Power Of Beauty In Snow White

A story is an incredibly powerful thing, transmitting messages about who we are, where we came from, and how we should behave. This event contributes to our knowledge of the world around us and leaves a major impact on each one of us. This inherent obscurity allows stories to become incredibly dangerous weapons, as they often become implanted in our collective consciousness that the stereotypes they reveal become irrevocable truths. If we are told consistently from a young age that women are either beautiful and good, or ugly and evil, it leaves no surprise that these beliefs slowly begin to control many people's perceptions of reality, and possibly impact how we tell others. Instead of living in a world where anyone can be anything they dream of, women are trapped in the same old roles and offered minimal amounts of freedom to the point where they become as restricted in real life as they are in fictional texts and films.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was released by RKO Radio Pictures in 1937 as an American animated musical fantasy film. The film was produced by Walt Disney Productions. The story was originally based on a German fairytale by the Brothers Grimm and is the earliest Disney animated feature film. My decision to analyze 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' was not determined by a lack of alternative options, but by the film era guideline given to me. A similar consideration of female depiction could be conducted using films such as, 'Sleeping Beauty,' 'Cinderella,' or 'Rapunzel', to name only a few.

In 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, the evil stepmother manipulates men, specifically the Huntsman, by utilizing her beauty and devious sexuality. Snow White, on the other hand, is 'white as snow.' She is the ideal princess, obtaining the perfect qualities of being both beautiful and innocent, passive and gullible. Unlike her step-mother, Snow White has no motivating force, no aim or ambition. You could say she is a blank slate, entirely selfless with no story of her own. Her lack of identity means that she can be easily manipulated by the storyteller and male characters. She is not truly given a consciousness, but merely operates in this story as an object, an insubstantial body upon which men can inscribe their own desires.

Patriarchal control is displayed in world culture through destructive beauty standards. Impossible to achieve, the physical perfection sold to women through media and advertising ensures that they continue pursuing the unattainable, often with the cost of genuine self-examination. In 'Snow White,' the stepmother's magical mirror gives the same purpose; it serves as a metaphor symbolizing male power, ensuring women police themselves, enacting a daily ritual of attempting to eliminate wrinkles and reduce pore size. The evil stepmother personifies this internal perish when she is disproportionately preoccupied with beauty. One day, the queen's magical mirror informs her that she is no longer the "fairest of them all," but Snow White is. She then allows herself to become so insanely jealous of Snow White, that she orders the Huntsman to kill her.

When Snow White runs away from home and needs a place to hide from her stepmother, she comes across a beautiful cottage in the forest. After approaching the strange home, her first instinct is to clean it. She tells herself, and the animals surrounding her, that if she simply cleans the dishes and cobwebs, the people living there might allow her to stay. When the dwarfs find

her, they all agree to give her the safety she is in dire need of. The next day, she continues to cook dinner for the men while they are out working to find gems and diamonds. These scenes allude to the way women were portrayed in society during this time. A typical housewife who cooks and cleans for the man, or men in the home.

The movie reaches its climax when the stepmother drinks a potion turning her into an ugly, wrinkly old woman. She soaks an apple in poison and plans to convince Snow White to eat it since the Huntsman couldn't bring himself to get the job done. The stepmother succeeds in her plan to kill Snow White, and apparently, the only thing that can bring her back to life is 'true love's first kiss.'

The seven dwarfs are alarmed when the animals attempt to bring them back to their cottage to help. They quickly realize what has happened and they chase after the queen, which unfortunately results in death. The stepmother stands on top of a cliff, trying to push a boulder down onto the dwarves, and instead loses her balance and falls off the cliff herself. The dwarfs go back to their cottage and cannot find it in themselves to bury Snow White because she is, "so beautiful, even in death," and they instead place her body in a glass coffin in the forest. When she is entrapped within that coffin, lifeless, she finally becomes the perfect beautiful object; entirely passive and subject to the unrelenting male gaze.

Finally, the prince she had met one time and had longed after ever since finally greets her dead body with a kiss on the lips, and Snow White is magically alive again. She steps out of her coffin and rides off into the sunset on the prince's horse. Happily ever after.

The way, this fairytale ends, symbolizes women as weak as if they need a man to come and save them when they are in trouble. This entire fairytale is based on women competing against each other to be the most beautiful and then ends with the idea that women are helpless when things get serious. The underlying messages behind these fairytales affect the children who watch them growing up. This film teaches girls that beauty is important when it in fact is not. Women are now portrayed a bit differently in most films- strong, independent, as they should have been all along.