# Overview

Today I will be talking about a piece of literature that incorporates myth and some of the themes you find in it and what that tells us about the culture that produced it. I chose to do the TV show Once Upon a Time which reimagines the classic fairytales and then some in a more modern way aiming at more mature audience. It aired from 2011 to 2018, which is 7 seasons. I will probably refer to it just as Once throughout this video. First I will give an overall synopsis of the show, along with a season breakdown. Then I will talk about the things this show does differently compared to the tales and stories we are used to. Then end with what I found compelling about the show and why I chose it.

From the fandom wiki page, Once upon a time follows Emma Swan a 28 yr old bail bonds collector who was abandoned as a baby. The son she gave up years ago, Henry who is now 10, finds her because he is in need of her help. He believes that Emma is from alternate world and is Snow White and Prince Charming’s missing daughter. The town Henry lives in and brings Emma to is Storybrooke and he believes according to his book of fairytales that everyone there is trapped and frozen in time. It is a place where magic has been forgotten but still powerfully close, where fairytale characters are alive even though they don’t remember who they once were. Emma will have to accept her destiny and fight like hell in the battle for the future of all worlds in order for good to win.

The show brings to life and gives a twist to some of the timeless tales from the Grimm Brothers those being Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, The Frog Prince, Rumpelstiltskin, The Bremen Town Musicians, The Elves, Little Red Cap, The Fisherman and His Wife, Sleeping Beauty, Tom Thumb, and Rapunzel. However, the show also incorporates some tales and characters not by the Grimm Brother. We see characters such as Merida, Mulan, Jafa, Captain Nemo, Tiger Lily and a bunch more. We also visit and or do some storylines involving the Underworld, Neverland, Frozen, Camelot, and the Wizard of OZ however more specifically the Wicked Witch of the West.

The first season follows Emma (dubbed the Savior) as she attempts to figure out what’s going on in Storybrooke and break the curse. The Evil Queen, Regina, attempts to stop her and prevent her from taking back her son which she believes Emma is trying to do. We also get flashbacks to the Enchanted forest of different characters especially Snow White, Prince Charming, and the Evil Queen showing us their relationships back in Fairytale land and how the curse came about.

The second season follows the fallout of breaking the curse and the fact that everyone didn’t go back to the Enchanted Forest along with magic now being possible in Storybrooke. It introduces Captain Hook, Regina’s Mother (the Queen of Hearts), \_\_\_\_ with an agenda to destroy magic.

In season 3 we travel to Neverland to rescue Henry who’s been kidnapped by Peter pan. The end result causing all the characters to return to their original worlds, while Emma and Henry return to New York City. Mysteriously though everyone is brought back to Storybrooke with the previous year missing from their memories and the Wicked Witch of the West, Zelena appears trying to change the past.

The first part of season 4 has the characters from Frozen as Elsa has arrived in Storybrooke and tries to find her sister. The second part Regina teams up with Emma and Henry to find the author of Henry’s storybook so she can get her happy ending but Mr. Gold with Cruella, Maleficent, and Ursula have their own plans to rewrite the destinies of all heroes and villains. We see a lot of more of Emma as a child in the system this season.

Season 5 has Emma as the new Dark One and we travel to Camelot to try and destroy that darkness. However, everyone gets brought back to Storybrooke without their memories of the past six weeks in Camelot and Emma tries her best to prevent them from remembering. Then we travel to the Underworld to rescue Hook, where the group reunites with their dearly departed and help them move on to a better place, while the deceased villains have their own agenda.

Season 6 has the characters defending Storybrooke from Mr Hyde and the Evil Queen, who is just the Evil Queen as Regina separated her good and bad side. Emma’s destiny as the Savior weighs heavily on her and in trying to alter her fate Aladdin is introduced. The war between light and dark leads to the arrival of the Black Fairy and the final battle that was prophesied before the original curse was cast.

Season 7 was a soft reboot following Henry and his daughter along with the Evil Queen, Hook, and Rumpelstiltskin as they once again take sides in the struggle of good against evil.

# Analysis

Now we’ll talk about what sets Once apart from the typical fairy tale genre, as it works to separate itself from the usual notions for younger audiences and how the show shows society’s lean towards realism and reliability in media.

One of the biggest things that is reiterated through all the season is that there are two sides to every story and not everything is as black and white as you think it is. We see this in the flashbacks that not only show us the hardships and struggles that our typical heroes go through but we see the villains too. Another example of this is in season 2 episode 17, Snow White (Mary Margaret) goes to confront Regina, asking her to kill her because the fight has been going on for so long between them. When she goes to do it however, she sees a spot of darkness in Snow’s heart and refuses to crush it to put her out of her misery. This shows that not even the ones we think of as the most pure and good are exempt from evil or bad things.

Once promotes the ideology that problems don’t always end quickly and cleanly. Love doesn’t miraculously happen. Snow White and Prince Charming weren’t a love at first sight couple. They initially hated each other and after loss, miscommunication, and personal development they fall in love. The show also puts emphasis on familial relationships or lack of and things you don’t typically show children. Emma struggles with abandonment, which is seen in Season 3 when Pan gives Emma a map that will only show the location of Henry if she admits who she really is. She believes herself to be the savior but admits that she was/is a Lost Girl and still feels like an orphan. The Evil Queen doesn’t have the best relationship with her mother, examples of this are Cora erasing her childhood memories of having a sister and removing her heart because she believed love to be a weakness leading Regina to believe that she didn’t care about her. Prince Charming worries about being a capable father with his and Snow’s second child since he wasn’t exactly there for Emma. We see that the mentality of all ends well conflicts with what the show shows us.

The show also showcases strong female characters and redefines a hero. Rather than being the princess we typically expect, characters like Snow White have as much combat skill and experience as Prince Charming. The female characters also take initiative to solve problems and directly face enemies.

Tying into our earlier mention of not everything is black and white, this means that everyone has the potential for good or evil. While our main hero is Emma she isn’t the only hero we see and at one point is the villain herself. The evil queen and Hook both are examples of characters that grow to be heroes on their own and in their own right. You recurringly see the theme of redemption not only for the villains but the heroes too. We’re constantly reminded that everyone has the capacity for change.

# Why chose this myth

Lastly, I chose this show to talk about because I liked the spin it did on the classic fairy tales and seeing more of the villains’ side. I liked the life lessons or insights you could glean from the show. It makes you realize that in life that not everything is always as it seems. One of the shows favorite phrases is that magic always comes with price, which to me is synonymous with life can take just as much as it gives and no matter how much you want something the result of the action taken to get it is not worth the consequences. What particularly hit home with me was the issue of abandonment, very early on, Henry asks Emma why she gave him up and she responds that it was so he could have his best chance at life. This is something that is also reiterated through Emma, as her parents also sent her away as to avoid the Evil Queen’s curse and give her her best chance at life, despite it not leading to a great one. Around that time, I was probably 11 and I knew I was adopted my parents never hid that, it was just a fact of life. As a child it wasn’t something that I frequently thought about and it wasn’t until I was 18 that my parents told me the reason I was given up. But that scene resonated with me and it was the first time I really connected with something from a tv show that made me tear me up and feel emotional and after watching that I had decided in my mind that that was how I was going to look at my life. Once Upon a Time was truly a great show that used your everyday known fairytales and characters to reflect how complicated life sometimes is.

Thank you for listening. I hope you have a great day.

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