
The authors in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* claim that Disney has control over ideologies placed within their films, and that these ideologies have a great impact on young audiences. The authors further their claim by stating that Disney films are a cultural capital, and much of what young people learn come from viewing the films. The book also claims that because Disney has an appeal that speaks of innocence, the corporation is usually exempt from scrutiny.

Jack Zipes, who wrote the chapter, ‘Breaking the Disney Spell”, argues that Disney created movie versions of oral fairy tales, and placed his ideologies within the text. The films are not just mere entertainment, but contain the ideologies of the man who transformed the tales into movie versions.

This book can be used to support the claim of subtext existing within Disney films, songs, and images. It will support areas of racism, culture, and gender roles, and how Disney places its own views and stereotypes within their films. This book will parallel *The Mouse that Roared* because it touches on some of the same issues. Although it touches on many of the same issues, when it comes to gender, *From Mouse to Mermaid* focuses more on sexuality than roles.


In the article, “Beauty and the Beast: The Romanticization of Abuse in Popular Culture”, Laura Beres argues that there is a strong relationship between abuse and the romantic notions in films. She claims that films romanticize abuse through the female being able to change the abuser. Females begin to take on the roles they see in the film and think that they too can be the character. Beres also claims that women connect to the films because they feel it is a story of their lives. They can identify on many levels, with the female character, but the difference in the film is that the female characters, many times end up changing the male abuser for the better.

I will be able to use this article for my research because the author uses Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast*. It connects to the idea that women can be a part of an ideal narrative audience, which ties into Disney creating an ideal narrative audience with children.

Fisher, Jerilyn and Ellen Silber. “Good and Bad Beyond Belief: Teaching Gender Lessons through Fairy Tales and Feminist Theory” Women’s Studies Quarterly, Volume 28, Number ¾. (Fall-Winter 2000). P 121-136

In the article “Good and Bad Beyond Belief: Teaching Gender Lessons through Fairy Tales and Feminist Theory, Fisher and Silber argue that fairy tales display a patriarchal ideology that girls
are ready to adhere to. The authors further argue that fairy tales indoctrinate gender roles to the young girls who read them. They show how the young woman waits for her prince charming to rescue her because only then will she live happily ever after. This is an ideology that predisposes young girls not to be independent, and to rely on the male counterpart for happiness.

This article will link to White’s article, “Skins: Female Agency and Bodily Mutilation in The Little Mermaid” because it shows how women are affected by fairy tales. It further support the idea that viewing fairy tales, and Disney versions of fairy tales can prove to be harmful to young people when they are not educated about what they are viewing. It also ties to White’s claim that there are subtexts that can be read within films; subtexts that reveal more that a happily ever after ending.


In the book, The Mouse That Roared,” Giroux argues that Disney appears to be all fun and innocent when it comes to films and theme parks, but there is more to it than that. He argues further that Disney is a multi billion dollar corporation that shapes the ideas and views of young children. The popular corporation shapes children’s understandings of society and themselves through entertainment. Disney shapes ideas of race, gender, nationality, and religion through images in film. He says that as teachers and parents we must look closely at Disney and its films to notice what exactly Disney is saying.

Giroux co exists with both Hurley and Tavin in saying that Disney teaches children through television and films. He is also in agreement when it comes to ideas being imprinted on children through these films. Children take on viewpoints of the world through what they see, and they are watching Disney whether it is at the movies, on a DVD, commercial, or a toy they purchased. He also agrees that teachers and parents should look more closely at Disney and the messages they are sending. Children cannot learn just through Disney, but through parents and teachers as well. Giroux states “We must pay attention to how these Disney films and visual media are used and understood differently by different kids” (588).


In her article, “Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess,” Dorothy L. Hurley argues that Disney depicts fairy tale princesses as being a part of white society, and this depiction affects how children of color view themselves and the world. The self image of children of color is affected by how and what they view from an early age. Hurley further argues that Disney versions of fairy tales show white privileging through color symbolism, and that to affects how all children view people of color. Hurley states that teachers and parents
need to be aware of the white privileging that can be seen and heard in Disney versions of fairy tales before they use the films and books to teach children.

Hurley’s article can be used within the research to support ideas of racism within fairy tales, and more importantly, Disney versions of the fairy tales. Children incorporate images of themselves at an early age, and the self images, many times stem from Disney movies because it is a big part of children’s lives. With color symbolism running through Disney films, children begin to associate white with goodness and black with evil or darkness. When students were asked to depict a princess, the article stated that “children almost invariably drew white characters no matter what color they were” (222). This demonstrates how the images and symbolism affect children. The article suggests adopting multicultural education as a way to reverse the effects color symbolism can have. Books and Disney films can be one such arena for discussions of worth, self image, and viewpoints about race.


In the article The Celebration School: A model Learning Community, Ishler boasts of an innovative idea for a school equipped to teach students k-12. It is a part of a professional development school, which serves as models of learning environments that are beyond the norm. The model not only teaches students in an environment that is supposed to feel more like home, but also trains teachers in the process. The idea of the professional development school builds off that the school should be more like a learning community rather than just a school. It states that the school is cooperative where parents have a say in the curriculum and that everyone is a lifelong learner.

Although this particular article does not show how Disney films are teaching children societal norms and behaviors, it shows how Disney is everywhere. It shows how the corporation is just about in every facet of a child’s life. It was not merely enough through the Disney franchise to affect the lives of children through films and toys, but now Disney has built a school where they are teaching teachers how to teach. When comparing the films of Disney where there isn’t much diversity, it is interesting to see that one of the school’s founding principles is: “Diversity – Recognize and act on the belief that including people from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, and abilities build a rich learning environment” (4).


The Facebook page has over 11 million likes, which shows how far Disney’s reach is. The forum allows people who like the page to post pictures and/or text to the page. The page mainly supports those who share the same love for the company. It will not allow any posting that are off topic, inappropriate, or objectionable. It is a place for “fans” to share their ideas of the company.
I can use this source to show how far Disney can reach its audience. It has over 11 million likes, which I have not seen on Facebook before. It can tie into how Disney creates a lifetime consumer. The people who are fans are most likely those who have children, and are allowing their children to also be consumed by Disney.

Louie, Belinda Y. “Guiding Principles for Teaching Multicultural Literature” International Reading Association. 2006

In her article “Guiding Principles for Teaching Multicultural Education,” Belinda Louie claims that there should be specific guidelines for introducing and teaching multiculturalism. She also claims that Disney versions of cultural tales are from the actual truth of the tale, but many children know about other cultures through these films. The author discovered many transgressions in Disney films when they were based on actual truth. The author states that the Disney versions of films could and should be used in teaching multiculturalism for the fact that most children are familiar with the film. It is also a good tool for comparison.

I can use this article to show how Disney does not stay true to cultures when depicting them in films, but use a more stereotypical depiction instead. It can show how Disney versions of films are far removed from the culture’s folktale or history of the same story. I can also use this article to show how Disney can be used to teach culture. It can be used in a classroom or even at home to display differences among many versions of the same tale.

Muller-Hartmann, Andreas. “Is Disney Safe for Kids?-Subtexts in Walt Disney’s Animated Films” Amerikastudien/American Studies, Volume 52, Number 3, P 399-415.

In the article, “Is Disney safe for Kids?-Subtexts in Walt Disney’s Animated Films,” Andreas claims that Disney films are a reflection of Walt Disney’s vision of American values, and that the ideologies present are racist and sexist. Andreas furthers his claim by stating that these ideologies are intrinsically formed in children at a young age. The ideologies are formed through watching the films that Disney creates and markets to young children all around the world. Even though the ideologies are present, Andreas argues that Disney can still be enjoyed if children are taught to critically analyze the films.

The Andreas article supports my research by showing a connection to education and Disney. This article parallels the argument set forth in the multi-cultural article about teaching what Disney is saying. Although the articles cite different ways in which to use Disney as a teaching tool for children, they both state that it can be done. The Andreas article furthers the argument for teaching children about the subtext in Disney films by giving strategies for the classroom.

In the article, “Education Goes Mickey”, Natale claims that the Celebration school that Disney is building will be an asset to Florida. The article boasts of contributions Disney has made, and that Disney’s long time mission is education. Natale claims that the Celebration school will train new teachers and that the cost is no more than a regular school to build. She claims that the school will attract professionals and their families to the area, which can build the community.

This article will show how Disney is a teaching machine, and that they have their hands in all aspects of children’s education. It will show that the Disney Corporation is trying to control the young audience, and the classroom is just another way to exert the control they have.


In “Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences,” Rabinowitz claims that “there are at least four audiences that are implied in any narrative literary text” (125) He states there is the actual audience, which is the flesh and blood of the actual person reading or viewing a book, movie, or television show. Next there is the authorial audience, which knows outside information. They are understanding all of the references being made. The next audience is the narrative audience, and this audience takes on the fantasy and becomes a part of it. Rabinowitz states the narrative audience would ask “What sort of person would I have to pretend to be...if I wanted to take this work of fiction as real?” (128). The last audience is the ideal narrative audience. This audience believes what the narrator says to be true and accepts all judgments that were made.

The idea of an ideal narrative audience in Disney films contributes to the idea that children learn societal viewpoints from the films. The children are taken in at a young age and believe the narrator no matter how unreliable he may be. The children think and agree with what they see in pictures. The children who are viewing the Disney films automatically accept what is being said and shown without question to its validity. This also ties to Hurley in that as teachers and parents we must be a part of the authorial audience and understand outside references being shown and stated within the films.


In the book, Disney The Mouse Betrayed: Greed, Corruption, and Children at Risk, Schweizer claims that since the Disney corporation was taken over by Michael Eisner, the company has lost its innocence. The pair further argues that since the new CEO has taken over, Disney has become more like Hollywood instead of having family values. It is claimed that Disney lost its morals when Eisner became CEO, the innocent family appeal was replaced by the sinful ways of Hollywood.
This book can be used to contrast claims of racial and sexist subtext existing in Disney films before Eisner took over the company. The book claims that Disney fell from grace after 1984, and that before this date, Disney was more of a family company. I will argue against the claims that Disney was innocent before 1984, and show subtext of gender roles and racism throughout the films. I will argue that morals and children are not what is at the heart of Disney productions, but instead it is about what sells to the masses.


Tavin argues that children’s knowledge of themselves and their world is largely constructed through visual forms of pop culture, especially animated films and television. He states that Disney plays a large role in shaping ideologies of young children in America, and around the world. Disney has corporate holdings in many industries and is a major influence around the world. He does not state that Disney is at fault, jut that parents and teachers need to be more aware of what their children are viewing because what they view will shape their views about themselves and the world in which they live.

Tavin’s article supports Hurley’s article in that children and their ideas are molded through what they see. Even though this article did not pin point color symbolism as Hurley’s did, it still displayed the effects on youth. In Tavin’s article asked a fifth grade class was asked why there weren’t any non-white people in Tarzan when it is clearly set in Africa, and a student said that “there are many non white people in the movie, they are black, they are the apes” (34). This ties to the idea that children are gaining ideas from what they view in the movies and on television. Since the article showed that children are influenced, it also suggested that parents and teachers be aware, and in the class that discussed Tarzan, more discussion came about because of the child’s response, which was a teachable moment.


In her article, “Split Skins: Female Agency and Bodily Mutilation in the Little Mermaid”, Susan White argues that young girls are taking on ideologies that in order to be accepted women must succumb to the perfect image. She claims that movies such as the Little Mermaid have subtexts which young girls subconsciously adhere to. The subtexts are hidden beneath a clad of bright colors, songs, and larger than life characters so it will appeal to young children. White also claims that such films display (subtextually) how women are viewed and should view themselves. The subtexts of films can lead to alarming ideas that young children form about the gender and race roles in society.

I will be able to use this information to draw a parallel to female body image being forced upon children at a young age through “innocent” such as Disney. It will further my standing that the
subtexts found in Disney films can be damaging to young children, and that their viewpoint stays with them through adulthood. The multi-billion dollar corporation reels in the very young by placing their ideas within the films, and continues with their abuse through consumerism. They are building lifelong customers starting with placing ideas in their minds.


In her article, “Children’s Films as an Instrument of Moral Education,” Monique Wonderly claims that children have an innate sense of some morality, and that their morality can be fostered through the use of films. She claims that there are many films (including Disney) that have good moral education aspects to them, and that they can teach children between right and wrong. She states films are good educators of morality because aesthetics play a role in the teaching, and children learn better when they can connect the moral with a picture and/or the feelings they get from seeing it.

This article will work as a nice contrast to the other articles I have read. Although the article does not state that Disney films are moral, she does claim that they can be used for moral education, and not by contrasting them. I feel this article shows how many people view the innocence of Disney films. The author even uses Disney’s version of The Bridge to Teribithia as an example for moral education, which has been on the most challenged book list by parents.