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Are girls too "Tangled" in their Disney fantasies?

Disney movies have always been every young girl's fantasy and way to live vicariously and experience what society calls a "fairytale" Majority of little girls dream about the life these princesses live and hope one day, a prince will come by and sweep them off their feet. However, what we ignore and turn our backs to as a society is the fact that these movies are setting toxic standards for young girls, their self image, and even how they view the opposite gender. Disney movies perpetuate gender roles and portray women as weak, fragile beings who constantly need to be saved by a man and exist solely for their sake.

The most prime example we see is in Hans Anderson's *The Little Mermaid* with the main romantic lead, Ariel. Ariel is King Triton's beautiful, red-headed daughter with a remarkable singing voice. It is her most prized possession and she is known for it throughout the sea. One day, to her father's opposition, she ventures to the surface as she is fascinated with life on land. On one of her trips, she falls for a human prince and is determined to be with him. In the pursuit of her newly found love, she makes a deal with the sea witch and exchanges her talent for 3 days of human life. Ariel gives up everything, her family, her friends, and her precious voice to be with a man she doesn't even know. The creators of Little Mermaid center all of their focus on her physical appearance teaching young girls they are nothing but their exterior. Ariel was

obsessed with having feet like humans and although she didn't condemn her fins, she definitely made it obvious that she wanted to change her appearances so the man she wanted would accept her. She indirectly sent a message that one's physical appearance is greater than their personality. Another observation that was made was Ursula's appearance. Ursula is the cold, sea witch who played the antagonist in this movie. She was clearly an evil persona who was portrayed as a overweight and masculine and gave children the message to associate that with her traits.

Cinderella, the most classic Disney movie of all time, may also have been the most problematic. She is every young girl's fantasy, her life is their dream. Millions of young children watch this piece of cinema and are left with unrealistic expectations. Cinderella, throughout the film is seen cleaning and cooking and doing nothing but the entire film. She seems to only be involved in household chores and have no other interests. Small things like this set the gender roles for kids growing up. She was portrayed as your traditional women, taking care of her homely affairs, barely having a voice, being nothing but a pretty face and the idea that you should marry a rich man to solve all your problems. When Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother pushed her around, she could've easily said no. However, she was depicted as submissive and voiceless, indirectly conveying the message that women should quietly bear any injustices to come their way as has always been. One thing that has been prevalent in both *The Little Mermaid* and *Cinderella* was the concept of solely being eye candy. In this movie specifically, Cinderella needed a pretty dress and shoes for a man to like her. Nothing but her physical appearance matters. She had met the prince at the ball just once, and the next meeting was at her marriage. After the marriage, all her problems seemed to have been solved by marrying a rich man. This idea encourages young children to not establish themselves and work

for their own success, but to rely on someone else to take care of you, even expect the same for yourself. Many young girls grow up assuming they don't need to work hard for a happy life because some prince charming will come galloping on a horse and save them from any troubles they might have. Young girls should be taught to be independent and be the heroes of their own story. Cinderella perpetuates unrealistic and toxic gender roles which clearly are shown in these examples. Disney movies show us that appearances don't matter, unless you're the girl that is.

The Little Mermaid and Cinderella seem to immortalize these traditional gender roles and are shaping the way the younger and upcoming generations will see the world. Many children may set themselves up for failure and disappointment and even end up with hyperfemininity or hypermasculinity issues. Ultimately, Disney's creations have promoted traditional gender roles and stereotypes against women.