ENG3267 Language and Gender

Gendered Discourse in Children's Literature

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Group members:

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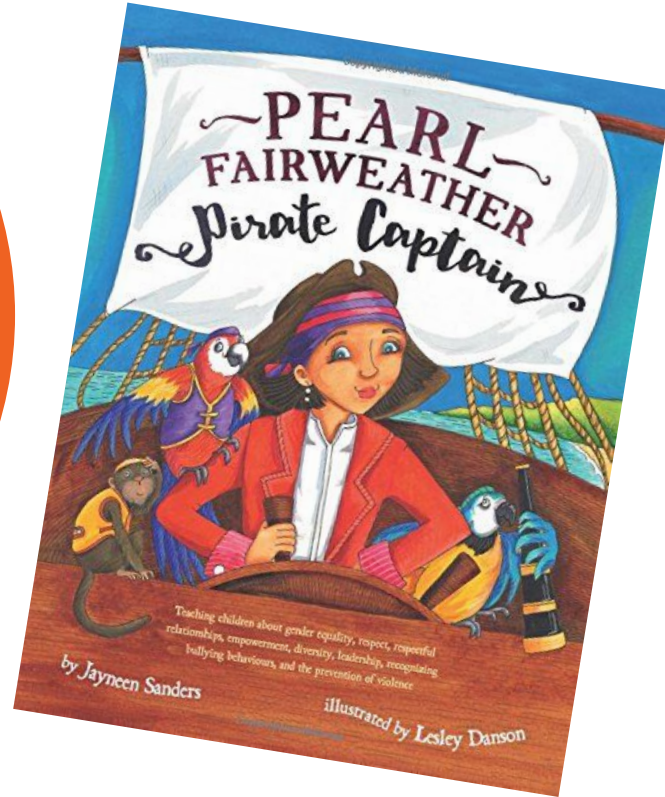4. Yan Tsoi Lam (11168479)

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Analysis
   a. Textual
   b. Visual
3. Exceptions
4. Implications
5. Conclusion

Captain Pearl Fairweather's Adventure
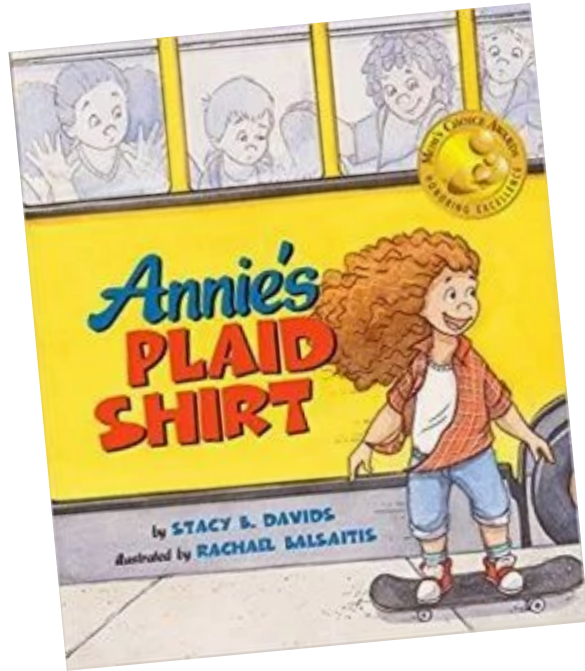
Good news !!

Captain Pearl Fairweather is a brave, fair and strong pirate captain. She and her diverse crew of twenty-four women sail the seven seas on the good ship, Harmony, looking only for adventure.

Author:
Jayneen Sanders

Illustrator:
Lesley Danson

Annie's struggles

It's Annie's uncle's wedding! Annie plans to wear her favorite plaid shirt, the one that she always wears, every day. Annie's mom says girls wear dresses to weddings, but dresses make Annie feel like she isn't herself. What will she do?

Author:
Stacy B. Davids

Illustrator:
Rachael Balsaitis

Can you help with Danny's dress?

The school parade is coming up and Danny knows just what he wants to be: a princess! He even has the perfect dress in mind. The problem is, he can't find it!
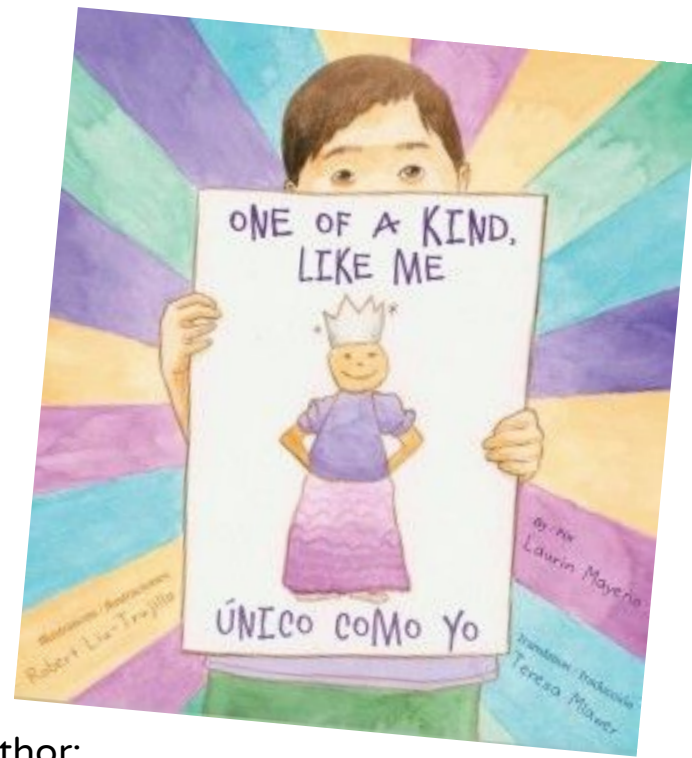
Author:
Laurin Mayeno Robert

Artist:
Liu-Trujillo

Things to ponder:
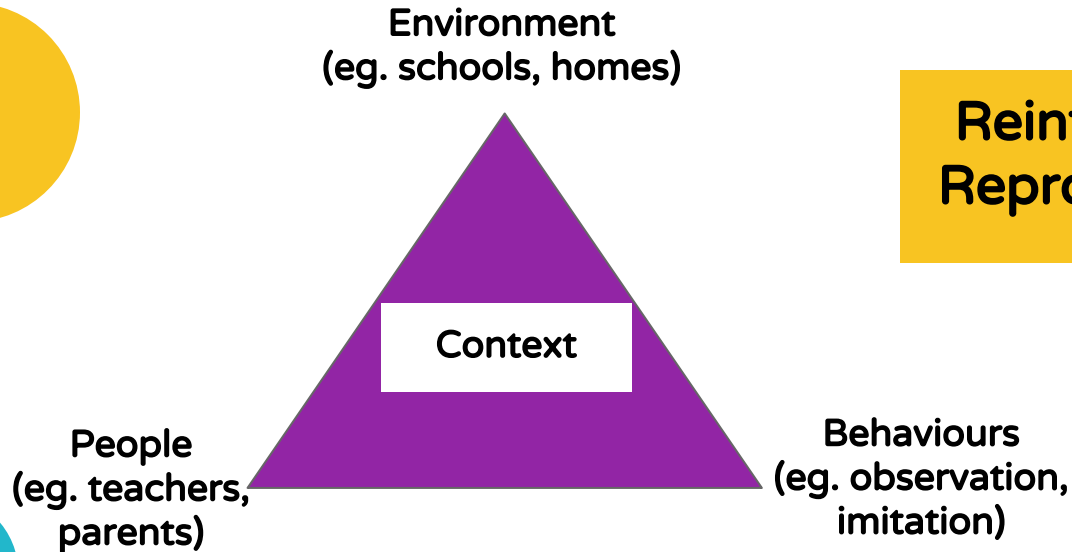
Children?
Reaction of parents and other people?
Gender performance?
Gender representation?

Source:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pC2UHYizag

How gender is socially constructed?

(Lee & Chin, 2019)

Environment (eg. schools, homes)

Context

People (eg. teachers, parents)

Behaviours (eg. observation, imitation)

Reinforcing? Reproducing?

Bandura' social learning theory

Focus:

How gender is illustrated in children's literature?

With examples of Disney movies

Timeline of Disney movies

Early Disney Princesses (1937-1959) → Modern Disney Princesses (1989-1998) → Postmodern Disney Princesses (2009-2013) → Unofficial & Upcoming Disney Princesses (2013-2016)

Passive, reactive be rescued by men

Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), Aurora (1959)

more **independent, exploration-driven** rely on men to save them.

Ariel (1989), Belle (1991), Jasmine (1992), Pocahontas (1995), Mulan (1998)

the most **liberated**, breaking the traditional gender roles; **independent** and **ambitious**

Tiana (2009), Rapunzel (2010), Merida (2012)

unconventional (queen, heroine)

Frozen (2013), Elena of Avalor (2016)

(Cordwell, 2016)

Let's think!

Gender illustration (Disney movies)

Changing?

In what ways?

Analysis

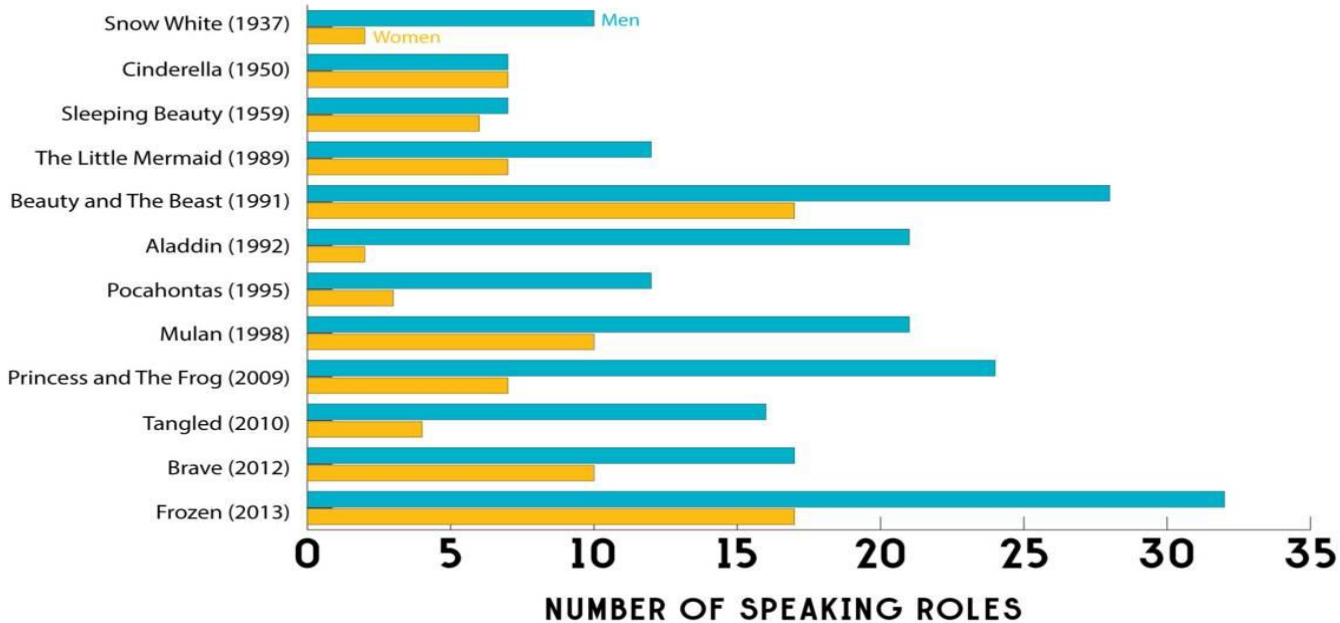**Textual level**

Textual Analysis

1. Naming of Characters

2. The Voiceless Females

3. Adjectives for different Gender

Naming of characters

The Voiceless Females

Source: The Washington Post (Guo, 2016)

Adjectives for different gender

He	She
Old	Beautiful 2
Proper	Wicked
Busy	Bad
Grumpy	Mean
Small	Nice 2
Happy	Cold
Strong	Small
Handsome 2	Pretty 2
Big 2	Quiet
Tall	Jealous 2
Romantic	Gentle
Dirty	Warm
Little	Safe
	Lovely

Connotative meaning?

Social expectation?

Gender stereotyping?

(Data from Corpus Concordance English -Disney Scripts)

Gender Representation

1. Domestic roles
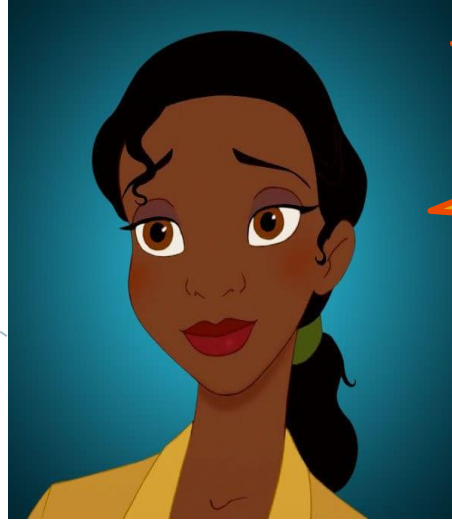
2. Social roles

3. Activities

Domestic roles

"I bring you a mother to tell you stories…"
Peter Pan introduces Wendy to the boys.

Nanny

Waitress/
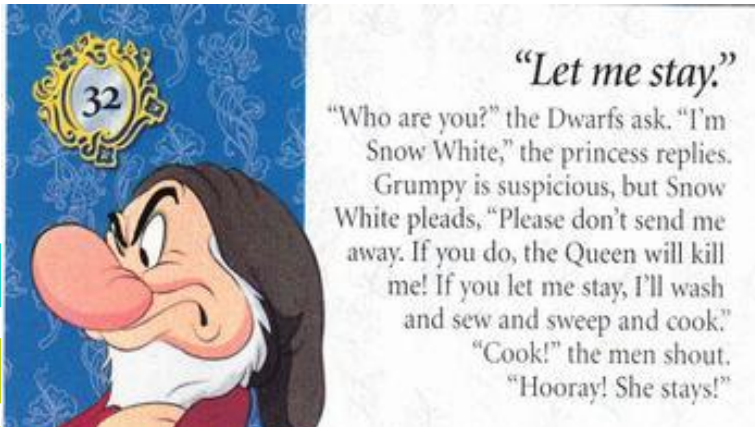Restaurant owner

Social roles

Princess?

Activities

"Leave the sewing to the women, you go get some trimming." a girl mouse said in Cinderella (1950).
"You've got to get dear prince to fall in love with you" The Little Mermaid (1989). -> To find love

"Let me stay."

"Who are you?" the Dwarfs ask. "I'm Snow White," the princess replies. Grumpy is suspicious, but Snow White pleads, "Please don't send me away. If you do, the Queen will kill me! If you let me stay, I'll wash and sew and sweep and cook." "Cook!" the men shout. "Hooray! She stays!"

- And I can do the sewing.
- Leave the sewing to the women.

Analysis

Visual level

Visual Analysis

1. Physical Appearances

2. Body image

3. Clothings

4. Settings

Physical Appearances – Females

The majority of the supporting female characters are attractive and feminine looking.

- **Long hair**,

such as Ariel, Jasmine, Pocahontas, Cinderella

- **Small facial features**

E.g. Nose, mouth, chin, cheeks, and ears

- **Big bright eyes and long eyelashes**,

such as *Jasmine, Ariel, Belle, Tinkerbell*

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Physical Appearances – Males

The majority of the young supporting male characters are good-looking and charming.

- **Strong jawline**

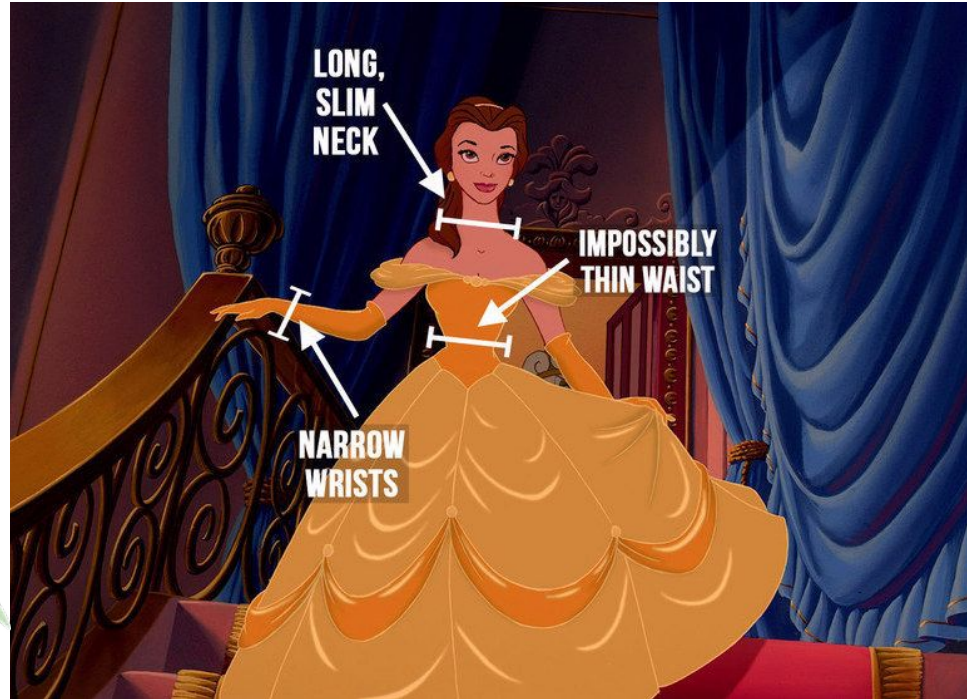- **Do not wear facial hair**

E.g. A beard or mustache.

- **Big bright eyes and well-groomed eyebrows**

For example, Eric, Aladdin and John Smith, all of them acquire the characteristics mentioned above
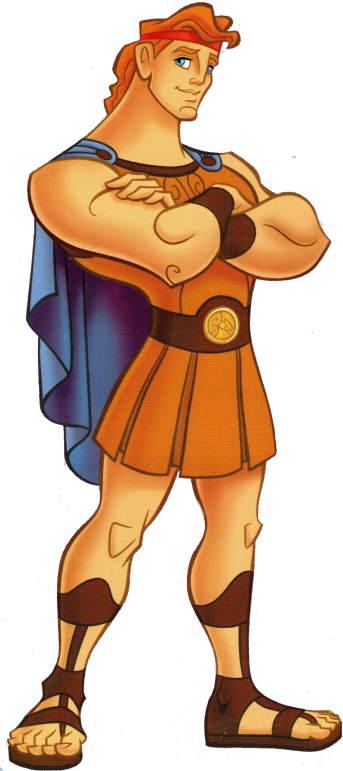
Body image – Females

Body image – Females

- The body image portrayed:

  - Reinforces the feminine beauty ideal concept.

  - Beauty was defined by the aesthetics of the Disney Princesses.

  - Inculcates the false message that more physically attractive people were morally superior and led more fulfilling lives.

Have disastrous consequences for young viewers, who *look up to such characters as role models.*

Body image – Males

ANATOMY OF A
DISNEY CHARACTER'S STYLE

Gaston

ARROWS FOR HUNTING

SIGNATURE PONYTAIL

DEEP V-NECK

BICEPS

BICEPS TO SPARE

ON-TREND
MUSTARD
YELLOW
GLOVES

TIGHT LEGGINGS

STYLISH, YET
FUNCTIONAL BOOTS

Body image – Males

The body image portrayed:

- Tall, have broad shoulders, big chests, narrow waists.

- Exhibits massive muscular physiques which hardly reflect a natural man's body.

Have disastrous consequences for young viewers, who may want to *bring their bodies into conformity with the muscular ideal.*

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Clothings – Females

Traditional sexy and beautiful clothings of females are the standard in Disney films and provide young children with ***an unconscious perception of stereotypes***.

Example : *Cinderella*

Transformation :

Reinforces the beauty ideal concept

The Prince falls in love with Cinderella *sorely based on her* physical appearance, but not even considering other elements, like her kind personality.

If Cinderella were to attend the ball in her homely attire, her chance of making a lasting impression on the Prince would be quite low.

Clothings – Males

Having ready-to-fight clothings and carrying heavy objects are commonly seen in Disney male characters, which provides *a false depiction of masculinity* to the young readers.

Settings – Females

1. Snow White

- She is rescued by the dwarfs *by taking on domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking for them.*

Settings – Females

2. Cinderella

- Her housework duties are an act of submission and a way to gain love from her stepmother and stepsisters ***by being their servant.***

Settings – Males

1. The Prince (Snow White)

   - Live in castle
     → Rich
     → Powerful
   - Ride on white horse
     → Charming

Settings – Males

2. Simba (The Lion King)

   - Son of King Mufasa
     → Powerful, will become king in the future
   - Loved and respected by all animals

Exceptionals

Exceptional Case(s)

1. Character role

2. Personality

Character role

✅ : Leading characters

❌ : characters who stand besides male main characters

E.g. Elsa and Anna (Frozen), Moana (Moana)

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Personality

✅ : Strong, brave

❌ : Weak

E.g. Mulan (Mulan),
Merida (Brave)

However...

They are always assisted by the male characters in the story.

Examples

-Frozen: Kristoff

-Moana: Maui

-Mulan: Mushu

Example 1 – Mushu (Mulan)

- After Mulan decided to go to war
- Mushu is sent by Mulan's family ancestors
  → to protect Mulan
- Provide guidance for Mulan and use magic to help her

Example 2 – Maui (Moana)

- Moana is in danger from the evil Te Ka
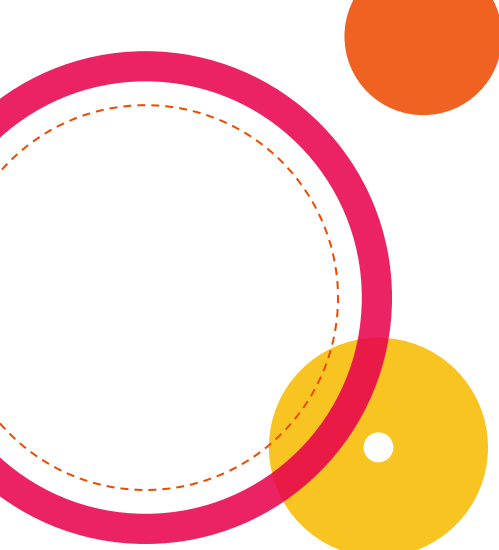 → Maui shows up
  → saves her life

Implications

"

Gender isn't something fixed; it's about ideas and values, and how we negotiate those ideas and values.

Gender as a spectrum

Source: https://www.genderspectrum.org/
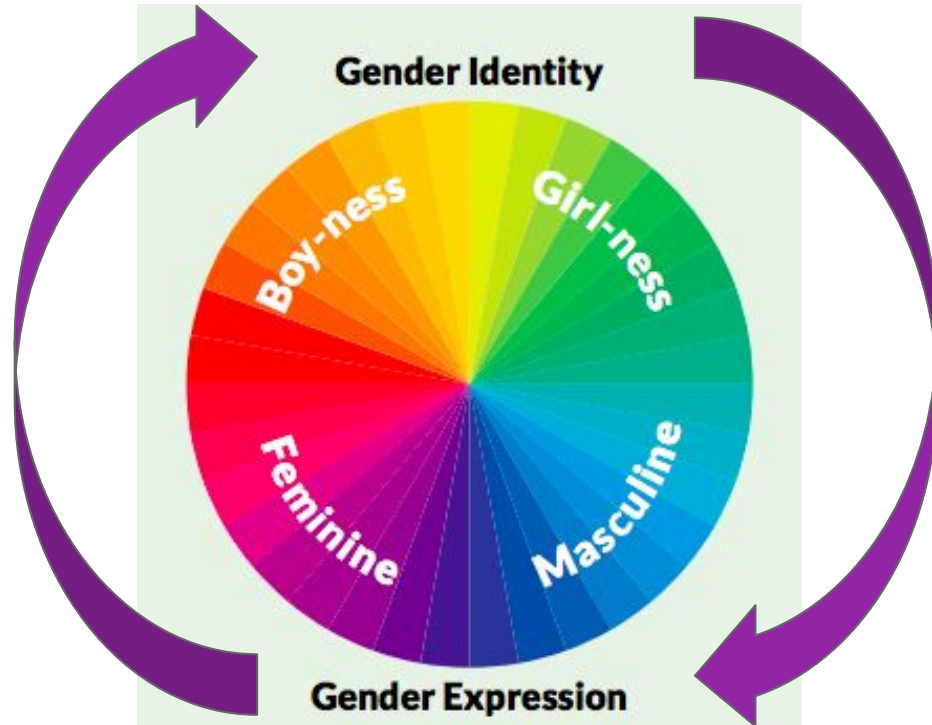
How gender is represented in children's literature?

1. Textual (adjectives, naming...)
2. Visual (clothing, body images...)
3. Exceptions (character roles, personality...)

How gender is <u>understood</u> in children' literature?

Things to ponder:
1. The way children seeing the world
2. Importance of education (eg. schools, homes)
3. Interaction between people, settings and society

Source:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTvGSstKd5Y

Implications to parents and educators

1. Realising parental influence at home
    a. Gender roles
    b. Parent-child reading (i.e. guidance for children)

2. Rethinking teacher role in classroom
    a. Language use in classroom
    b. Selection of children' literature for pedagogical use
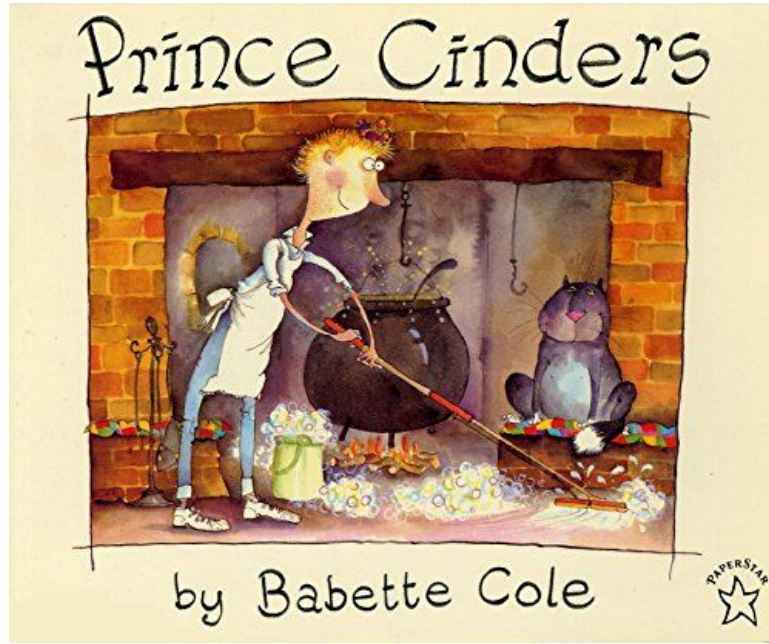
Possible pedagogical practice:
- Classroom reading
- Follow-up discussion about gender roles and gender-neutral occupations, activities etc...
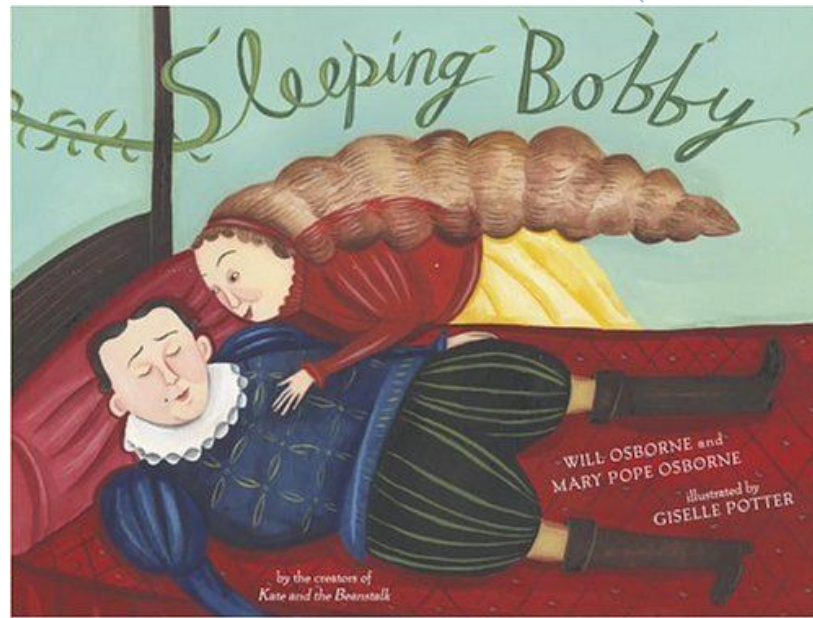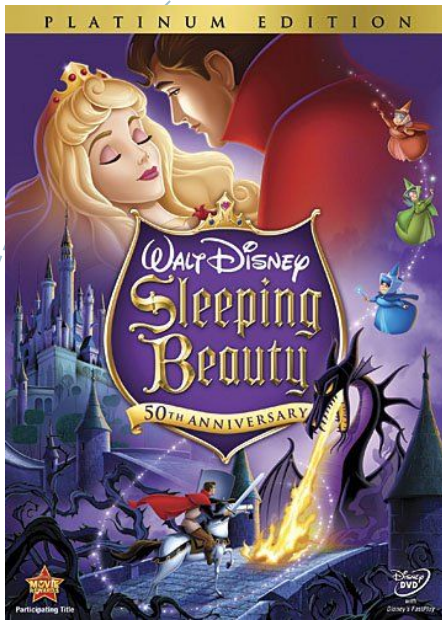
Possible pedagogical tasks:
- To rewrite stories by swapping the original set gender
- To illustrate recreated characters with drawings

References

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Thanks for watching :)