all, and be that awesome girl who is beautiful, kind, but so determined and hardworking and who can land her Prince Charming. There are so many positive aspects to fairy tales, who doesn't want to dream about ball gowns and handsome fellas with horses and glory? However, it's important that the literature we read to children gives them an empowering sense not that it just makes for a good daydream. Fairy tales are great pieces of literature, but sometimes even a good thing needs a little tweaking from time to time.

The purpose of this study was to explore fairy tales and the stereotypical gender roles placed on females within the genre. This study took a look at book publications of traditional fairy tales in need of stronger females and does a comparison amongst the traditional versions with modified versions of the tales.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Lawyers, doctors, teachers, mathematicians, scientists, writers and so forth are all occupations we wish our young females to attain one day. Being fearless, strong, independent, and confident is what we hope our young females will be. However, do these qualities present themselves in traditional fairy tales?

### The Background of Fairy Tales

In order to understand why it was that fairy tales have this desire need to portray women as damsels in distress and men as these gallant and strong heroes, it was best to start at the beginning. Therefore, I have included information to give readers background knowledge into fairy tales so that it may facilitate the digestion of the information within the thesis. Keeping that in mind, it was best to begin with the origins of fairy tales so that all viewpoints may be shown as well as to help understand the genre.

To begin, Jack Zipes, an author who devoted a book to the topic of fairy tales, stated that the true beginning of fairy tales began orally and there is no official record of when they began. In his 2012 book titled the "*Cultural Evolution of Storytelling and Fairy Tales*, he writes that

“though it is impossible to trace the historical origins and evolution of fairy tales to a particular time and place, we do know that humans began telling tales as soon as they developed the capacity of speech. They may have even used sign language before speech originated to communicate vital information for adapting to their environment. Units of this information gradually formed the basis of narratives that enabled humans to learn about themselves and the worlds that they inhabited.

Informative tales were not given titles. They were simply told to mark an occasion, set an example, warn about danger, procure food, or explain what seemed inexplicable. People told stories to communicate knowledge and experience in social contexts (Pg. 1).”

Zipes summed it up nicely in the fact that fairy tales really did stem from an oral tradition, but much of them were stories at first that taught life lessons. The genre can easily be seen as folklore due to the lessons and morals they present in them and vice versa, however fairy tales have that happy ending whereas the folktales may or may not depending on the nature of the moral. In fact, oral folktales truly began the genre of fairy tales, however, the reason they flourished decades later was due to a man named Charles Perrault.

Born in 1628, Perrault was a forerunner for the Enlightenment in Europe which was an era that was not accepting towards magic and fantasy, to say the least. The Enlightenment changed that mindset with plenty of hesitation, however, but it was devoted to thinking outside the box, to question things in the world around us. In fact, to light up this darker period of the world, Perrault published a book in 1697 titled *Tales of Mother Goose*. The title itself alluded to the fact that these tales had been oral traditions before anything else. This book was a collection of different fairy tales previously known to only be oral tales such as *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. Little did Perrault know that he would become the father of fairy tales and be remembered long after his death simply for this book. He is credited with starting the genre of fairy tales and since then the genre has appealed to so many.

Soon after, the explosion of fairy tales hit and in the early 1800s in Germany, the Grimm Brothers appeared.

“The romantic movement in Germany (a movement in the arts that favored a return to nature and a greater focus on national culture, especially folk tales) awakened the Germans' interest in the past of their own country. Although some work in the rediscovery and editing of medieval (from the Middle Ages, 500–1500) German literature had already been started in the eighteenth century, it was the poets and theorists of the next century who first focused national attention on the origins of German culture and literature. The Grimm brothers were the most important of these early language and folklore romantic historians (Gretsky, 2017).”

They are still present today in new modern forms of their tales including the *ABC Network* hit *Once Upon a Time*.

The final part of this trinity of great fairy tale writers is Hans Christian Anderson. In 1835 Anderson began to write fairy tales and from there the genre was strong and maintained its popularity. Fairy tales had caught the attention of everyone and from that point, different versions were created and translated, movies made, and thus this continuing obsession with them.

The writers, of course, are the ones who raised the genre from the ground up, but what has made these fairy tales last so long? After some research, many of the fairy tales as well as the earliest forms of them contained special elements to them. These elements include the following:

- *Settings placed in the past*
- *The inclusion of fantasy, supernatural or make-believe aspects.*
- *Incorporation of clearly defined good and evil characters.*
- *The inclusion of magic elements such as people and animals.*
- *Inclusion of objects, people, or events in threes.*
- *The focus to be on a problem or conflict in need of resolution.*
- *Contains a happy ending based on the resolution of the conflict or problem.*
- *Usually, teaches a lesson or demonstrates values important to the culture.*

The above list of fairy tale qualities sums up the criteria needed to make a fairy tale but to also have the fairy tale be attractive to the audience in question. The above qualities make fairy tales continue throughout time. These qualities stem from the original tales themselves and due to those qualities, the genre has continued to present day. Fairy tales have the positive ending and in our world, it is needed especially for children. It is important that they see the positive outcome and these tales are the perfect way to show it which is why the genre is used to exemplify this. However, the question now is how much do we actually depend on these tales? Or how much should we depend on these tales?

### **Definitions of Gender Roles and Stereotypes**

The question that drove this thesis in the first place was why are our beloved fairy tales portraying females in such a weak sense? Based on the background information of fairy tales, it

seems as though before our time and when these oral tales started, they were portrayed this way because of traditional gender roles within those societies. During those time periods women being household maids, cooks, seamstresses, and family caretakers were normal; it didn't seem weak, and it was how things were done. If people did not adhere to those social rules, they were shunned and looked at as unfavorable. For example, in the original telling of Beauty and the Beast, Belle is not a traditional princess type of girl and with all her reading it's absolutely socially upsetting. Today she would be admired, but that was not the case in those times. This study is looking for those stronger females, but to understand the study some terminology needs to be adhered to such as what the terms gender role and stereotypes truly mean. Therefore, I have gone ahead and defined the terms accordingly in order to help the reader understand exactly the target issue in this thesis.

To start, according to the Oxford dictionary, gender roles are defined as the role or behavior learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the social and cultural norms within the society. It is 2017 and we still hold onto some of these norms in terms of not paying women the same, expecting them to do motherly deeds, etc. However, this thesis did not aim to badger people on their views and what they consider normal, nor was it an attack on males and their character, it was simply an exploration into why we don't see stronger female characters in the genre.

Gender roles in children's literature genres became an important issue around 1970 and the 80s, with many claims saying that there were sexist remarks and negative portrayals of females and nevertheless in Newbery Award winners (Powell 1998). As the years go by, there is



still this issue within books. A quick look into the original tale of Cinderella by the brothers Grimm is evidence of previous gender roles that have prevailed today. The stepsisters in this story are shallow, mean, money hungry, and willing to do anything to land a man who is strong and good looking. It shows that women care more about appearances than what is on the inside, as well as sends a message that girls need to wait for some Prince Charming to save them from the evils of life or to elevate their status.

Why care so much about gender roles in children's literature is perhaps the thought running through the many minds who will read this, and the answer is quite simple. Students of all ages in schools will be taught gender stereotypes from the books they will be read, the books parents will read them, and from society as a whole. Gender roles are established very early in a child's life. In fact, it has been determined that most children are able to identify themselves as either a boy or a girl by the age of three. While there is no definitive evidence that children's literature is a major factor in how gender roles are assigned and stereotyped, the importance of the messages in said works cannot be denied. When it comes to children's literature, much of these stereotypical gender roles are just beginning to come under fire and for good reason; "leading ladies have tendencies to be mild mannered, submissive and worst of all: damsels in distress in these fairy tale stories (Heinsz 2017)." We still have a long way to go when it comes to teaching individuality in children and the disregarding of stereotypes.

### **Studies of Fairy Tales and Gender Roles Within Them**

In order to pursue the thought behind this thesis, it was evident that I need to find other studies that could help guide this thesis and take its own spin. There were plenty of studies much like this one, and each conveyed the same type of unfairness among the genders. This showed that there is evidence beyond what could have been imagined, this is an issue popping up due to the dynamics of the world as compared to past decades. These studies contributed to my understanding and I felt necessary to include in order to benefit the reader in terms of gathering more insight into the issue at hand.

To begin, in a 2012 study conducted by Aleah Steinzeg, interviews were conducted based off of both men and women and their thoughts on both femininity and what fairy tales made them expect out of the opposite gender as well themselves. One of the men in the interviews, when asked about femininity, replied as follows:

*“Feminine means like the opposite of masculine. [Masculine means] you can fend for yourself, you can do it all for other people. And feminine, you have to have someone do it for you. You need help with stuff.”*

Taking the year this was done in mind; the concerning factor is that this is the mindset of many younger people and our society in general as well. In fairy tales, there are these underlying messages such as in Cinderella who is much like the quoted interview response. She waited for someone, she was dependent and without Prince Charming, she would never have stood up for herself or anything. As for the stepsisters, they are portrayed as snotty spoiled children which is not much better than a damsel in distress. Much of the fairytale genre results in a heroine who

less than heroic. The men save the day, the women stand by and then there is a happily ever after. This is a current issue as evident in a study done by Amanda Schnibben in 2014. In her study, she found that fairy tales had both good and bad manifestations that could progress.

“As stated above, previous research has shown that the impact of fairy-tale imagery on female emotional development can involve both positive and negative manifestations (von Franz, 1996). For example, if the fairy-tale imagery evokes a positive memory or fantasy for the female, this may result in contributing to a healthy sense of self. On the other hand, if the fairy-tale imagery is negative, the manifestation may be shown by negative behaviors such as gossiping, spreading rumors, or cheating on a significant other. Striving for a “happily-ever-after” and the perfect prince is not just a myth, but could lead to skewed thinking when it comes to a female’s intimate relationships (von Franz, 1996). Women may develop faulty thinking and unrealistic expectations based upon a myth that is amplified within a fantastical story such as a princess receiving a grand love and a life that is happily-ever-after. Day by day, the life after the fairy-tale is not viewed or perceived from a mature perspective. A woman may enter a relationship expecting that all romantic love is supposed to be perfect, when in reality there are many imperfections within any relationship. This is where the female’s skewed thinking could manifest.”

After conducting some more research, it is clear that fairy tales and their genre, as well as characteristics, may not have all the effect in the world immediately but over time depending on

how a person interprets and processes these stories that it could lead to more stereotypes and prevalence of gender roles.

In fact, a study done by Kate Paterson on children in schools using the books *Paper Bag Princess* and *The Three Little Bears* shows this innate sense of how children will simply develop these mindsets of what each gender should be like. Paterson gave the students the opportunity to do reader's theater, a form of reading instruction where the students can practice their fluency as they read a script or book in a play fashion. She assigned the girls the parts spoken by girls and the boys the parts spoken by boys. This seemed to go smoothly and then Paterson changed the game by giving a girl the script of the prince and the boy and script for the princess. This caused an imbalance and the little boy could not acknowledge that this girl was going to play a boy. When the teacher doing this for Paterson asked if the prince was ready, she said he and the boy corrected her saying that *she* was ready. The girls pretend to act like a boy and the boys made sure to make stereotypical hand movements and incline their voices to a high pitch sound. The students had ultimately decided that they knew what made a boy and what made a girl and that could not be changed. This shows that these behaviors are learned, they are influences which makes the point of changing the way we view females in fairy tales so much stronger.

There are countless other studies that have been performed on this topic or related to this topic in some sort, which only proves this is an issue and worth looking into. As an educator, we always have to strive for equality. These days we shove girls into doing science and we make it a big deal to include all genders and races. However, our literature is not doing the same, genders are not equal and there are underlying messages that really stick with girls and boys. Fairy tales

may not explicitly say that women need to be a certain way and that men need to be a certain way, but if there are countless fairy tales and books always portraying women in a particular light then it's only natural for children to believe them and that is what the issue really is. It is that we are continuing this cycle of societal gender stereotyping and that we need to look at literature differently and make those stronger characters in order to begin changing these dynamics.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide information pertaining to the design and facilitation of the fairy tale analysis and comparisons. An explanation of the study will also be given in this chapter including the narrowing down of the focus group of fairy tales and modern tales. An explanation of the qualities I used to compare the modern and traditional tales will be given as well as an explanation of the data charts used to facilitate this study. An explanation of the modern tales will be given as well as how they were chosen in order to complete this study.

### Tales of Focus

Due to the overwhelming amount of folklore and fairy tales that there are in the world of children's literature, I chose four distinct modern retellings of the traditional fairy tales that are most common in Northern America. Fairy tales come in many forms as well such as versions in different languages, and versions in general terms of how they are told. These books I researched in order to find good quality texts that were reliable in terms of showing characteristics missing from traditional tales as well as those that would provide an authentic experience to the reader at all levels of development and reading development. There was a need personally to not just choose random retellings, but rather to choose books students would see outside of the classroom, books they could pick up that would suit their developing needs. Therefore, I have chosen the following books to compare with the traditional tellings of the fairy tales.

- *The Wide Awake Princess* by E.D Baker (2010)
- *The Princess Knight* by Cornelia Funke (2004)
- *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch (1980)

- *The Runaway Princess* by Kate Coombs (2006)

### **Traditional Tales**

As mentioned above, choosing fairy tales and folklore proved daunting due to the number of versions these tales come in. In terms of traditional tales, I purposely chose tales that were more geared towards western cultures that had a set beginning and end to them for the most part. As I looked through fairy tales to include with this study I also wanted to pick quality tales to focus in on, therefore, I chose to use only one author to have a standard to actually compare these new tales to. The Brothers Grimm have a specific language on their own that they use in their tales as well as a style and they were examples of the traditional values in society in their time period. The following tales were chosen out of popularity, but also relevance in terms of showing the evidence of gender stereotyping within the tales themselves:

- *Little Snow White* by Brothers Grimm (1812)
- *Little Briar Rose* by Brothers Grimm (1812)
- *Cinderella* by Brothers Grimm (1812)

### **Qualities of Females Within the Texts in Need of Revision**

In order to be able to compare and analyze each fairy tale, there needed to be criteria for proving the lack of strong female characters in fairy tales. As I read the books there seemed to be four qualities that strongly presented themselves in the modern tales as well as four that were present within the traditional tales. The modern tales such as the book *Wide Awake Princess* stress these qualities by showing a princess without the qualities and the traditional tales show females with these qualities thus showing the imbalance. These four criteria points included beauty, assertiveness, naivety, and heroism. Within the four criteria points there were of course

the contradicting evidence within the tales of non-beauty, un-naïve or knowledgeable, non-assertive or passive as well as timidity rather than heroism.

### **Definitions of Criteria for Comparison**

Beauty in this instance of comparing fairy tales means that the princess typically has to have some type of magical beauty. The princesses, as well as the princes, are usually described to have perfect features, dimensions, great hair, great smiles, and so on. They are considered the most beautiful of all people and the princes ‘search for beauty in their future marriage partner. This creates the stigma to young females that beauty is the sole reason someone would look in their direction and that without it, they won’t amount to much.

Assertiveness in this reference means that the princesses do not talk loudly or shout, they do not anger with the villain, they do not advocate for themselves or what they feel in a situation. The princesses know they must wait for their prince, that they must obey the commands of others, and that they must respect the decisions made for them and so forth.

Naivety for this purpose of study means that the females within this genre tend to have a misrepresentation of the world and believe in only the good and are unaware of the pressures of life. The females tend to trust very easily and believe what they are told. Thus, this was a category that needed to be addressed in order to accurately compare modern tales and traditional tales to one another.

The final criteria for this study was heroism. It seems the hero in every story is the man and any act the female may do is overlooked and shadowed by the male in the story. The female is not portrayed as the hero in almost every circumstance and it seems unlikely that the females would ever be capable of such heroic acts.



### **Data Charts**

In order to keep the criterion for each tale both traditional and modern, I created a chart to use as quick references as well as to summarize the results of the study. The data collection chart provides supportive information on each tale in order to better understand the comparison amongst traditional and modern tales. The chart is a tool that houses the individual results for each book or tale in order to have a reference guide of information and it was simply for comparison purposes. The chart includes the summary of the books in order to provide insight into the books for the reader who may or may not be familiar with the texts. It includes the characteristics of the females present and provides a score of the strength the female is given within the tale.

The scaling is based on a number system score of one to four and measures the total strength of each female by giving an average score of all the criterion measured which is beauty, naivety, assertiveness and heroism. This provides the reader a way to understand why or why not the tale is acceptable in terms of female strength or whether it falls short of including strong female characters.

## Process of Evaluation

In order to come to the conclusions of what criteria would be the most valid for this thesis, it required evaluating each text and finding the specific pinpoints to be able to make those points of comparisons.

I began by searching for quality texts that provided a genuine example of feminine downfalls. *The Paper Bag Princess* was the first one that came to mind simply because of its genuine revolt against the typical female in a fairy tale. I began by looking for feministic characteristics such as beauty, intelligence, and romantic endeavors as well as those who took charge in scenarios. From there I sought help in looking for titles related to *The Paper Bag Princess*. Databases, as well as local librarians, were able to help search for those related books.

As I found quite a few titles with the feministic attributes, I needed to search for authentic examples of fairy tales. They needed to be fairy tales that would be seen both in school and out of school and at a high volume-tales that are popular. As I looked through fairy tales I evaluated them by their popularity in modern society and the above-mentioned criterion. Each fairy tale was evaluated for their main character's feminine characteristics of beauty, assertiveness, naivety, and heroism. I gave each category a rating of one to four. The ratings were determined as follows:

- 0=Never demonstrated
- 1= Rarely demonstrated the characteristic
- 2=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic
- 3=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time
- 4=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

Upon completion of each analysis for each female, I determined whether the fairy tales possessed any strong females within their story and if they did why they were portrayed that way. Of course, it was expected that not every fairy tale has a strong female character, nor did I truly think traditional fairy tales would exhibit many of these qualities in their females because I sought to prove that they wouldn't. For sake of keeping track of information, I collected the data on the data sheet which I included in APPENDIX A. Each sheet should provide the title, date, author, and a short summary as well as the criterion in order to familiarize the reader with the specific tales and books chosen in this study.

In order for this study to be effective, I knew I would have to limit myself to a certain amount books because there are countless books that are in the genre. I encountered so many tales in my initial round of research that I needed to limit the number of tales to analyze to a manageable and concise amount. Otherwise this thesis could become a long list of fairy tales and ratings of their females. I wanted to be able to really compare both traditional and modern tales so I chose a small amount of both. Finding each tale and book was a process, I researched modern tales that were out there and then previewed each one trying to find evidence that would be relevant using the criteria mentioned earlier. I wrote out each book and their qualities onto a list narrowing down each one to find the prime examples that would be useful; This was repeated for the traditional tales and as a whole both the modern and traditional tales were found based on the stories being similar to one another. I wanted to find stories that were related to another in order to be able to show that contradictory evidence, for example, *The Wide Awake Princess* was similar to *Little Briar Rose*. Each book was evaluated as explained above, and each book was able to be compared to a modern tale. That is, the traditional tale could not be just a fairy tale; it

needed to be related to a modern fairy tale in some sense or show evidence of having a strong female.

### **Re-Envisioning a Tale**

After conducting research on these fairy tales, I decided to include one of my own that will be pursued in the future. To culminate my research into a smaller project, I created a short story to include the elements lacking in many females within our fairy tales and in some cases other types of literature. However, the focus is on fairy tales and therefore, I wrote a short story with the spin-off of *Cinderella* by the Grimm Brothers. I wanted to create a tale that not only included the elements of what I had been researching, but that also played to current society in terms of feminism and include modern elements within the story.

In order to create the characters and story itself, I did research to find powerful names for women as well as men and included characteristics both from the common tales and the modern ones. I wanted to keep some stock characters and therefore included those as well as re-envisioned characters.

The story focuses in on a young fourteen-year-old girl named Audra. She was dropped into the world of Princesses and Princes when she was just a baby-quite literally. Audra was left on the doorstep of the king when she was two months old by her birth mother. The king took her in and raised her as his own. He never married because he said she was enough, but soon enough there was Lucinda-the wicked stepmother! Lucinda finds ways to manipulate the king into making things difficult for Audra and relatively dreamlike for her two daughters Marigold and Seraphina. Audra hates her stepsisters and mother and finds comfort in her best friend Isadora.

Together the two of them meet some princes along the way and drop an item or two and find out who they really can be.

### **Lesson Planning for Gender-Neutral Activities**

As an aspiring educator, I found it important to include lesson plans that can encompass a broader range of activities to include the genders in an equal way. From a study previously mentioned about the students doing reader's theater and being assigned atypical roles for their genders, I was able to realize that gender-neutral activities are not always promoted and or that, that thinking is simply not done at the elementary level which progresses into static thought later on about genders.

I created a lesson plan for reader's theater in order to promote gender-neutral activities as well as a lesson plan for the title *The Paper Bag Princess* in which the students explore female qualities of strength. In order to create these lesson plans, I used other studies as well as the Florida standards in the CPALMS website which lends tools to create lesson plans. I wanted to make sure students were exposed to more than the stereotypes of society, therefore, I strove to make something they could use to understand that anyone can do anything whether they be a boy or girl and that girls are tough, they can slay a dragon.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

When I began this study, I wanted to focus in on the multicultural aspect of fairy tales, however, as I researched the topic I found that there seemed to be a discrepancy between the characters. The females seemed to be “weaker” and the males “stronger”. I sought out to prove that this discrepancy was a reality and that it was changing how we viewed females and males. This chapter explores the results of my research and any discussions related to my findings.

### **Female and NOT Equal**

The results of my research cleared showed that women in fairy tales were not represented as an equal to man. The women in these tales were lacking in assertiveness and heroism but were beyond beautiful and naive. Little Briar Rose, Little Snow White, and Cinderella all had those in common. Briar Rose couldn't escape the thorn hedge in the Brothers Grimm version of her story but rather chose to wait for a prince to save her. The prince was given all the credit for saving the day and it was all so easy for the prince. He was portrayed as fit, heroic, and masculine. However, Briar Rose was simply stuck in a tower portrayed as beautiful, naïve, and weak.

Little Snow White was just the same, always falling for the old woman's tricks and falling for the apple from the queen. The queen was certainly powerful, unlike Snow White who ran into the forest and dove into the help of seven little men. She fell into the traditional roles of cooking and cleaning for these men meanwhile falling for evil tricks from a jealous queen. The only strong female in the fairy tale was truly the queen, however, she was depicted as jealous, vain, evil, and unkind. It seemed that strong meant having to be mean and feminine meant being sweet and nice all the time.

In Cinderella, the last traditional tale I evaluated; she was also weak and not at all strong in terms of doing something for herself, standing up for herself, or standing up to those that bullied her. Cinderella could not face her stepmother and sisters in order to save herself; she depended on others to help her get to the ball, to save her and she could not be assertive in going after what she wanted which was freedom and love again. Cinderella is a prime example of a damsel in distress, yet these are the tales we honor and give clout to.

Each fairy tale was evaluated upon the criterion of beauty, naivety, assertiveness, and heroism. The traditional fairy tales all fell short of the strong qualities which would be the assertiveness and heroism. The males are the heroes and the women are simply beautiful and naïve. Strong women can no doubt be beautiful, have a little naivety which is great because strong women are, they believe in the little wonders of life and they can be extremely beautiful, but they are assertive and heroic. Heroic didn't have to mean slaying a dragon, facing an evil queen or a hedge of thorns, it means saving yourself from the perils in which one finds themselves. Heroism meant going after what was needed and wanted and being self-reliant. With assertiveness, the characteristic meant having a voice for oneself, it meant speaking up even if it was out of turn or not the right thing to say. Assertiveness also meant not becoming a doormat, knowing how to say no and stand up to those who have wronged.

After evaluating each traditional fairy tale, it was clear that female meant weak and beautiful. Each fairy tale was, of course different, but they contained the above-mentioned criteria. Fairy tales are popular because of the heroism, the happy ending, but I can't help but think that fairy tales can still have this even if it isn't a male saving the day.



Each tale was given a scale of one to four for each category, and all these traditional tales fell short in showing much of the qualities that made a woman strong. Of course, as mentioned, the assertiveness and heroism aren't the only strong female qualities, but they encompass more sub-categories within them. The traditional tales on average scored a four on beauty, a four for naivety, and a 0 for the remaining two criterion of assertiveness and heroism.

### **The Trouble with Traditional**

Further analysis of my findings showed that the problem with these traditional tales in promoting these qualities of women is that it creates these stereotypes within young children, especially at the school age. It is said that by age three, children already know what gender they are and the activities associated with their gender. However, the problem with having traditional tales be told is that they only influence this gender role idea. Again, this research was not an attack on fairy tales simply because the genre provides happiness which is needed in the life of a child, it shows them that life is not all bad which helps their trust in the world. However, my argument still stands on the fact that there can be happy endings without the man having to rescue the woman.

Students do not learn about gender roles, and yet they have them, they use them and find comfort in them. Fairy tales did not create gender roles of course, but the point of the research was to see how gender roles manifest themselves within this genre and it does play some part to an extent. We attribute beauty to naivety, and any form of assertiveness or heroism is shot down and excuses are made for women in order to make them weaker. Our society struggles with gender roles because of the connotation these roles have. It's a battle between the genders and even at the elementary school level, kids know they may not know it's a gender role, but they

know what each gender does and using literature is a way to expose them to the latter or to expose them to these gender roles indefinitely.

### **A Modern Twist**

After seeing the resulting qualities from traditional tales, it's evident that some of them needed a change to survive in our modern world. I studied four additional books that were impactful in terms of changing the way we think of a female whether they be a princess or not.

The other tales that were studied in my research were as follows:

- *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch (1980)
- *The Princess Knight* by Cornelia Funke (2004)
- *The Runaway Princess* by Kate Coombs (2006)
- *The Wide Awake Princess* By E.D Baker (2010)

These above-mentioned tales were studied in order to see books that had redone gender roles since the time fairy tales were created. There was a genuine surprise to find out that *The Paper Bag Princess* was from 1980 simply because it is such an innovator in terms of creating a different type of princess. In this first book, Munsch tells the story of how one princess actually did defeat a dragon, but not with her hands, but with her mind. She saved Prince Ronald who was beautiful, but terrible hearted and not a caring bone in his body. He disregards the princess simply because she is not in a ball gown and sitting pretty even though she saved his life. The book wonderfully shows the stereotypes as well as gender roles we assign to others and not only was the book an example of that, but it was an example of the fact that we don't have to stick to those stereotypes just because others say it is so.

The following books within this research were all from the twenty-first century so it was less surprising to see the different gender roles. In *The Princess Knight*, Funke writes about a princess who dreams of being a knight not one who again simply sits still and looks pretty. This children's book was so important simply because it targets that beginning audience, those that are simply starting out reading, fresh minds that are still able to be influenced. This book does a wonderful job in showing that because you are one thing, it doesn't mean you can't become something else, and it takes heroism and assertiveness to say no to something and stand up for what you want to do or be.

*The Runaway Princess* was another book that stood out in the evaluation process and the results showed that this book made waves in the gender role world. It tells the story of a princess who doesn't want to be a princess and in fact cannot stand to be even titled one. She thinks dresses are hindrances and that she doesn't want to do "wifely art". In the story, the mother has assumed traditional roles and tries to press that onto her daughter, however, she is not the kind to go down without a fight. She refuses to go into a tower and wait for someone to love her. She talks about escaping and defeating wizards and villains which is the anti-Cinderella. These books proved that there can be strong females without having to give up titles and fairy tales if children need the happy endings they can have them, but not at the expense of having quality female characters.

The final book evaluated in this research was *The Wide Awake Princess* in which Baker tells a tale similar to sleeping beauty or Little Briar Rose. This tells the tale of an average princess who is the sister to the most beautiful princess in the land. This average princess is not ugly nor beautiful and that displeases the family and the rest of the people in the land. However,

she is smart, brave, assertive, and heroic because due to being unaffected by magic she is able to save those affected by the spindle and its magic. The average princess Annie is mistreated simply because of beauty and it is a prime example as to why this research was done in the first place. Fairy tales are wonderful but once again not that the expense of showing what is truly valued.

From these books, I was able to prove my research and show evidence of how effective these tales can be in terms of either promoting traditional roles versus inspiring to be untraditional. It is evident there were some tales in need of a revision.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter discusses the overall conclusions gathered from my research. Based on the result of the research I have provided suggestions for finding quality texts, for creating gender-neutral classrooms, as well as my recommendations for future research into the topic of children's literature regarding gender roles and fairy tales.

### **Searching for Quality Texts**

I believe there is no other way to influence the young minds of our students and children other than to find good quality authentic texts. In terms of authentic, it is important to find books with experiences that promote discussion as well as those that are going to promote ideas that will be seen outside of the classroom such as gender roles in this instance. However, this is the same whether as a teacher or parent we are trying to promote diversity or talk about discrimination amongst genders and races etc.

Finding texts that support every student can be hard and time-consuming, however, research has shown that it is important to play to the students and their needs and interests. Once these types of texts are found, however, it provides a well rounding for the children and benefits them in the long run. As an aspiring educator, I find it imperative to promote good books that students will remember and get something out of. There are so many genres of text and each one is as important as the next, however picking good books for each genre is just as important. Students will want to read world record books, myth books and so on all day long, but supporting the child with quality texts as well as though good read books are important to their

development. In order to help with the search for quality texts, I have inserted fairy tale books that can be used in the classroom in APPENDIX C.

### **Creating Gender-Neutral Classrooms**

The more I dove into this research and invested my time into looking for fairy tales that would promote stronger females, I felt that I could help to prevent gender roles in the classroom. It is so important to have the students know that they can absolutely do anything, in fact my teaching philosophy is that everyone can, everyone can learn and do anything they set their mind to. In order to implement this type of thinking I thought of ways to use the classroom to help students develop this sense.

Snack helpers, door holders, assigning masculine roles to girls in a play or even when reading aloud, etc., are all ways to promote gender neutrality within the classroom. Females are associated with cooking, being quiet and nice as well as beyond caring, however, boys are capable of the same compassion and abilities. Having a boy be the snack helper may not seem like much, however, it makes it so that males must clean up after others, not just women, it instills autonomy as well as helps to create that gender neutrality.

One of the studies that stuck with me was, of course, the reader's theater lesson done by Patterson. Alongside this study I included my own lesson plan that would showcase a similar approach. However, the real reason I mention this study is because it was a prime example of the stereotypes young children already have inside of them in their first few years of life. If they continue to both see and read these types of issues continue, they eventually will develop the thoughts of how they should be, how their gender should be, and what they expect out of the opposite gender. I say this because of other studies done that resulted in just that, fixed mindsets

rather than a dynamic mindset. If students are allowed to engage in activities and responsibilities that perhaps are rather atypical of their gender, it promotes their growth and hopefully diverts their thinking into the dynamic realm.

Books again are also a way to promote different ways of thinking about gender roles. I mention fairy tales due to the fact that, that was the genre I decided to focus in on, however, science picture books and so forth can instill these same values. There are books that promote atypical gender roles or rather modern ways of our society such as *Grace for President*, *Amelia to Zora*, as well as *Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon*. These books show females who are strong whether they be explicitly honoring women or whether they show the differences that make women beautiful in their own way. Finding books where girls are doing experiments or where they are doing sports like football are ways to promote atypical gender roles and show that it is okay. Books such as those show girls they can do anything a boy can do and vice versa. It's important to target both males and females. While my study mentioned females, boys are affected the same in terms of gender roles and it is important for this reason to create those gender-neutral classrooms (Gordon, Roberts, 2015).

### **Future Research**

Upon the completion of this study, I realized that there is definitely some future research that can build upon this initial study. As I mentioned earlier, when I began researching this topic I had begun with a multicultural study in terms of finding different relatable fairy tales and gender roles in those cultures. As I complete this first part of the study I realize that can be a possibility to continue with. I thought about analyzing the gender roles placed on females in other cultures based on popular tales in that country or region of the culture. There was a study

done using Portuguese fairy tales that I came across and would like to implement something like that in terms of analyzing a single culture and their literature. This would only widen my research and prove that perhaps this is a phenomenon in more than just western cultures but worldwide and culturally significant.

I also contemplated conducting a study involving males and masculinity. As I studied fairy tales and the females, I noticed that males were always heroic and masculine. If the males weren't in their own way beautiful and stereotypical they were useless and simply stepping stones to the prince type. This made me think that conducting a study similar to this one could perhaps prove that gender stereotyping within children's books is a thing and that we need to be more aware of what is put into the classroom and in the minds of students.

However, beyond future research, I also thought about conducting this same study again with a wider range of fairy tales from even more authors rather than focusing in on one author and their fairy tales. I feel that narrowing the tales to one author simply by the popularity was a good course of action, but perhaps another course needs to be taken to get an even fuller picture of gender stereotyping within fairy tales. Therefore, I would love to take the research done currently and extend it as well as extending it to different cultures and males.

### **A Final Thought**

Concluding this particular study, I created a passion within myself for this particular topic. I as a child was like the females in many of these stories, I didn't fit into the stereotypical category of what a female should be. It was put into my head that I needed to be a certain way in order to be considered a female in the society in which we lived. This turned into the idea for this study, but actually conducting this study lit a fire under me in terms of wanting to promote this



gender equality amongst future students of mine as well as into society. As a future classroom teacher, I will continue to have this passion and continue the philosophy that everyone can, everyone can learn and everyone can be what they set their mind to. I will promote the gender equality in the classroom and provide good quality texts so that future females can see that there is more offered to them than they believe. I will be mindful of my students and who they are beyond the male and female classification and I hope to create a passion within them as well.

## **CHAPTER SIX: A RE-ENVISIONED TALE**

### ***Chapter One***

Once upon a time in a far, far, away land-----okay it wasn't that far just the lands of Hermosa, the head of the country Bellisa located just under the lands of South America; and it really wasn't that long ago either. But that is beside the point, the point is once upon a time a little baby girl was dropped in front of the gates of the king's palace. King Emilio was interrupted during his siesta in order to find a baby girl crying her eyes out in the arms of the gate guard. She had a gold necklace around her neck that was far too long for her with the name Audra. The guard tried to hush the baby but she would only cry and cry.

“Sebastian what is the meaning of this?!” cried the king. The poor guard hollered over the crying baby complaining that the baby had been left at the gates of the palace with only a note explaining that she was unwanted. The mother's noted asked and hoped that the baby could be given a maid's job eventually here at the palace and that she apologized for inconveniencing the king. Something about the child had drawn King Emilio to her though. “Sebastian give me the child,” said the king extending his arms towards the baby. He did as he was told and the minute Audra landed in the king's arms she silenced and brought herself close to his chest where she promptly fell asleep. The guard couldn't believe his eyes as the baby fell asleep.

“She's a beautiful little creature don't you think?” said the king as he rocked the baby. In an instance, the little girl became his world whether he realized it or not. She had him wrapped around her little fingers and he couldn't help but to profoundly love her. He had the chamber maidens (fancy term for maids) create a room for her in the west wing, the one where he and his

late wife had resided. She loved the library in their home, which was in that wing and until Audra, the king never dared let anyone near it. The maids therefore, could hardly believe their ears as they followed orders. It was strange how in just a few minutes a little girl had melted the heart of the king. He declared her his princess and from then on, they would become a team.

After hours of hard work, Audra's room had been finished and the king was able to lay her down in her crib that night. She almost cried on instant after not being in the king's arms, the poor baby would turn to hysterics. The king called for the kingdom's fairy godmother in order to figure out what to do with Audra in order to make her cry less. The fairy godmother whose name was Gardenia hurriedly flew to the palace and could see the concern on the king's face. She wondered what could be wrong when she heard the ear-piercing sound of a distraught child. Gardenia found the child in the west wing without having to ask and saw the poor baby girl flailing around and calling for attention. "She has been through much already," said Gardenia. "She's scared of life, but I can fix it!"

With a shake of her hips, a shoulder wave, and a flick of her wrist, Gardenia touched Audra with the most powerful magic of all. She gave her the gift of bravery, and the minute Gardenia's fingers laid upon the baby's forehead, she stopped crying. However, something else happened; Audra's heart began to glow as this happened. Neither Gardenia nor the king knew what was happening. "I've never seen magic penetrate the heart!" exclaimed Gardenia looking dumbfounded. Then suddenly the glowing stopped and Audra simply went to sleep as if nothing had ever happened. The king and Gardenia didn't think much of it afterward and she claimed there was nothing to worry about. She departed to get back to her own child Marigold who was in need of sleep herself.

The king sat in the chair next to the crib that night just to make sure Audra would be okay, he spent most of the night stroking her hair and whispering to her how much love she would have all her life and how she'd never have to worry ever again. He saw Audra smile for the first time today and continued to watch her sleep, but he couldn't help but wonder why this creature had been brought to him.

The guard had left the note that had come with the baby when she arrived and the king read it hoping to find an explanation within the words.

*Dear King Emilio,*

*This baby is named Audra and I apologize for doing this to you, but I cannot take care of this child. My family has exiled me because this child is of Haiden decent. We both know the Haidens were a cruel tribe long, long, long ago who would run wild and destroy villages simply because they could. I did not know her father was of this decent and after finding out I promptly fell out of love with him. I could not love such a person and he turned into a beast cursing the child saying she would prick her finger on a spindle causing the kingdom to fall into a perpetual sleep. I, therefore, cannot raise such a child. She will never be mine, but I hope you can make use of her, perhaps as a maid in the palace.*

*Sincerely,*

*Adriana E. Grenaldi*

The king looked at the little baby in sudden panic and in an instant, began having spindles burnt to dust. They had been a useless contraption anyways that only lent themselves to pricks and ugly sweaters in the long run. King Emilio could not understand why anyone could curse an innocent child but he vowed to never let the curse come true. King Emilio kissed the

baby on the forehead and said goodnight. “You can always find the light little one! Remember you can survive anything.” said the king before walking out of the baby’s chambers. One thing for sure was Audra would always be loved.

## ***Chapter Two***

“Audra get down from that tree!” shouted Mrs. Winifred looking around cautiously for one of the palace workers. “You’re in a dress for goodness sake!” she continued. Audra didn’t listen and besides she was far too old for a nanny. She only climbed higher and higher into the apple tree and began throwing down apples into the basket she had placed under the branches.

“You worry too much Winnie! How else are we gonna make apple pie? This was your idea anyway!” shouted Audra from the tree in a sarcastic tone.

“I apologize, princess, but I don’t think the other countries heard your sarcasm!” countered Mrs. Winifred. The woman was hitting her 70’s; and she was far too tired to run after a 14-year-old girl who did not conform to the princess way. Mrs. Winifred was growing more impatient with the child every day, she constantly skipped out on important matters such as cooking classes, décor meetings, dress fittings and of course anything involving princess like behaviors. She was certainly the strangest princess of them all which was why King Emilio hadn’t even started to find her a mate. Audra didn’t give a rat’s nest; however, if she ever got married. Her favorite line was that she was independent, so she’d just keep exploring and enjoying life. Mrs. Winifred continued to beg Audra to come down from the tree, but everything was useless.

“Your father is not going to like his princess in a tree Audra! Come on we need to get you ready for dinner with the Landers family! Audra stopped in her tracks and rolled her brown eyes before pursing her lips and crossing her arms over her chest. She stood so gracefully in a branch and stated, “I’m not going.” Then, promptly jumped down from the lower tree branch. She picked up her apples, and Mrs. Winifred simply gawked at her taking a second to realize

exactly what Audra had said. When it finally sunk in, she chased after Audra and stopped her in her tracks.

“Audra Rose Ellington, I know I am older but I don’t remember asking if you wanted to go tonight, its mandatory which means you *must* be there.” Mrs. Winifred stared her down, but Audra wasn’t scared or intimidated as she countered, “*And* I remember saying I wasn’t going.” Both ladies had reached an impasse and Audra sure knew she wouldn’t be the one to budge. She had met Leo Landers at school. She knew that her dad had been dying for this dinner simply because his family had money. Everyone knew he was the future king of Candara, a neighboring land. It took about three seconds for Audra to dislike him when she first met him through one of her friends on the basketball team and it was the fact that you knew everything about him in three seconds; he was pretty, about as intelligent as a pet rock, and rude as a sailor.

Mrs. Winifred had, had about enough out of Audra for the day. She was the weirdest princess she had ever met. She hated dresses stating their only purpose was to escape wearing pants, she played sports, talked when she wasn’t supposed to talk and had no interest in princes. Mrs. Winifred grabbed Audra by the arm and dragged her inside lecturing her all the way through about how she should be more gracious and princess-like. To Audra, all she heard all the way inside was *blah, blah, blah, blah, blah*.

Audra called for her friend Isadora as Mrs. Winifred or in this instance Cruella Deville made her get ready for this dumb dinner that was going to be about as productive as watering a donut. Isadora arrived with great speed as Audra used their best fairy god friend call and watched as her nanny shoved her in a bathtub to clean up. “Winnie, you can go now I’ll have Isadora here help with the rest of my feministic look, I promise she’ll make me look as dolled up as can

possibly be done,” said Audra in a sarcastic and teasing way. Mrs. Winifred stormed out cursing to the wind saying she quit. Audra and Isadora just laughed like nobody’s business.

“Isn’t that like your tenth nanny?” laughed Isadora as she motioned for Audra to scrub off the dirt on her face. Audra grabbed the peach mango soap and nodded as she cleaned off. “Yeah, this one was the worst though! She was 60 something, and constantly reminding me that I was not a princess just because I like basketball and doing as I please. I mean, come on! I know what I want and don’t want in life, and I can’t help it if maybe I want more than a crown on my head and to sit still and look pretty,” replied Audra as she finished up her bath and dried off before changing into her fluffy bathrobe. Isadora motioned for her to come over to the mirror to dry off her hair and do her makeup.

“Audra you’re a strong independent girl and you are just in a weird stage of development anyway. You have different ideas about what a princess should be and that’s okay you’ll just have to eventually make Hermosa see you the way I see you, which is heroic,” uttered Isadora. Audra smiled and Isadora began doing her hair, deep down inside she knew she was right, but it was quite hard being different everyone constantly looked at her funny. Audra watched as Isadora did her hair making sure to brush through every last strand of her mahogany colored hair. She looked at her features, she was pretty and plain with brown eyes, brown hair, some slight freckles and rosy cheeks. She was never one for makeup, but Isadora kept the makeup natural as she moved onto her face. Audra knew she’d never fit in at all, but Isadora was right she could try and make everyone see what a princess could be.

When Isadora finished up with Audra, it was as if she had transformed her. Audra looked at herself in shock, she had been forced into a delicate pink lace dress that just touched the floor



and the ruffled sleeves fell off her shoulders in an effortless way. Her hair had been curled at the ends and she seemed radiant. “I look so weird, but like in a good way,” laughed Audra as she twirled around.

“Just because you want to be the anti-princess, doesn’t mean you can’t dress up like one every once in a while, Audra,” said Isadora with a wink as she cleaned up the dressing area. “If only Angus McAllister could see you now,” she added. Audra immediately stopped twirling and suddenly felt her stomach do somersaults and her knees buckle. Isadora laughed because no matter how hard she tried, Audra was hopelessly in love with Angus who was her best guy friend, but also mega crush. Audra simply waved it off though and thanked Isadora again before making her way down to the dining hall. Isadora followed suit and they laughed all the way down and opened the doors, but that was when they fell silent.

A beautiful woman stood in front of them, she had golden hair that was almost blinding, her smile was perfect and she looked stunning in a blue dress that wrapped around her in a delicate and intricate way. “Who are----” started Isadora but she was cut off by King Emilio who slid in next to the woman and kissed her on the cheek. “This is Lucinda Laughton, your soon to be stepmother, she actually has two twin daughters your age Audra.” Audra smiled awkwardly and held her will back to shoot daggers at the evilly well-dressed woman.

“Dad, is this because Winifred quit?” wondered Audra panicking inside.

“Winifred quit?!” asked her father obviously annoyed.

“No, but thanks for telling me. Lucinda is my love and we are getting married in two weeks, I just couldn’t wait to tell you,” said King Emilio, far too lovesick. Audra tried to stay calm, but she just about ran out of the hall only to find that the Landers family had arrived. To

make matters worse, Leo Landers had arrived, too. Audra didn't know what to do. The only thing she knew was gold digging Lucinda had to go.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: RE-ENVISIONING LESSON PLANS

### Gender-Neutral Classrooms Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Subject:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Title:** Gender Roles No More

**Estimated Time:** 150 Min

#### **Standard/s:**

- **LAFS.3.RL.1.1:**
  - Ask and answer questions to demonstrate an understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- **LAFS.3.RL.1.2**
  - Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

#### **Learning Goal(s):**

- Using the book, *The Paper Bag Princess*, the students will be able to pull key details and/or examples from the text in order to discuss the book as a class.

- The students, given a writing prompt on gender roles, will be able to explain what a gender role is with at least three sentences.
- Using the book, *The Paper Bag Princess*, the students will be able to create a reader's theater in groups with a gender-neutral script.

**Prior Knowledge:**

- Students should be familiar with inferencing and pulling key details from a book.
- Students should be able to discuss a text using examples from the text and current knowledge.
- Students should be able to write multiple paragraphs with three to five sentences.

**Materials/Resources:**

- *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch
- Writing Journals
- Paper for scripts
- Timer

**Essential/Guiding Question(s):**

- What is a gender role?
- How do these gender roles affect us and the people around us?
- Should we follow gender roles? Why or Why not?

**Content Outline:**

- I. Read aloud *The Paper Bag Princess*
- II. Discuss the text
- III. Introduce gender roles and stereotypes

- a. Gender Role: Roles given to boys and girls by our society over time
  - b. Stereotype: A typical characteristic that is expected of someone and their behavior
- IV. Find Examples in the text of gender roles and examples of atypical behavior
- a. Discuss findings
- V. Introduce Reader's Theater
- VI. Constructing a Reader's Theater

**Key Vocabulary:**

- Stereotype, Gender Role

**Procedures:**

**Introduction:**

- The teacher will begin the lesson by activating the students' prior knowledge using questions that will relate to the later lesson.
- Sample questions and introduction: "Okay students, today we are going to read *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch. But before I read this book, I would like you all to turn to a partner and have a conversation about what a princess should look and act like. Take two minutes to do this please." As the students are conversing, the teacher will walk around to groups and listen in on thinking. After two minutes the teacher will regain the students' attention.
- "Okay class what did we talk about?" The teacher will call a few groups to share and then as a class pose the question, "What do you think princes are supposed to be like?" The teacher will call on a few students and then move on. "I appreciate your responses, as I read this book to you think about the characteristics you just

described to me about princesses and princes. Do they match? Are they different?” “Now let’s read!”

- The teacher will read the book aloud to the students.

**Input:**

- Once the text has been read, the teacher will discuss the text using the following or similar questions:
  - i. What was the conflict in the story?
  - ii. What happened when the princess saved the prince? Use details from the text to support your answer.
  - iii. Why do you think the prince was so upset about the princess saving him?  
Why do you think this?
  - iv. After your beginning thoughts about princesses and princes, do these characters fit that image? Why or why not?
  - v. Do you think it is normal for the girl to be the hero? Why or why not?
- After the discussion, the teacher will then define the following two words and introduce them. “Students I want to introduce you to the words gender role and stereotype.”
  - i. Gender Role: Roles given to boys and girls by our society over time
  - ii. Stereotype: A typical characteristic that is expected of someone and their behavior
- The teacher will then ask the students if they can find an example in the book that goes with both vocabulary words. The teacher will give a minute or two of wait time and then call on a student to provide their example.

- After the students find examples, the teacher will explain that gender roles and stereotypes apply to real life by using common stereotypes and gender roles such as; blondes are not smart, girls must always wear dresses, etc.
- The teacher will have the students grab their writing journals and brainstorm stereotypes they have or have been used against them. The teacher will allow ten minutes for the activity. At the end of ten minutes, the students will discuss some of their findings and ideas. After the students do this the teacher will write a writing prompt on the board or post-it paper.
  - i. **Writing Prompt:** Take one of your stereotypes you wrote down or a gender role you are expected to do and write at least one paragraph about why you think it is fair or if it is not fair. Please use examples.
- The teacher will give the students twenty minutes to do the activity reminding them about punctuation, capitalization and complex sentences. **ESOL STRATEGY: Have students draw pictures to illustrate their writing or have the student orally explain their writing.**
- After the students are finished writing, the teacher will call on one boy and one girl to share. If time allows the teacher may call on two more students to share. **ESOL STRATEGY: have students present with a peer to communicate orally.**

**Modeling and Guided Practice:**

- The teacher will then introduce reader's theater in case the students do not know what it is. The teacher will explain that it is basically a script like in a play that the students perform and read.

- The teacher will model a reader's theater (found at the end of the lesson).
- The teacher will then explain that the students will be creating their own reader's theater using a gender-neutral script meaning they are going to write a script that does not follow common stereotypes. The teacher will tell the students that the boys may play girls and that girls may play boys for the roles.
- The teacher will then take about ten to twenty minutes to brainstorm some ideas with the students prior to splitting them into groups of at least four.
- The teacher will inform the students that they must use at least ten sentences for their script and that one member must play a role of the opposite gender.

**Check for understanding:**

- As the students break off into groups, the teacher will check for understanding by conferencing with the groups about their script. They should be able to give an explanation of why they are making the script the way they are and how it is gender-neutral. If the groups seem to have an understanding the teacher will remind the students about the words they learned and the book to help keep the learning in the proper context. If the students are confused, the teacher will stop the students and revisit the terms and use the book to reference examples as well as their writing prompts.

**Closure:**

- Finally, the teacher will wrap up the students' writing and tell them that it is okay if it is not finished, that more time will be allotted later on if needed. Most students will not finish the script and that will be expected.



- The teacher will then have the students come back together for a discussion to close the lesson.
- The teacher will have the students share a synopsis of what their scripts will be about and then proceed with the discussion using the following discussion questions:
  - i. What is a gender role?
  - ii. What is a stereotype?
  - iii. In the book we read, what was different about the princess? How did she act?
  - iv. Do you think the princess should have acted the way she did? Why or why not?
  - v. Do you believe the prince should have acted the way he did? Why or why not?

### **Assessment and Monitoring**

- Formative Assessment:
  - i. Discussion questions will be used to check in with the students and their comprehension.
  - ii. Writing Journals will be used to informally assess the individual understanding of each student.
- Summative Assessment:
  - i. Reader's theater scripts will be used to measure the overall student's understanding of the objectives and lesson.

**APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION SHEETS FOR TRADITIONAL  
FAIRY TALES**

**APPENDIX A: COLLECTED DATA FOR TRADITIONAL FAIRY TALES**

<b>Title:</b> Little Briar Rose	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 1812
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<b>Author:</b> Brothers Grimm	<b>Illustrator:</b> N/A
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**Summary of Tale:** In this tale, a king and queen receive the gift of a baby girl, however, she is soon cursed to prick her finger on a spindle and fall down dead. Fairies who not given her a gift yet try to soften the blow by making it so that she only falls into a perpetual sleep on her fifteenth year. The king in order to try and save her altogether locks her in a tower where she must wait for a prince to save her from the tower.

0=Never demonstrated

1=Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

2=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

3=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

4=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

<b>Criterion of Evaluation:</b>
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<b>Beauty</b>	4
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<b>Assertiveness</b>	0
<b>Naivety</b>	3
<b>Heroism</b>	0

**Explanation of Criterion:**

<b>Beauty:</b> Little Briar Rose or Sleeping Beauty is a beautiful young girl and that is constantly expressed within the tale and is coined in the name eventually.
<b>Assertiveness:</b> She is not assertive, in fact Little Briar Rose does not stand her ground with the old woman spinning by saying that she did not need to touch it nor did she say yes to marrying the prince that saved her.
<b>Naivety:</b> Briar Rose is naïve in the very least as she is coaxed into touching spindle which causes her to sleep until someone saves her.
<b>Heroism:</b> Briar Rose is a damsel in distress until she is saved by a handsome prince who is to marry her, she does not save herself or attempt to save herself in any way.

<b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> No	<b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> Yes, the evil maiden who was not invited to the welcoming of Little Briar Rose.
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<b>Date:</b> 08/10/17	<b>Time:</b> 5:45 pm
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<b>Title:</b> Little Snow White	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 1812
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<b>Author:</b> Brothers Grimm	<b>Illustrator:</b> N/A
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**Summary of Tale:** Little Snow White is a beautiful young girl with fair skin and rose red lips and cheeks who is the fairest of them all. The evil queen is then beckoned to kill the child in order to save herself as the fairest of them all. The young girl is chased into a forest where she settles in a little home of seven dwarfs. She cooks and cleans for them and simply tries to escape the evil tactics of the queen to stay alive and wait for her true love.

**0**=Never demonstrated

**1**=Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

**2**=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

**3**=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

**4**=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

**Criterion of Evaluation:**

<b>Beauty</b>	4
<b>Assertiveness</b>	1
<b>Naivety</b>	4

<b>Heroism</b>	0
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**Explanation of Criterion:**

<p><b>Beauty:</b> Snow White is considered perhaps the most beautiful of all due to her complexion and personality and she is constantly regarded as the fairest and most beautiful.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness:</b> Snow White is only assertive once when she says she cannot accept gifts from strangers, however, she is only slightly assertive with the woman, careful not to be impolite.</p>
<p><b>Naivety:</b> Snow White is very naïve, she believes the queen each time that she brings a gift until she finds herself dead and laid in a coffin.</p>
<p><b>Heroism:</b> Snow White does nothing for herself and does not save herself from the evils of the queen, she ends up in a coffin and a handsome prince sees her through the coffin and runs to catch up with them in order to save her.</p>

<p><b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> No</p>	<p><b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> Yes, the evil queen who is still beautiful and intelligent.</p>
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<p><b>Date:</b> 08/27/17</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 7:20 pm</p>
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<b>Title:</b> Cinderella	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 1812
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<b>Author:</b> Brothers Grimm	<b>Illustrator:</b> N/A
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**Summary of Tale:** In this story, Cinderella is a young girl bound to an evil stepmother and two wicked stepsisters. She is reminiscent of the days spent with her family and how her new family has ruined it all. She is turned into a maid and forbidden to attend a ball. She uses the help of a fairy godmother in hopes of attending the ball and landing the prince all while avoiding her wicked stepmother.

**0**=Never demonstrated

**1**= Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

**2**=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

**3**=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

**4**=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

**Criterion of Evaluation:**

<b>Beauty</b>	4
<b>Assertiveness</b>	1
<b>Naivety</b>	3

<b>Heroism</b>	0
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<b>Explanation of Criterion:</b>
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<p><b>Beauty:</b> Cinderella is described as beautiful and fair and kind much unlike her stepsisters whom she inherits by a wicked chance just like her stepmother. She is the object of her sisters' jealousy and is considered a beautiful maiden when she enters the palace.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness:</b> Cinderella is slightly assertive when she asks to go to the ball, or when she tries to end her own torture of being a maid. However, it quickly fades in the face of her stepmother who is evil and wicked to her.</p>
<p><b>Naivety:</b> Cinderella is somewhat naïve in that she believes the world is always just and that she will be swept off her feet by someone who will end the torture her new family puts her in.</p>
<p><b>Heroism:</b> Considering a prince had to find her using a shoe, it is clear Cinderella was not her own hero, she landed the prince on accident but through her charm as well. She was a damsel in distress however not being able to set herself free.</p>

<b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> No	<b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> Yes, stepsister and stepmother.
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<b>Date:</b> 09/12/17	<b>Time:</b> 5:45 pm
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**APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION SHEETS FOR MODERN FAIRY  
TALES**

<b>Title:</b> <i>The Paper Bag Princess</i>	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 1980
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<b>Author:</b> Robert Munsch	<b>Illustrator:</b> N/A
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**Summary of Tale:** Princess Elizabeth is not the typical princess, she sets off on a quest to save the man she is supposed to marry when a dragon takes him hostage. She throws on a paper bag leaving the princess dress behind and outsmarts a dragon without the power of a sword. When she saves the day however, Prince Ronald can't be bothered to even be grateful because she doesn't look like a princess.

**0**=Never demonstrated

**1**= Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

**2**=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

**3**=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

**4**=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

**Criterion of Evaluation:**

<b>Beauty</b>	3
<b>Assertiveness</b>	4
<b>Naivety</b>	0

<b>Heroism</b>	4
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**Explanation of Criterion:**

<p><b>Beauty:</b> Princess Elizabeth is of what we consider average beauty, she isn't touched by magic to always be flawless and she is not sparkly and shiny, however, she shows plenty of inner beauty.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness:</b> Princess Elizabeth is very assertive, she is the one who says she will go to defeat the dragon, she asks the dragon directly for the prince back, and she stands up to Prince Ronald.</p>
<p><b>Naivety:</b> Elizabeth is not a regular princess, she is certainly not naïve either. She knows exactly what the world is made of and if not she realizes it on her own and knows to believe and trust in herself and judgment.</p>
<p><b>Heroism:</b> Heroism is perhaps the trait Princess Elizabeth shows the most because of her willingness to fight the dragon in the first place and the ability she had to use more than violence to slay the dragon. She saves the day which is typically left to the males.</p>

<b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> Yes	<b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> No
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<b>Date:</b> 09/22/17	<b>Time:</b> 5:05 pm
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<b>Title:</b> <i>The Princess Knight</i>	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 2004
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<b>Author:</b> Cornelia Funke	<b>Illustrator:</b> Kerstin Meyer
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**Summary of Tale:** Violetta is a princess, but she wants to be a knight, in fact her, own knight in shining armor. At night, Violetta practices at becoming the best knight in the land which will prove to come in handy once she learns that her father, the king, will be staging a tournament for Violetta's hand in marriage. Violetta knows she must saddle up for the greatest battle of all time and for the most important prize of herself.

**0**=Never demonstrated

**1**= Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

**2**=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

**3**=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

**4**=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

**Criterion of Evaluation:**

<b>Beauty</b>	1
<b>Assertiveness</b>	4
<b>Naivety</b>	0

<b>Heroism</b>	4
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<b>Explanation of Criterion:</b>
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<p><b>Beauty:</b> Violetta is not stated that she is beautiful therefore there were not enough indications to be able to judge that criteria in its fullest. She is not stated that she is not beautiful however so the book is focused in on the tale for the most part.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness:</b> Violetta is able to stand up to her father in order to say she wants to be a knight rather than a princess. She also shows assertiveness in fighting for her own hand to prove a point.</p>
<p><b>Naivety:</b> Violetta is anything but naïve, she understands her world and what is expected, but she knows enough to not be naïve about what she wants as a person.</p>
<p><b>Heroism:</b> In the book, Violetta shows a lot of heroism in order to risk herself for the tournament and to fight for herself. She goes against the norm and that takes a form of heroism all on its own to be able to do such a thing.</p>

<b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> Yes	<b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> No
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<b>Date:</b> 09/25/17	<b>Time:</b> 4:15 pm
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<b>Title:</b> <i>The Runaway Princess</i>	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 2006
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<b>Author:</b> Kate Coombs	<b>Illustrator:</b> N/A
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**Summary of Tale:** Meg does not want to be a princess, not one bit. She is being given away to the person who can rid their kingdom of the evils that lie in such as dragons. Meg is appalled and does not understand these traditional values of being a princess. She sets off to battle the evils in the kingdom herself so long as she doesn't have to be given away like a box of chocolates. She encounters evils and princes along the way to try and save herself.

**0**=Never demonstrated

**1**= Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

**2**=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

**3**=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

**4**=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

**Criterion of Evaluation:**

<b>Beauty</b>	2
<b>Assertiveness</b>	4
<b>Naivety</b>	1

<b>Heroism</b>	4
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<b>Explanation of Criterion:</b>
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<p><b>Beauty:</b> Meg is average in beauty based on the details within the book which is a trend in some of the modern tales, they are less focused on beauty and more on the qualities of the princess. She is however as well beautiful on the inside in terms of a person.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness:</b> Meg is definitely assertive, she wastes no time in disagreeing with her parents about what is right for her. She doesn't want dresses and princes or tea parties, she wants to live her own life without the restrictions of being a princess. Without a doubt, she is assertive.</p>
<p><b>Naivety:</b> Meg holds that hope to be free thinking it can be easy to win her freedom which makes her somewhat naïve in that sense, but she also knows that what can lie ahead can be hard as well.</p>
<p><b>Heroism:</b> Heroic is definitely a word to describe Meg who sets off on a quest no one but her suitors dares to go on. She is venturing out to dangerous parts of the kingdom and only to save herself which is beyond brave.</p>

<b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> Yes	<b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> No
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<b>Date:</b> 10/05/17	<b>Time:</b> 8:00 pm
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<b>Title:</b> <i>The Wide Awake Princess</i>	<b>Publishing Date:</b> 2010
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<b>Author:</b> E.D. Baker	<b>Illustrator:</b> N/A
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**Summary of Tale:** Princess Annie is the younger sister to Gwen, also known as the princess destined to be Sleeping Beauty who got all the looks and all the princess genes. When Gwen pricks her finger on a hidden spindle, the whole castle falls asleep leaving only Annie awake. Only Annie-blessed (or cursed?) with being impervious to magic-can venture out beyond the rose-covered hedge for help. She must find Gwen's true love to kiss her awake and maybe find hers along the way.

**0**=Never demonstrated

**1**= Rarely demonstrated the characteristic

**2**=Seldom demonstrates the specific characteristic

**3**=Demonstrates this characteristic most of the time

**4**=Consistently demonstrates the characteristic

**Criterion of Evaluation:**

<b>Beauty</b>	2
<b>Assertiveness</b>	3



<b>Naivety</b>	0
<b>Heroism</b>	4

<b>Explanation of Criterion:</b>
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<p><b>Beauty:</b> Annie by birth is not altered by magic and therefore, is not considered beautiful by her family and kingdom's standards. She has slightly crooked teeth, she can't get too close to anyone without destroying their magic and her inner qualities mean nothing to the rest of the kingdom. But Annie doesn't care she knows she has more to offer either way.</p>
<p><b>Assertiveness:</b> Without a doubt Annie is assertive, however, it is hard for her when it seems the whole kingdom is against you. She waivers on the assertiveness but has a strong foundation in speaking her mind when she can.</p>
<p><b>Naivety:</b> Annie is definitely not naïve simply because without all the magic she knows what is real, what is possible and she shows a clear demonstration of not being naïve just by when she warns her sister about the present that caused the castle to sleep.</p>
<p><b>Heroism:</b> Saving her sister and the rest of her family while finding herself definitely shows heroism. Annie may have been the only one left without falling asleep, but she still went to save the castle and the kingdom from the perpetual sleep. She took it upon herself to fix it and that is heroic all on its own.</p>

<b>Contains Strong Female Protagonist:</b> Yes	<b>Contains Strong Antagonist(s):</b> No
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**Date:** 10/12/17

**Time:** 9:00 pm

## **APPENDIX C: FAIRY TALE BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS**

## APPENDIX C: FAIRY TALE BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The Paper Bag Princess*, Robert Munsch (1980)
- *The Wide Awake Princess* By E.D Baker (2010)
- *The Princess Knight* By Cornelia Funke (2004)
- *The Runaway Princess* By Kate Coombs (2006)
- *Not All Princesses Dress in Pink*, Jane Yolen (2010)
- *Cinder Edna*, Ellen Jackson (1998)
- *The Seven Chinese Sisters*, Kathy Tucker (2003)
- *The Worst Princess*, Anna Kemp (2012)
- *The Tough Princess*, Martin Waddell (2002)
- *What Jill Did While Jack Climbed the Beanstalk*, Edward Zlotkowski (2016)
- *Ella Enchanted*, Gail Carson Levine (1998)
- *Princess Academy*, Shannon Hale (2007)
- *Ugly Stepsister*, Aya Ling (2015) (YA)
- *Just Ella*, Margaret Peterson Haddix (2007) (YA)
- *The Frog Princess*, E.D. Baker (2004)
- *Once Upon a Curse*, E.D. Baker (2004)
- *The Bravest Princess*, E.D. Baker (2014)

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