

## Rapunzel and Tangled: A Study

Throughout history, fairy tales have been told with the intent of teaching a lesson. These stories have been altered numerous times, varying with a changing society. Classic fairy tales by the Brother's Grimm, *Rapunzel* and *Cinderella*, were published in the mid 1800s. Many years later Disney released its own versions of these Grimm fairy tales called *Tangled*, a modern take on Rapunzel, and *Cinderella* published in 2010 and 1950 respectfully. Both fairy tales compare and contrast with the more modern versions. The most potent similarities and differences are seen through the characters, plot, and lesson to be learned.

Beginning with the analysis of *Rapunzel* and *Tangled*, both tales have Rapunzel and Mother Gothel, however other key characters are altered. In both stories, Mother Gothel takes Rapunzel from her mother and father. In the *Tangled* movie however, Rapunzel kidnapped in the night from her parents who are a king and queen of a vast kingdom, while in the Grimm version she is given to Gothel as a way of repayment for her father's actions. In the Grimm fairy tale there is a prince who falls in love with the beautiful singing of Rapunzel, "...The song had touched his heart that he returned to the forest every day to listen to it" (Grimm). In the more modern day telling of the story, there is no prince but a bandit named Flynn Rider. Flynn had been attempting to escape from palace guards after stealing the "Lost Princesses'" crown when he came across Rapunzel's tower and hid in there. The biggest difference in characters is seen through the Prince and Flynn Rider. There are also far more characters in *Tangled* ranging from the typical good and bad guys seen in most Disney movies. These characters act as

obstacles to the main goal that Rapunzel and Flynn Rider are trying to accomplish. Some characters act as helpers along the way, such as the men that Flynn and Rapunzel encounter at the Snuggly Duckling, while some characters are antagonist and stand in the way such as Stabington Brothers. There were no such characters as these in the Grimm version, which was kept much shorter with fewer outside characters. On the other hand the fairy tale story and movie of *Cinderella* have many identical characters, both having a Cinderella, a Prince, an evil stepmother and two evil step sisters. However, in the more modern telling of the tale there are far more animal characters that act as helpers to Cinderella consisting of numerous birds, mice, and a few farm animals, while in the Grimm tale there are only two white pigeons. An additional character in the more modern version is a Fairy God Mother, who aids Cinderella to the ball and helps her in her time of need. Aside from the contrast in animal characters, the other characters found in both stories assume the same role.

There are varying plots between the fairy tales *Rapunzel* and *Tangled*. In *Rapunzel*, the plot involves an evil sorceress, Gothel, imprisoning Rapunzel in a tower, the only way in or out is by climbing her long golden hair. One day a Prince over hears her singing and falls in love, once they finally meet they plan to marry and Rapunzel begins planning her escape. Unfortunately Gothel finds out cuts her hair and banishes Rapunzel into the woods leaving her miserable and alone, when the Prince finds out he falls from the tower blinding himself in the process and got lost in the woods. After some time however, the two find each other and by Rapunzel's tears she cures her Prince from his blindness and the two return to his kingdom to live long happy lives. In *Tangled* the plot begins with the explanation of the magical qualities of Rapunzel's hair, its ability to

cure sickness and prevent aging. This is the reason why Mother Gothel kidnaps Rapunzel from her parents in order to remain youthful, “She wishes to be forever young; and for that she needs the magical power of Rapunzel’s hair.” (Llausas). Eighteen years later the main plot of the up to date day fairy tale begins when Rapunzel and Flynn Rider accidentally meet when Flynn stows away in her tower hiding from the palace guards. Rapunzel asks him to be her guide to see the floating lights that she sees every year on her birthday, which happen to be thousands of lanterns released by the Kingdom where she was stolen from. Along their journey together they encounter many complications ranging from having to flee from palace guards and the Stabington Brothers to avoiding the overbearing Mother Gothel. Upon returning back to her tower, Rapunzel realizes that she is the lost princess and that Gothel had stolen her away from her real parents. Flynn, in order to stop Gothel, cuts Rapunzel’s hair and Gothel loses all her youth and shrivels up in old age, falling out of the tower and dying, “The bad witch must die, as everybody knows. It is necessary and fundamental to the classic symbolism in fairy tales” (Llausas). Rapunzel cures Flynn’s wound, inflicted by Gothel to keep him from returning Rapunzel to her parents, by her tears, a link to the Grimm fairy tale. She is then reunited with her parents, and like most fairy tales they all live happily ever after. There is a large change in plot between the two fairy tales, which may have to do with the change in society since the 1800s. In the older edition of *Rapunzel* she is seen more as girl in distress, she is banished to the woods for punishment and there she remains until her prince finds her. Compared to the modern day story, Rapunzel is seen more as a rebellious girl who is not afraid to chase her dreams, in a song in the movie she sings, “I’ve got a dream...I just want to see the floating lanterns gleam, and with every passing hour I’m so glad I left my

tower...” (*Tangled*). She doesn’t regret her actions of disobeying Mother Gothel and is determined to pursue her dream.

The plot found in both of the *Cinderella* stories share many similarities. The plot in both involves Cinderella being bullied by her stepmother and two stepsisters. There was a giant ball hosted by the kingdom, with the intention of finding the prince a wife, everyone is expected to go except Cinderella. In the Grimm fairy tale Cinderella is sent to do tedious work instead of going to the ball, in spite of this two white pigeons arrive to help her finish her work quickly therefore making it able to attend the ball. She receives her clothes from a tree that she had planted at her mother’s grave, her mother had told her before passing, “Plant a little tree on my grave, and when you want something, just shake the tree, and you shall get what you want. I will help you in a time of need” (Grimm). Compared to the 1950s telling of how Cinderella got to the ball, her dress was at first fashioned by her little animal helpers to later be torn apart by Cinderella’s jealous stepsisters. Once her stepsisters and mother had left Cinderella’s Fairy God Mother appears to help her, she magically conjures a beautiful dress with glass slippers. For both the stories, the prince falls in love with Cinderella at first sight, and at the strike of midnight she had to be off. While leaving the palace Cinderella loses her slipper, which the Prince then uses to find his bride, and upon finding Cinderella he rescues her from her former life as a maid.

Each story either told by book or by movie, has a moral or lesson to be learned. The classic tale of Rapunzel told by the Grimm’s holds the message that, “Through all of the drama, children are offered an important lesson about love. Rage, grief, and jealousy flash through the story, but in the end, it is love that prevails” (Zelinsky). This holds to

be true in the end when, although separated for years and lost in vast woods, Rapunzel and her Prince find each other. The lesson in *Tangled* is different in that Rapunzel is a strong willed feminist character. The moral of the tale is that if you have a dream you should stop at nothing until it can come true, Rapunzel had a dream to see the floating lanterns and she did everything in her power to make it come true. This moral fits one more commonly seen in today's society, girls are no longer only seen as "damsels in distress" and are capable of much more than once thought. On the other hand the moral of the tales of *Cinderella* are much alike in that good triumphs over evil "Cinderella's rag-to-riches story inspires females to prevail against improbable odds" (Baum). Cinderella had nothing, she lost her mother and was bullied severely by her stepmother and sisters, and through all this she conquers evil and made it to the ball to find her true love.

In conclusion, each tale, modern and classic, compare and contrast in their own ways from characters, plot, and morals. The Grimm story of *Rapunzel* varies largely from the more modern version *Tangled* in all three components of characters, plot, and the lesson learned. The two versions of *Cinderella* on the other hand are quite similar aside from a few details, but the main moral remains the same through both. Of these fairy tales, alterations were applied in order to fit the needs of the current public in which they were written, the older ones fit what was popular in society then compared to the modern telling of the stories which fit today's culture.

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