A Meticulous Recount Of Historical Contexts In Fairy Tales

Fairy tales provide a meticulous recount of historical contexts by revealing both the author's personal attitudes and collective societal values throughout history. In a pedagogical manner, fairy tales communicate the acceptable morals and behaviours of children within their context, in turn providing us with 'a lens into human culture in its historical and social context' as theorist and academic Bruno Bettelheim states. Charles Perrault's Le Petit Chaperon Rouge presents an explicit window into the societal expectations of young girls in the 17th century, depicting the value of obedience and the disgrace of sexuality and additionally alluding to the prominence of the patriarchy. Alternatively, Angela Carter's modern adaptation The Company of Wolves (1979) reflects her personal value for feminism, which she displays by juxtaposing previous patriarchal values and introducing a bold, free-thinking and sexual female, indicative of the evolving beliefs overtime.

Historical fairy tale adaptations provide distinct depictions of the societal values and expectations of that time, reflected through specific archetypes, symbolism and contextual elements. Charles Perrault outlines the 17th century value of obedience and innocence for young French girls in his cautionary tale Le Petit Chaperon Rouge, brimming with underlying patriarchal ideals and sexual elements, alluding to a young female's place in society during this time. Perrault's didactic tale highlights both the behaviours expected and condemned by society, this idea fortified by expert Jack Zipes, stating 'the implicit and explicit notions of childhood and child rearing in this tale were an elaboration of bourgeois expectations," Perrault initially molds Little Red Riding Hood as a figure of model behaviour, addressing the significance of obedience in the descriptions "the prettiest creature who was ever seen" and "her mother was excessively fond of her", which are not only didactic in the sense of enforcing values on young female readers/listeners, but additionally highlights the praise associated with good behaviour. Alternatively, the consequence of not meeting these standards is explored in "all the better to eat you with", where hyperbole and euphemism ensure emphasis on the consequence of disobedience, scaring young girls away from misbehaviour. It additionally represents sexuality as something vulgar, stressing the importance of virginity with the allusion to rape, or loss of innocence when the wolf "ate her all up". Moreover, the ideology of helplessness among women within the context can be deduced in "Little Red Riding Hood... was at first afraid, but believing her grandmother…" symbolic of the innocent maiden archetype, where she fails to read the danger, drawing attention to her naivety and weakness. This reflects the patriarchal society that it was written in, revealing society's idea that girls are not, and should not be free thinking or independent and instead should just be taught to behave. Perrault effectively symbolises the societal expectations of young French girls in his fairy tale adaptation Le Petit Chaperon Rouge, consequently providing readers with rich contextual insight into 17th century ideologies.

Fairy tales are reflective of both cultural and societal values and expectations of children in different time periods. Perrault's Le Petit Chaperon Rouge explores the model behaviour of 17th-century bourgeoisie children while Angela Carter in The Company of Wolves, flaunts her personal feminist opinions, whilst simulatenously reflecting the evolving value of feminism around her. Both adaptations have been intricately modelled around their context and therefore capture significant contextual insight into cultural and societal values throughout history. Within

their archetypal elements and language features, fairy tales possess a snapshot of history's values, of both writers personally and society as a whole.