

BOLD BELLE

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[Assignment: Respond to the essays we have read and the issues we have discussed by writing a short essay (3-4 pages) about gender and/or pop culture (fairytales, movies, TV, popular music, comic books, etc.). This time, structure your paper as an exemplification, causal analysis, or classification.]

Cinderella and Snow White were saved by Prince Charming, and Red Riding Hood was rescued by a woodsman. These three fairy tale endings may reinforce Marcia K. Lieberman's view of fairy tales. She says that Disney fairy tales are bad influences because they teach girls to be passive, beautiful, and always in need of help. I do not think Lieberman ever saw Beauty and the Beast. Belle, the heroine, is a perfect example of how Disney is portraying girls differently. Belle shows that one can be feminine as well as bold and different. Belle is not any typical beauty. She is a brunette who dresses very conservatively, but she is feminine. She wears a blue and white dress. She has her hair pulled back with a blue bow. It is hard to say if she even wears make-up. Her lips are a subtle pink, and her cheeks are rosy. She is not preoccupied with being or looking beautiful. She does not even comment on her own beauty. Yes, she is beautiful, but would not criticizing her for her beauty be harmful to those who are natural born beauties?! Yes, her name means beautiful in French, but it does not specify how someone is beautiful. These days, beautiful can stand for many different things. It is best to call someone who has an inner beauty beautiful. Someone can be beautiful on the outside but ugly on the inside, and someone can be less than perfect on the outside but a raving beauty on the inside. Belle is both. She is beautiful on the outside as well as on the inside. She should not be criticized for that! That would be reverse discrimination. Belle is also very different from most girls. She likes to read and envision what the world outside her village is like. She hopes to one day travel to mysterious places. When Belle is introduced, she is headed towards a book store. She says she loves to read because it takes her to places other than her "provincial" village. She is ambitious, intelligent, and beautiful. That sure does not sound like a bad influence to me. She promotes reading and dreaming. She never acknowledges her own beauty. She seems indifferent to it. When it comes to getting married, Belle does not seem to have a preference. She definitely knows that she does not want to marry Gaston. Gaston is the village hunk and jerk. Some girls would do anything to be his wife, but not Belle. She is able to see through his handsome exterior. All she sees is the brutish, self-centered, monster. She kindly and wisely evades Gaston's advances. Gaston even foolishly thinks his beauty would be all that Belle would want and plans a wedding, but he ends up in the mud with the pigs where he belongs. Here, she makes it clear to Gaston as well as to the audience that she does not want to marry such a man. She also does not state that she wants to marry a prince. She is much more interested in her own abilities and life. The caring side of Belle is revealed many times. She sacrifices her own life for her father's. Instead of running away, she nurses the Beast's wounds

after his fight with the wolves. This adds to how she is such an excellent influence on little girls.

Teaching girls to be bolder and wiser should not suppress their desire to be sensitive as well as nurturing. Belle has a heart of gold. Belle has a chance to run away from the Beast, but he needs her, so she helps him. She brings him back to the castle and wraps his wounds. Belle demonstrates her mothering qualities. She is calm and confident. This only adds to her gleaming personality. Belle reveals her bold and stubborn qualities throughout the movie. In the first few scenes, she lets everyone know, especially Gaston, that reading makes her happy. She also tells Gaston in an indirect way that she does not need him to take care of her. She proves her courage by going out to search for her father alone. She does not stop to think, "What strong man can help little ol' me find my father?" When she does finally find him, she is confronted by the Beast. She stands up to him by giving up her own freedom for her father's. When she asks the Beast to step into the light, she sees his beastly form but does not run away from it. She withholds all her fears and sticks to her promise. She has an inner strength that anyone who watches her can notice. Most fairy tales end with the females being rescued by the males, but that is not the case here. Belle is the one that saves the Beast. Belle's love gave him a reason to fight when Gaston was just about to stab him. She saves him in a physical way too. When Gaston stabs the Beast for the final time on the balcony, Gaston is the one who falls to his death while Belle grabs the Beast and does not let him fall to his death. Is that an example of a feeble little girl? I do not think so, and Lieberman would have to agree that Belle proves she has strength. Finally, Belle saves the Beast from his horrible curse. She is able to see through his rough exterior and see the beauty within. She falls in love with him and breaks the curse. When the Beast turns into the handsome Prince, she looks into his eyes to see that it was really he. It has been said that the eyes are the windows to one's soul. This tells the viewer to look past the exterior of a person and find the beauty within. That sounds exactly like something I would teach my children in the future. Lieberman puts up a good argument when it comes to Cinderella and Snow White, but her criticism is not applicable to Belle. She is definitely not passive and only beautiful. Her beauty is not what won her the Prince. It was all her other special qualities. She is a great influence on little girls and boys. My little cousin, who loves to watch movies like Terminator and Blood Sport, could not stop talking about Beauty and the Beast after we saw it together. He said that it was one of the best movies he had ever seen. I can remember even seeing a tear run down his cheek when Belle confessed her love to the Beast in the end. It would be no surprise to me if children, who did not know that "belle" meant beautiful, thought it meant courageous and bold.