

MA Thesis Proposal – Student Name

Director: Dr. Justine Van Meter

### An Analysis of Fairytales Through a Lens of Disability Studies

For my MA thesis, I intend to research a few of the classic fairytales (Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers, etc.), analyzing and critiquing them through a lens of disability studies. The readings I have chosen include many of the original fairytales, academic articles and books studying those fairytales through disability studies and other overlapping theories such as feminism and postmodernism, and several readings that outline disability studies in a more general sense.

As one of the most recent and developing literature theories, disability studies has not been highly explored or applied to works of literature. I plan to research the original fairytales through a lens of disability because I feel as though this specific topic hasn't been thoroughly analyzed or discussed. Since fairytales have had such a strong and lasting impact on our society today, I want to shine a light on the way characters with disabilities are represented and treated within these stories.

Many of Perrault's and the Grimm Brothers' stories represent characters who have cognitive or physical disabilities in a negative light. Villains often have a disability or are punished with one at the end of a fairytale, such as the evil step-sisters in the Grimm version of "Cinderella" cutting off their heels and toes in order to fit into Cinderella's shoe, becoming disfigured, or protagonists with a disability are always able to overcome it for their "happy ending," such as Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," who loses her tail and voice to gain legs, making her able to become a "normal" human and marry the prince.

With these considerations in mind, I plan to develop an in-depth study on characters with disabilities within several of the classic fairytales. I have provided a working list of sources that I plan to read and sort through while writing my thesis paper.

## Working Bibliography

- Bérubé, Michael. "Disability and Narrative." *PMLA*, vol. 120, no. 2, Mar. 2005, pp. 568-76.
- Corker, Mairian and Tom Shakespeare. *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2002.
- Eilers, Nicole. "A Critical Disability Studies Reading of 'Beauty and the Beast': Détournement in Pedagogical Practice." *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, Jan. 2020, pp. 54-63.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory." *The Disability Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Lennard Davis, Routledge, 2006.
- Glyn, Justin. "Rewriting the Fairy Tales of Disability." *Eureka Street*, vol. 29, no. 20, Oct. 2019, pp. 59-62.
- Leduc, Amanda. *Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space*. Coach House Books, 2020.
- Schmiesing, Ann. *Disability, Deformity, and Disease in the Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Wayne State University Press, 2014.
- Schmiesing, Ann. "Teaching Fairy Tales from a Disability Studies Perspective." *Teaching Fairy Tales*, edited by Nancy L. Canepa, Wayne State University Press, 2019, pp. 206-14.
- Tatar, Maria. *The Classic Fairy Tales*, edited by Maria Tatar, W.W. Norton & Co., 2007.