

## Cinderella: The Feminist Tale (A Discourse Analysis of the Story's Adaptation through Podcast)

Puri Bestari Mardani<sup>1</sup>, Maria Febiana Christanti<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Communication Science, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia  
e-mail: [puribestarmardani@upnvj.ac.id](mailto:puribestarmardani@upnvj.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>; [febiana@upnvj.ac.id](mailto:febiana@upnvj.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

\*Corresponding author

### ABSTRACT:

Cinderella's character and feminist ideology are contradictory. The phrase "Cinderella Complex Syndrome," which refers to women's dread of independence, supports this idea. Fairy tales are full of beautiful, passive, submissive princesses, as well as bold, independent female constrained by archaic gender stereotypes. They uphold conventional norms about gender roles and value. Fairy tale adaptation is not a new phenomenon; for centuries, people have used it to further their objectives, uphold their cultural standards, and further their ideologies. The construction of feminism in Cinderella rhyme via podcast is the main focus of this study. This rendition carries the feminist ideals while representing an unexpected tale. This study uses discourse analysis methodology, relying on the ideas of liberal feminism and Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation. According to this theory, adaptation encompasses both the process and the final output. It is evident from Cinderella's podcast that retelling of the narrative is dependent on the story teller's perception and incorporates a new ideology – liberal feminism, which is associated with the second wave of feminism. This study shows how the liberal feminism ideology in Cinderella's rhyme is constructed through modifications in the storyline and characterization. This Cinderella portrayal gives more depth that doesn't match the image of a traditional princess and shows that she can accomplish anything she sets her mind to. This Cinderella adaptation tale shows Cinderella active role that frees herself from her oppressor as the development of liberal feminism in her character. Cinderella's assertive voice in voicing her demands and desires also supports the liberal feminism idea.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the realm of storytelling, fairy tales have long been regarded as timeless classics, captivating audiences across generations. However, a closer examination reveals that these seemingly innocent narratives often perpetuate patriarchal values, relegating women to passive, subservient roles. As feminist scholars have pointed out, the classic fairy tales of Basile, Perrault, Grimms, and Disney tend to prioritize the male gaze, reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting the agency of female characters (Ragan, 2009). Conversely, the modern adaptation of fairy tales using new media, such as podcast, has emerged as a powerful counter narrative, reframing these stories through a feminist lens. Fairy tales and gender issues, particularly those involving princesses, have been discussed extensively. Since women gained many of their rights through the feminist movement, it followed that even the representation of women in fiction had to change to reflect this reality (Hamraoui, 2023). Disney, as one of the pioneer in creating tales about princess, keeps up with the time by referring to popular issue, hence there have been various modifications to the representation of princess characters in Disney films (Ashari, et al., 2024). Recent years we have seen a significant drive within Disney Company, a well-known producer of princess fairy tales, to begin highlighting strong, self-reliant female characters. The appearance of princesses who defy the popular stereotype of earlier princesses is evidence of this. As an illustration, consider Princess Merida from the *Brave* film, who practices archery and declines to wed a prince; Princess Mulan, who rose to national hero status; and other princesses who govern their realm independently of males such as Princess Elsa and Princess Moana. These were brought up to criticize their earlier work, particularly *Cinderella*, which is the face of the Disney princess brand and one of the most well-known classic princess tales.

*Cinderella's* persona has been the subject of countless articles, movies, songs, and even Ted Talks. The song line included in the Disney film *Cheetah Girl* goes "I don't want to be like *Cinderella* / Sitting in a dark, cold, dusty cellar / waiting for somebody to come and save me / I'd rather screw myself" (Robbins & Savigar, 2013). *Cinderella* seems to be waiting for a man to come to her aid and not taking action to save herself. These days, it is far from the embodiment of an independent woman. Collete Dowling also conceptualized the *Cinderella Syndrome* in the 1980s. Its name is inspired by the *Cinderella* tale, in which a woman longs for a prince to rescue her from her stepfamily. The syndrome is similar to psychological dependence on women, and in this type of dependence, women must be morally patient to receive a man's rescue as a reward. According to this syndrome, women want a man to come along and take charge of their own lives for them to live happy lives (Saha & Safri, 2016). Women are conditioned from an early age to feel safe and at ease; as a result, they are prepared for reliance rather than independence. This dependent process—which feminism embodies—is the source of the fear of freedom (Demir, et al., 2021). Put another way, the *Cinderella Syndrome* concept first applied to women who lacked confidence in their independence.

This philosophy runs counter to feminism. Feminism and gender-inequality are multidimensional social phenomena which sprawl through personal, familial, social, and

cultural (Hambur & Nurhayati, 2019). The underline premise of feminism is to seek women's equality and justice in every sphere of life and create opportunities for women to have the same access to the resource that are otherwise freely available to men (Raina, 2017). Woman's experience of not being allowed to make their own decisions serves as the inspiration for liberal feminism's founding principles. The theory of liberal feminism holds that people – male and female alike – have minds that enable them to comprehend morality and individual freedom while making decisions that protect people's rights (Lubis, 2015). According to liberal feminism, regulating obstacles must be removed to achieve gender equality. According to John Stuart Mill in the 19th century, women's liberty cannot be guaranteed by mere educational parity between men and women. Women should be allowed to participate in the economy and granted civic rights, such as the freedom to express themselves, join organizations, and make their own decisions (Article19, 2020).

As evidenced by the contributions that concentrate on translation and adaptation, viewing Cinderella as a social text, entails approaching its refashioning across language, medium, and cultures (Rochère, 2016). It also requires focusing on how fairy-tale discourses shape our comprehension of diverse communities and cultures. When a traditional princess tale is being reimagined, it might be a means to subvert the patriarchal values and introduce feminist values.

Analysis of Cinderella's adaption has focused on the adaptation techniques applied to contemporary fairy tales (Šarec Miškin, 2019). Dupont (2015) examined historical and modern versions of Cinderella using framing theories. These two studies demonstrate how the way a character or plot is presented can influence audience expectations regarding gender roles and social norms, as well as how the presentation fits into a particular cultural setting (Dupont, 2015). Consistent with these research findings, Morton (2020) reinterpreted conventionally static gender roles in my creative work, a screenplay in which the female leads navigate variety of difficult circumstances, sometimes not reacting to the best of their abilities, giving their characters more nuance (Morton, 2020). Additionally, Cinderella adaptations highlight the opportunities for more expansive manifestations of femininity (Parsons, 2015). Analyzing Cinderella's tales that still hold today can show in more depth how she changed from patriarchal to contemporary female roles.

According to Hutcheon in the book "A Theory of Adaptation," adaptation refers to both the creation and reception of the work as well as the media difference, which directly affects the way the story is told in adaptation work and results in a new work that is entirely different from the original ones (Hutcheon & O'Fyynn, 2013). According to Hutcheon in the book "A Theory of Adaptation," adaptation refers to both the creation and reception of the work as well as the media difference, which directly affects the way the story is told in adaptation work and results in a work that is entirely different from the original ones. The Adapters are first interpreters and then creators Hutcheon (2013). Adaptation processes involves taking another person's tale and applying different screening techniques. In this context, filtering refers to removing other people's work according to the adaptor's sensitivities, passions, and skills. Put

another way, an adaptor becomes the author of the new work after first interpreting the original piece (Hutcheon & O’Fyynn, 2013).

When someone performs an adaptation, their sensibility, interests, and talents will be reflected in the new work that they made. As a result, adjustments are made to the ideology as well as the tale in adaption works. The link between fairy tales and humankind can be understood as closely knit and reciprocal, having grown via continual interaction, given its venerable quality and enduring influence on the history of world literature. In addition to their well-established literary status, fairy tales' edifying purpose is one of their most important relationships with humanity; as a result, most of them include moralizing undertones (Bartu, 2021). The Roald Dahl poem Cinderella (1982) is one instance of a Cinderella adaption that introduces new ideologies. Gabriel Porras used the podcast channel Radiant Whispers to disseminate this adaptation effort. A professional voice actor and philosopher from Mexico, Gabriel Porras previously worked as a senior editor for the BBC World Service. He also hosts podcasts. This audio channel features dramatic readings of classic pieces of literature, art, music, and both ancient and modern history in each episode. Gabriel Porras presents this Cinderella variation in this podcast, using a dramatic back sound and an engaging vocal to set the character apart. The principles of feminism, particularly liberal feminism, are reflected in the ideological shifts observed in this adaptation activity. This study focuses on the issue of how liberal feminism is constructed in Cinderella through a podcast.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This discourse analysis study utilizes the liberal feminism concept and Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory. Discourse analysis seeks to show that the discourse creators' ideologies are present in any given discourse. Critical discourse analysis, seeing language as an essential factor, is how the word is used to see power imbalanced society (Ginting & Wiradharma, 2023). Using speech as a social practice, research on discourse analysis has shown the connection between discourse and power, domination, and societal evils. Discourse analysis is concerned with changing society, or constructing new, better realities (Gölbaşı, 2017). Discourse is seen as a type of social practice in Fairclough's socio-critical approach, and Wodak's discourse-historical method is essentially consistent with Fairclough's approach in that they both take this perspective (Jahedi, et al., 2015)

Discourse analysis based on Fairclough (1941) involves three steps, which are as follows:

1. Description phase: The researcher's main goal at this point is to define the formal discourse forms. It can draw attention to various meanings, such as relational, experiential, and expressive meanings.
2. Interpretation phase: Scholars examine the components and procedures of the interpretation process and elucidate how the specific discourse shape contributes to the specific meaning contracting. As interpretive systems absorb the previously mentioned material, new relevance will become apparent.
3. The explanation phase: The discourse analysis section discusses discourse as a particular kind of social practice. Within some social structures, discourse reproduces by

establishing norms and values. Put differently, rhetoric both reinforces and demonstrates social reality (Fairclough, 2019)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Description and Interpretation Phase of Cinderella's Rhyme

A podcast that told the Cinderella story in rhyme for about six minutes was released. Dahl's original rhyme was omitted in part for this podcast. Podcast listeners prefer more entertaining, shorter programs. The program began with a dramatic back soundtrack. By the setting, the podcast host said that her tale would be a more fitting retelling of the Cinderella tale. Murdoch (2011) stressed that fairy tales do not have a single creator. The story is conveyed verbally and is told over again, changing each time. As a result, Bewer maintains that humans cannot know the true stories of Cinderella and that there is no genuine creator in fairy tales. Cinderella adaptation stories often resemble the Basile-Perrault-Grimms-Disney Cinderella story (Murdoch, 2011). This podcast also discusses Cinderella's mistreatment by her stepfamily and her exclusion from the ball.

The Ugly Sisters, jewels and all,  
Departed for the Palace Ball,  
While darling little Cinderella  
Was locked up in a slimy cellar,

The Cinderella rhyme follows the rhyme scheme from start to finish, which is the rhyme scheme that appears in the final sound equation of a sentence. To support the idea that Cinderella is different from her sisters and that they are ugly, the opening line of this rhyme utilizes the phrase "the ugly sisters jewels and all." Additionally, this makes it clear that they are not related by blood or shared gene. The phrase "jewels and all" also highlights the fact that males are visual beings who only see women physically. This justifies the idea that males are superior to women, with women needing to dress nicer to attract men's attention. Cinderella's stepfamily mistreated her, as evidenced by the phrase "locked up in a slimy cellar." In addition to being depressed about her circumstances, Cinderella wanted to attend the ball just like the other girls. Cinderella was the one who asked for assistance in this tale. Rather than arriving by chance to assist Cinderella, the Fairy Godmother comes because she hears that someone is in need of assistance.

She bellowed 'Help!' and 'Let me out! (sobbing)  
The Magic Fairy heard her shout.  
Appearing in a blaze of light,  
She said: 'My dear, are you all right?' (voice over)  
'All right?' cried Cindy. 'Can't you see (sobbing)  
'I feel as rotten as can be!'

This scene features a cut-off of the background sound to let the listener concentrate more on the narrative. Rather than using the phrase "Fairy Godmother," it prefers to refer to the fairy as a "Magic Fairy" to underscore that the fairy is not a mother figure to Cinderella to whom she assists. Its magic only functions because of Cinderella's inventiveness,

resourcefulness, and strength, which summons this fairy to come and help her. This symbolizes her actual strength, which is the ability to voice her needs and desires. The podcaster placed a tearful Cinderella in this scene by including a sobbing sound. This expresses how wretched and heartbroken Cinderella feels. However, she actively seeks assistance instead of moping about her terrible fate.

This version of Cinderella includes the scene where Cinderella leaves her shoe behind and flees the ball at midnight, much like the other version. Furthermore, the prince's search for Cinderella through locating the slipper's owner hasn't changed. But this story offers a fascinating plot twist: one of the ugly sisters replaces Cinderella's slipper with her own. The prince's irresponsible action in placing the shoe inside the beer crate allowed this scene to occur. The beer crate reveals that the prince was a party animal—the term "disco" is used in this story. Additionally, the prince stated in this scene:

'The girl this slipper fits,' he cried,  
'Tomorrow morn shall be my bride!  
I'll visit every house in town  
'Until I've tracked the maiden down!'

The prince ultimately in this scene demonstrates the strength of patriarchy since the person who fits the shoe is forced to wed the prince. Furthermore, the fact that the prince can inspect every home in the community demonstrates his authority to rule over it. It represents how patriarchy ruled the society where Cinderella resides. They all compete to lure the prince since a woman must get married. It is extended to Cinderella's stepfamily as well, since the absence of a masculine role in the home following the death of Cinderella's father. A financial supporter of this family was no longer present. It is the reason why Cinderella serves as an unpaid housemaid in the first place. The stepfamily's eagerness to attract the prince's attention was not surprising. Her stepsisters are far too petty, cunning, and self-centered for true love, in contrast to Cinderella, who has a good heart and is therefore capable of love. It was the message conveyed by the story. The discourse that supports injustice and is focused on societal transformation to create a more ideal reality.

The punishment for Cinderella's stepsister meddling with her dream is also in this tale. Instead of the glass slipper, one of Cinderella's stepsisters replaces it with her shoes, and the inattentive prince doesn't even realize the difference. They are supposed to cherish the slipper because it belongs to the woman who wins the royal prince's heart and will soon become a princess in their realm. More than merely a meaningless object, the silver slipper has significance. Particularly in the fairy tale's original rendition, it symbolizes hope for Cinderella. In this version of Cinderella's adaption tale, the slipper helps Cinderella escape the prince. Without the slipper, Cinderella would not be obligated to marry the prince. Even though the slipper fits the stepsister's foot, the prince refuses to marry her and beheaded her instead.

'Off with her head!' The Prince roared back.  
They chopped it off with one big whack.  
This pleased the Prince. He smiled and said,  
'She's prettier without her head'

The prince's shallow thinking and desire to wed a beautiful woman are evident in this scene. The phrase "the ugly sisters" is used in this story to describe Cinderella's stepsisters as being unattractive. The prince refuses to marry her even though the footwear suits the lady. In addition to beheading two of Cinderella's stepsisters, the prince violates his vow. It demonstrates how men have the majority of power. In this story, the male character, or prince, is unrestricted in what he does and stays unpunished. Reprimanded for tricking the prince are the stepsisters, the female figure, on the other side.

Fairy tales frequently feature the concept that ugly is connected to negative qualities like cruelty, envy, and evil, while beauty is connected to virtues like kindness, goodness, and virtue. This contradiction represents larger cultural ideas and ideals related to morality and beauty. Analyzing these stereotypes can offer insights into how beauty standards and moral judgments are constructed and reinforced in society. They can also prompt discussions about the impact of these stereotypes on individuals' self-esteem, body image, and perceptions of others. However, it's important to note that this stereotype is not universal across all fairy tales and cultures, for example in this adaptation tale. Not all fairy tales and cultures conform to this stereotype. This adaptation story breaks with the traditional fairytale stereotype by depicting the attractive prince as a villain, even though it initially introduces the gorgeous Cinderella and the ugly stepsister, who are comparable to the standard stereotype. This subversion of the stereotype helps to add depth and complexity to the characters and the story.

This Cinderella story ended with a completely different resolution than the traditional Cinderella, along with an additional narrative twist. Cinderella does not end up marrying a prince because she reveals that the prince is unworthy to be her husband. This challenges the assumption that being nice on the outside always translates into being decent on the inside. It might serve as a reminder that real character is deeper than appearances and that individuals are not always who they seem. After all Cinderella didn't want to marry a prince; her main objective was to escape her cruel stepfamily.

'Within a minute, Cinderella  
Was married to a lovely feller,  
A simple jam maker by trade, (glad voice)  
Who sold good home-made marmalade.  
Their house was filled with smiles and laughter (slow tempo)  
And they were happy ever after'

Cinderella asks the fairy to find a nice man since she knows she won't be happy if she marries a shallow, evil prince. The podcaster emphasized the idea of happiness in this segment by speaking slowly and in his voice. In this adaptation, Cinderella marries a humble jam maker rather than a wealthy man. It is comparable to Cinderella, who was an orphan and did not come from a wealthy family. Considering that marrying a prince doesn't ensure happiness in life, it gives Cinderella a brand-new, lovely ending. "Cinderella 2," the Disney sequel, provides evidence of this. Cinderella struggles and frequently denigrated by the royal family is shown in this film, which depicts her life after marrying the prince. This story conveyed the message

that living in a caring atmosphere brings happiness instead of marrying a prince. It also emphasizes inner beauty or other qualities are more important than physical appearance.

### **The Explanation Phase: Constructing Liberal Feminism in Cinderella's Podcast Version**

An abundance of pink decorations was ready to welcome a girl, even before she was born, categorizing her differently from a boy. Princess dolls were among the many gifts that girls received as they grew up. That the girl prefers to dress up like a princess for events like her birthday or the school costume is not surprising. When a young girl imagines herself as a princess, she usually imagines someone with long hair, a lovely face, and feminine behavior. The little girl is being forced to conform to social norms that dictate her femininity, much like the global stereotype of the princess. Mainstream media tends to marginalize others and misrepresent event, which contributes significantly to the formation of views, bias, and dominance over the social environment (Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015). The media and entertainment industry frequently shape the ideal of beauty for women by creating films featuring female leads who have physical attributes—such as hair, body type, and skin tone—deemed to be the standard of beauty. Indirect measurements of feminine beauty are even made using physical appearance (Berlianti, 2021). Words that are used from thousands of books and movies also varied depending on gender. Men's lives are adventure-oriented, while women's lives are focused on love relationship, as shown by the word use to describe the female and male characters (Xu, et al., 2019). Usually explored in relation to their folklore ties, Charles Perrault (France), the Brothers Grimm (Germany), and Hans Christian Andersen (Denmark) are seen to embody the global grand tale in particular (Lefebvre, 2013). Cinderella's surrender into a "valuable marriage" to a charming prince, whose value determined by his royal Eurocentric masculine status, is rewarded for these qualities (Henni, 2010). The term of 'beauty' has always been contentious in most literary works, and just as the other things change throughout time, fairy tales interpretations of beauty has also evolved (Nejad & Zohdi, 2014).

In literary theory, feminism aims to expose the oppression and injustice that women face in the writings of the literary masterpiece (Hargita & Nurhadi, 2022). A feminist interpretation of Cinderella's tale reveals various facets that are pertinent to questions of power and gender. The Cinderella of the traditional tale is presented as a helpless, marginalized woman who depends on men—her father and the prince in particular—to save her. Cinderella is frequently viewed as a stereotyped portrayal of women that emphasizes obedience, physical beauty, and reliance on men's generosity, as feminist research makes clear (Murdoch, 2011). People's interpretations and interactions with media can be a huge predictor of how they think about things in the real world. Consideration of our responses to the media we consume may be a particularly good method to reflect on our morals, individual identities, and values.

The Cinderella character's brilliance, bravery, and yearning for independence are highlighted in this rendition of the story. Feminist interpretations of the story also emphasize Cinderella's relationship with her stepsisters and the power struggles in the household, as well as how Cinderella overcomes abuse and adversity to find happiness on her terms without the

help of outside princes or good fortune. It is to say that this adaptation breaks down the dichotomies of achieving independence and emancipation in a married relationship. Changes in societal values and ideologies, among other general diachronic factors, are the source of this shift. The Cinderella story has withstood the test of time and space, bridging cultural barriers and act as window into the ideas and values of society. According to the study by Eslit, this story has cross-cultural importance and has the power of both reflect and influence cultural identity and values (Eslit, 2023)

This podcast's interpretation of the Cinderella image as a proactive, reasoned woman shapes the liberal feminism worldview. Ensuring equitable access to high-quality education, political involvement, and empowerment are the finest way for women to identify their presence. Feminists have worked to define women's roles in a variety of context's as well as their status (Saha, 2023). Second-wave feminism, a pivotal movement in feminist history, emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, marking a profound shift in the fight for women's rights. This wave challenged traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and legal inequalities. Advocating for women's autonomy and equality in all sphere of life (Devereux, 2014). Liberal feminism is part of second-wave feminism, contributing to its diversity by emphasized individual rights, arguing that women should be afforded the same opportunities and freedom as men within the existing framework of society. It aimed to achieve equality through assimilation and integration, rather than challenging the fundamental structures of power (Yashinta & Nurhayati, 2024). Liberal feminism holds that human beings are capable of comprehending the concepts of morality and individual freedom through their thoughts (Lubis, 2015). Cinderella's dreams in this version center on a vision of happiness she can have in the future, free from her oppressor, rather than men, as is typically overlooked by society. The emphasis in this reinterpretation of the Cinderella tale has shifted from pursuing a romantic relationship with a prince to obtaining personal fulfillment and independence. This alternative perspective highlights Cinderella's agency and resilience in the face of adversity, emphasizing her desire for autonomy and a better future on her terms. It challenges the traditional narrative that suggests women can only find happiness and fulfillment through marriage to a prince and instead promotes the idea that personal growth and empowerment can lead to a fulfilling life regardless of romantic relationships. The enchantment of the fairy godmother is based on inventiveness, resourcefulness, and imagination; Cinderella's power and imagination come to life in the form of a fairy godmother. It embodies Cinderella's real strength - her ability to discern her needs and desires. Cinderella decided to attend the ball as a short-term diversion from the oppression she faced regularly.

Additionally, the idea of a happily ever after was questioned in this podcast. Nowadays, living in a home full of smiles and laughter can lead to one's version of Cinderella's happily ever after, rather than just a lady marrying a prince. A critique of materialism was also present in the idea of the happily ever after. It claims that the many items that individuals frequently dream about—such as the diamond, carriage, silver shoes, and nylon clothing that Cinderella requested—could not ensure happiness through this rendition of Cinderella. On the other

hand, a modest existence that is full of love and surrounded by good people can lead to happiness.

The podcast portrays Cinderella's journey of liberation from her violent home and her subsequent establishment of a new one that reflects her ideals and understanding of a good, caring environment. The absence of the prince in her last escape indicates that she saved herself in the end. Cinderella triumphed in her story because she took the initiative and chased her dream rather than letting despair overwhelm her. The primary discourse among first-wave feminists is this forceful and proactive approach. This adaptation can be interpreted as a children's tale with a moral to the plot. It teaches the core ideas of liberal feminism, including the necessity for people to utilize reason to comprehend morality and realize their freedom—especially for women who frequently experience limitations on their freedom of choice. There's also a warning to break out from Cinderella syndrome and not to dream of becoming a princess by locking a wealthy prince.

## CONCLUSION

The idea that a woman shouldn't stand up for them and decide their fates, according to fairy tales that promote submissive or quiet behavior. Women's independence and optimism seemed excessively idealistic during the era when people started producing the classic Cinderella. These are uncommon, hard to cultivate, and frequently underappreciated traits. This podcast of Cinderella adaptation stories demonstrates how she can have an optimistic outlook even in the face of terrible circumstances and terrible experiences in the past. This story imparts important lessons to women, such as the need to treat people with kindness and appreciate beauty in the world. This image depicts a feminine persona that we find admirable. Strong female characters don't necessarily need to get involved in physical combat to achieve their goals. Feminism has a lot to offer; one doesn't need to replace it with masculinity to have strong moral principles. Feminism in no way diminishes women's femininity; on the contrary, it encourages each woman to discover what that means for her (Maier & Raven, 2020). The freedom of a woman to choose what she wants to accomplish is the essence of feminism.

Feminist interpretations of the Cinderella adaptation story demonstrate how this tale may reflect and challenge societal gender stereotypes that alter myths that restrict women's identities and roles. This is the story of a strong, feminine woman who defeats evil without the help of a male (prince) or by adopting stereotypically masculine traits. All these topics are complex and have applications in both the role of women in society and female characters in stories. Because of this, even fictional depictions of women had to change to reflect the feminist movement that gave women many of the rights they enjoyed. Nonetheless, a lot of women are certain that their lives will be better than they were (Su & Xue, 2010)

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