A Strong Princess

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Six Attributes of a Strong Princess

Most people today have heard or will hear one of the many iterations of what we might call the Cinderella story. Most of these Princess stories have a traditional tale that ends with her and prince charming sailing off into the sunset. One of the amazing things about fictional princess stories are how they manage to traverse cultures. The different cultural renditions of a princess stick to the traditional story line with a few twists here and there. Many readers will identify the differences with relative ease. But what many readers will not pick out is whether or not the princess in question is what we call a strong princess. When deciding if a princess is strong or not there are several criteria witch could be used. But perhaps the most important are the character traits that the princess embodies. A strong princess must be mentally strong, assertive, interesting, stereotype free, independent and must not rely on her beauty.

The first Attribute that a princess absolutely must have is strength. Strength comes in many different forms. The princess for example does not need to be physically strong although she could be, but rather she must be strong of mind. An excellent example of strong women is J.K. Rowling’s Hermione Granger. Hermione in these books not only possesses physical strength but also an amazing aptitude. She constantly bests people older than her and stronger than her by out witting them. It is important for children to see their heroes as Strong and “It is a great responsibility to choose books for children in which they can see themselves as strong individuals” (Becker 2011, p.106). A strong princess must have an attitude to match it.

Second a princess must be assertive. A princess must not sit by and simply let things happen, she must be involved in the story. This is essential for children to see because “If children are only exposed to books with female characters as passive and male characters as active, they are learning what kind of behavior is expected of them” (Becker 2011, p.107) . Assertiveness also gives the princess the ability to make her own future and dictate how she lives her life. For little girls reading about princesses who take on challenges and overcome the odds will cultivate a desire to push them to be all they can be.

Probably one of the most obvious characteristics a Strong princess should have is they must be interesting. Too many of the Princess stories have a boring princess with an awesome story to back them up. Think about snow white and the seven dwarves. Snow White waits at home for her seven dwarves to come home. And then teaches them about manners and how to stay clean. Most of us have had our mothers read some kind of manners and etiquette book that bored us to literal tears. Snow white is that book inside of The Lord of the Rings. Furthermore a Strong princess must be interesting because in many “Modern children’s picture books continue to provide nightly reinforcement of the idea that boys and men are more interesting and important than are girls and women” (Hamilton, Anderson, Brauddus, Young 2006, p.764).Which is completely untrue. One of the things that greatly effects whether or not a princess is interesting has to do with stereotypes.

A strong princess must be stereotype free. This does not go to say that the princess cannot do anything that would be thought of as feminine, but rather she must not be limited because of her gender. A limitation on a princess who is a high member of society creates in the young girls mind the idea that even the strongest women can’t overcome some challenges. Glazer and Giorgis (2005) argued: that children should be able to identify with their sex without seeing stereotypes” (as cited in Becker, 2011, p.107). The Prince in maleficent kills a huge dragon while the princess gets taken out by a sewing machine. The idea of the princess is almost strictly fictional so creating a princess that has all kinds of kryptonite’s is not fair to young girls. Instead Creating a princess who has challenges but overcomes them one her own creates a better image of a strong women.

An exceptionally obvious characteristic that a strong princess must have is independence. In many great stories “Women are presented in many different career positions, including but not limited to caretaker. They are also portrayed as smart, independent, self-assured individuals” (Becker 2011, p.105). We have several cases within the princess world where the princess is completely dependent on the prince. Sleeping beauty is yet again another excellent example. We can see her dependence as she is sleeps without a way of waking herself up. If only prince charming would give her a kiss then she could at least wake up. Sleeping beauty is perhaps the most pathetic of the princesses. She embodies dependence like she was still living with her parents and it does not give the impression of strength.

The final attribute that a strong princess must have is that she must not depend on her beauty for her success. In so many of the princess stories the princess is praised for her physical appearance and is often times the very reason that her prince takes notice of her. There is nothing wrong with physical beauty and a princess that has it may very well be a “strong princess”. That being said she absolutely must be strong without taking into account the way she looks. A princess that is strong of her own merit is a princess that can traverse cultures and race.

A strong princess must be strong of mind, with the ability to outwit others. A strong princess must be assertive, willing to stand up for herself and take on the challenges that she faces. A strong princess must be interesting; she must be a major part of the story not an insert. A strong princess must be stereotype free, not adhering to cultural restrictions according to her sexual orientation. A strong princess must be independent, having the means and ability to help herself out of treacherous situations. Finally a princess must not rely on her beauty but rather her own merit and character to influence the people around her.

References

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