

= Belle ( Disney ) =

Belle is a fictional character who appears in Walt Disney Pictures ' 30th animated feature film *Beauty and the Beast* ( 1991 ) . Originally voiced by American actress and singer Paige O 'Hara ? who auditioned for the role five times after first reading about it in *The New York Times* ? Belle is the non @-@ conforming daughter of an eccentric inventor . Ostracized by her village peers due to her intelligence and love of books , Belle yearns to abandon her uneventful life in favor of adventure . When her father Maurice is imprisoned by a cold @-@ hearted beast , Belle offers him her own freedom in exchange for her father 's , and eventually learns to love the Beast despite his outward appearance .

Disney chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg commissioned *Beauty and the Beast* as an animated musical with a strong heroine , and hired first @-@ time screenwriter Linda Woolverton to write it . Basing her on the heroine of Jeanne @-@ Marie Leprince de Beaumont 's fairy tale " *Beauty and the Beast* " , Woolverton adapted Belle into a stronger and less passive character for the film . Inspired by the women 's rights movement , Woolverton wanted Belle to be a unique Disney heroine different from *The Little Mermaid* 's popular Ariel , and thus deliberately conceived the character as a feminist in an effort to avoid the criticism Disney had long been receiving due to the studio 's reputation of depicting its female characters as victims .

Belle 's strength and love of reading was inspired by American actress Katharine Hepburn 's performance as Jo March in the film *Little Women* ( 1933 ) , while the writers instilled the adventure @-@ seeking heroine with goals and aspirations beyond romance . However , the story artists and animators often disagreed with Woolverton 's liberated vision for the character . Animated by James Baxter and Mark Henn , the former of whom based the character 's graceful gait on those of impressionist Edgar Degas ' ballerinas , Belle 's European facial features were inspired by those of British actresses Vivien Leigh and Audrey Hepburn . Several additional Hollywood actresses inspired Belle 's appearance , including Natalie Wood , Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly .

Belle has garnered widespread acclaim from film critics who appreciated the character 's bravery , intelligence and independence . Reception towards her feminism , however , has been more mixed , with commentators accusing the character 's actions of being romance @-@ oriented . The fifth Disney Princess , Belle is often ranked among the franchise 's best . Highly regarded as one of Disney 's strongest examples of a feminist character , critics agree that Belle helped spearhead a generation of independent film heroines while changing the reputation of a Disney princess . Also one of Disney 's most iconic characters , Belle was the only animated heroine nominated for the American Film Institute 's greatest heroes in film ranking . The character also appears in the film 's several sequels and spin @-@ offs , as well as her own live @-@ action television series . American actress Susan Egan originated the role of Belle in the Broadway musical adaptation of the film , for which she was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical .

= = Development = =

= = = Conception and writing = = =

After the success of Walt Disney Productions ' first feature @-@ length animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* ( 1937 ) , filmmaker Walt Disney himself made several attempts to adapt the fairy tale " *Beauty and the Beast* " by Jeanne @-@ Marie Leprince de Beaumont into one of the studio 's earliest animated feature films during the 1940s and 1950s . However , the project was continuously abandoned due to the fairy tale 's " static " plot and main characters . The filmmaker was also concerned about the " unnecessary intensity " required to depict Belle imprisoned . Inspired by the unprecedented success of *The Little Mermaid* ( 1989 ) , Disney chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg green @-@ lit another attempt at adapting " *Beauty and the Beast* " under the direction of Richard Purdum . However , Katzenberg did not approve of Purdum 's dark , somber version of the fairy tale , and ultimately ordered that it be restarted from scratch in favor of creating a Broadway

@-@ style musical film starring a strong heroine , similar to The Little Mermaid . Opting instead for a " feminist twist " on the story , Katzenberg hired television writer Linda Woolverton , who had never written an animated film before , to write the film 's screenplay .

Before Beauty and the Beast , Disney 's tradition of depicting female characters as victims had already long been established . The fact that Belle was hardly depicted as a feminist in earlier versions of the film became a point of contention among the filmmakers . Despite the fact that Disney wanted Beauty and the Beast to resemble an old @-@ fashioned film , the filmmakers envisioned Belle as " a woman that was ahead of her time " . As the first woman in the history of Disney to write a feature @-@ length animated film , Woolverton decided to explore Belle as an opportunity to create a female character who would ultimately be better received than Disney 's previous animated heroines , specifically Ariel from The Little Mermaid . Woolverton was aware that the task would be particularly challenging due to the previous character 's popularity , but fought relentlessly to make sure that she was creating " a new kind of Disney heroine . " Inspired by the women 's rights movement Woolverton herself had experienced during the 1960s and 1970s , the screenwriter was determined to avoid creating another " insipid " Disney princess and decided to conceive Belle as a headstrong feminist . Woolverton strongly believed that contemporary audiences would not identify with Belle unless she was updated appropriately , and thus evolved the character into " a woman of the ' 90s " . The screenwriter refused to watch Jean Cocteau 's 1946 film adaptation of the fairy tale and chose to base Belle on American actress Katharine Hepburn 's portrayal of Jo March in the 1933 film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott 's book Little Women instead , who she felt was " a real depiction of womanhood . " Similarly , story artist Brenda Chapman drew influence from Hepburn 's on @-@ screen bickering with actor Spencer Tracy during the scene in which Belle tends to the Beast 's wounds .

Animator Mark Henn observed that , unlike Ariel , Belle does not " fall in love at first sight " ; instead " there 's an actual relationship you see grow " . In the original fairy tale , Belle has two selfish sisters who both have their own respective love interests , all of whom Woolverton omitted from the screenplay in favor of focusing solely on Belle 's relationship with Gaston . At one point , Belle had a younger sister named Clarice and a cruel aunt named Marguerite , both of whom were discarded ? Clarice to emphasize Belle 's loneliness , and Marguerite to be replaced by Gaston as the film 's villain . Woolverton also eliminated the subplot of Belle asking her father for a rose . Despite constant " regressive " re @-@ writes , Woolverton 's overall vision for Belle generally remained intact . Beauty and the Beast 's story department was predominantly male , a time during which few women were involved . Woolverton often found herself at odds and disagreeing with the more traditional story artists in regards to Belle 's role in the film , but continued to be supported by Katzenberg and lyricist Howard Ashman .

According to Woolverton , the story team challenged nearly every line of dialogue Woolverton suggested for the character . On one occasion , the story artists re @-@ wrote what Woolverton had originally scripted as Belle using a map to indicate places to where she would like to travel to the character baking a cake . Arguing that the liberated Belle would not even know how to bake , Woolverton decided to compromise by having the character read a book instead , which was similarly debated because some filmmakers considered reading to be too passive an activity . To resolve this , Woolverton scripted Belle walk while reading , an activity in which Woolverton herself partook as a child . In Beaumont 's fairy tale , Belle is essentially forced to replace her father as the Beast 's prisoner . To make the character more independent , Woolverton re @-@ wrote her so that she willingly ventures into the woods in search of her father , bravely confronts the Beast and ultimately trades her own freedom in return for Maurice 's instead . During Gaston 's climactic fight with the Beast , the character 's line " Time to die ! " was changed to " Belle is mine ! " in order return the focus of the story to Belle .

= = = Voice = = =

Disney had originally considered casting American actress and singer Jodi Benson , who famously provided the voice of Ariel in The Little Mermaid , as Belle , but ultimately felt that the actress

sounded " too American " and young . Describing the character as " a woman that was ahead of her time , " the filmmakers wanted Belle to sound " more like a woman than a girl . " Director Kirk Wise was specifically searching for an actress capable of " creat [ ing ] a character completely with her voice " , inspired by American entertainer Judy Garland . American actress and singer Paige O 'Hara was performing on Broadway in New York when she first read about the role and Beauty and the Beast in The New York Times . Upon discovering that the studio was holding auditions for the lead role of Belle and specifically recruiting Broadway performers at the behest of lyricist Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken , O 'Hara immediately insisted that her agent schedule her an audition . O 'Hara auditioned for the role five times , competing against approximately 500 hopefuls . O 'Hara 's first two auditions required the actress to mail audio recordings of her voice to the studio in Los Angeles . The actress was also required to perform a song of her choice , selecting " Heaven Help My Heart " from the musical Chess . At her first legitimate audition , O 'Hara spoke and sang in a higher register than her own in an effort to mimic the voice of Snow White from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs , but the filmmakers insisted that she use her natural voice instead . O 'Hara 's last few auditions were attended by Ashman and Menken , directors Wise and Gary Trousdale , and producers Katzenberg and Don Hahn . Ashman was already familiar with O 'Hara 's Broadway stint as Ellie May Chipley in the musical Show Boat . An hour after her fifth and final audition , O 'Hara received a telephone call from Disney on her birthday informing her that she had successfully been cast . The actress was fairly confident that the role was hers before she was officially cast , and credits the fact that Ashman enjoyed her performance on the cast recording of the musical Show Boat . O 'Hara admitted , " I 'm not usually confident about auditions ... but I just understood ( Belle ) so much . "

Despite her successful stage career , O 'Hara was virtually unknown to Hollywood audiences before was cast in Beauty and the Beast ; she is recognized as one of the last relatively obscure actresses to be cast in a feature @-@ length Disney animated film . 30 years old at the time of her audition , O 'Hara consequently imbued Belle 's voice with a mature , " womanly quality " despite the character 's young age . Woolverton appreciated the fact that O 'Hara sounded more mature than traditional Disney heroines . Additionally , O 'Hara identified with her character because they were both ostracized by their peers throughout their childhood because of their unconventional interests , explaining , " I was odd growing up myself . I mean , I was into musical theater and Gershwin and Rodgers and Hammerstein while people were going to Led Zeppelin concerts . So I understood that ... I wasn 't the norm either . I was very focused on my career , on my performing all through my childhood and my teens ... I had a one @-@ track mind , and I think that Belle was like that a lot . " O 'Hara also shares Belle 's interest in reading . Wise was pleased with the quality of O 'Hara 's voice , which reminded him of Garland . O 'Hara initially found it challenging to control her speaking volume due to having been trained to project as a stage actress . O 'Hara told The Guardian that to solve this she " softened and used the microphone . " The actress would occasionally ad @-@ lib her own dialogue . However , none was included in the final film because it sounded " too modern " . O 'Hara and American actor Robby Benson , who provides the voice of the Beast , asked Disney to allow the co @-@ stars to record together as opposed to the traditional method of being isolated in a recording booth , to which the studio agreed despite its costliness . O 'Hara credited the filmmaker 's decision with developing both the film and Belle and the Beast 's relationship . O 'Hara and Benson became the first Disney voice actors to record together . In total , the recording process took over two years to complete .

Since the November 1991 release of Beauty and the Beast , O 'Hara has returned to The Walt Disney Company on several occasions to voice Belle in a variety of media and merchandise , including its direct @-@ to @-@ video sequels Beauty and the Beast : The Enchanted Christmas ( 1997 ) , Belle 's Magical World ( 1998 ) and Belle 's Tales of Friendship ( 1999 ) , as well as various video game releases such as the Kingdom Hearts series and several audio and video recordings associated with the Disney Princess franchise . Additionally , O 'Hara was hired by Disney to perform the song " Belle " at the 64th Academy Awards in 1992 . O 'Hara has referred to the studio as her " main employer for 20 years " . In 2011 , O 'Hara was officially replaced by actress Julie Nathanson , who first voiced Belle in the video game Kinect Disneyland Adventures ( 2011 ) . O

'Hara revealed to the Las Vegas Review @-@ Journal that news of the replacement greatly upset her to the point of which she was willing to re @-@ record much of Belle 's dialogue in an attempt to prove to the company that she is still capable of voicing the character . However , O 'Hara eventually admitted that she found the process quite difficult as a result of the way in which her voice has changed over the course of 20 years .

= = = Personality and design = = =

According to producer Don Hahn , Beaumont 's original Belle is an " incredibly passive " character , the personality of whom he likened to those of Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella , as well as American actress and animal rights activist Doris Day , describing them as women who are " capable , but filling a role that women might fill in the 1950s and 1960s . ? The filmmakers painstakingly reworked Belle into a more three @-@ dimensional character by providing her with goals and aspirations beyond romance and marriage , while expanding her passive role into that of a more inquisitive heroine . Determined to have Belle resemble " an unusual Disney heroine , " Woolverton deliberately molded her into an independent character who is not a princess , enjoys books and has little interest in marriage for marriages sake , and worked closely with Ashman to create a proactive heroine " who was a thinker and a reader and she wasn ' t about what she looked like and she wasn ' t a victim . " Both Woolverton and O 'Hara encouraged the filmmakers to emphasize the intelligent and book @-@ loving aspects of Belle 's personality . However , at times the animators struggled to realize Woolverton 's vision . Originally , Belle was depicted constantly crying throughout her imprisonment ; Woolverton resented this , arguing that the character was much more likely to be either searching for an escape or simply " be intrigued that she was living in an enchanted castle " than crying . " Once everybody realized she wasn ' t going to be this typical Disney female , they would go to the extreme ... She became bitchy " ; the screenwriter argued that Belle would be " too smart " to act this way . A few years older than The Little Mermaid 's Ariel , Belle 's love of reading makes the character more worldly and mature than her predecessor . Belle is believed by Henn to be " probably " the oldest of Disney 's princesses , at 20 years of age . Although Belle being well @-@ read is mentioned in the original fairy tale , it is hardly important to the plot . Thus , Belle 's love of reading was expanded upon , borrowing from both the Little Woman character Jo March and Woolverton 's own love of reading to demonstrate the character 's intelligence and open mind .

To demonstrate that the character is not perfect , Woolverton described " a little wisp of hair that keeps falling in her face , " which was the only direction she used to describe Belle 's physical appearance . Belle 's supervising animators were James Baxter and Mark Henn . Henn 's second Disney heroine , the animator had previously contributed to animating Ariel . Wanting Belle to be significantly different and more European in appearance than Ariel , the animators drew her with fuller lips , narrower eyes and darker eyebrows , which were inspired by the facial features of British actresses Vivien Leigh and Audrey Hepburn ; Belle 's yellow ballgown was inspired by a similar costume Hepburn had worn in the film Roman Holiday ( 1953 ) . Hahn and a team of male filmmakers designed the ballgown while consuming pizza and drinking alcohol . More statuesque than most Disney princesses , Belle 's appearance was inspired by that of American actress Jennie Garth . The animators also used photographs of Hollywood actresses Natalie Wood , Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly for reference . Baxter studied the art of French impressionist Edgar Degas , a painter known for his portraits of ballerinas , whose work inspired the animator to incorporate " graceful , swan @-@ like movements " into Belle 's performance . Henn was specifically assigned certain scenes to animate from the studio 's Florida division , namely the character exploring the West Wing , the scene in which Belle tends to the Beast 's wounds , and the " Something There " musical sequence . Art director Brian McEntee suggested that Belle be the only character in her village to wear blue in order emphasize the fact that she is different and an outcast . The colors Belle wears also mimic her emotions , blue being associated with sadness and loneliness . Blue was also used to symbolize good , while Gaston 's red represented evil . According to the Directory of World Cinema : American Hollywood by Lincoln Geraghty , Belle was inspired by actress Judy

Garland 's role as Dorothy Gale in The Wizard of Oz ( 1939 ) and Julie Andrews ' performance as Maria von Trapp in The Sound of Music ( 1965 ) .

O 'Hara felt that Belle originally looked " too perfect , " likening the character 's appearance to actresses Elizabeth Taylor and Angelina Jolie . Actress and model Sherri Stoner served as the performance model for Belle , providing live @-@ action reference for the animators as they drew the character . Belle 's tendency to constantly brush her hair away from her face was also inspired by both Stoner and O 'Hara . " I was constantly doing that and little quirky things that they would catch , " O 'Hara told The Guardian . The animators also incorporated O 'Hara 's eyes , cheekbones and the way in which she raises her eyebrow into Belle 's face . Writing for the Los Angeles Times , Charles Solomon observed inconsistencies in Belle 's appearance , writing , " The prettiest and liveliest Belle waltzes with Beast in his marble ballroom and weeps over his body before he 's transformed into the Prince " while " The Belle who receives the library from Beast has wider @-@ set eyes and a more prominent mouth than the noticeably slimmer Belle who sings ' Something There ' " . Beauty and the Beast became the first animated film to fully credit each animator responsible for animating a specific character during the film 's closing credits . Having since animated Jasmine in Aladdin ( 1992 ) , Mulan in Mulan ( 1998 ) and Tiana in The Princess and the Frog ( 2009 ) , Henn has established himself " as the go @-@ to man behind many Disney princesses . "

= = Characterization and themes = =

Woolverton created Belle as part of " her self @-@ directed mandate to move women and girls forward . " The Express @-@ Times described the character as an intelligent young woman who " sings songs about reading and wanting to gain knowledge , rather than falling in love . " Woolverton credits Belle 's knowledge and love of books with providing the character with a " point of view of her life and that doesn 't necessarily involve a man getting her there . " One of the film 's main themes , Belle is considered an outsider because her love of reading provides her with knowledge of the outside world as opposed to her " narrow @-@ minded " village peers . Writing for Wired.com , Matt Blum dubbed Belle " the geekiest heroine of any Disney animated film . " Similarly , Boxoffice 's Amy Nicholson coined the character " Disney 's Smartest Heroine , " while Rob Burch of The Hollywood News observed that the character " comes across as arrogant at times " because she " spends much of the first act complaining . " In her book Sex , Love and Abuse : Discourses on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault , author Sharon Hayes described Belle as " the quintessential beautiful young ingenue . " Comparing Belle 's personality to that of the princess in the Brothers Grimm 's fairy tale " The Frog Prince " , The Meanings of " Beauty and the Beast " : A Handbook author Jerry Griswold described the character as a similarly " feisty and outspoken " heroine . Writing for St. Francis Xavier University , Dawn Elizabeth England observed that Belle possesses equally as many traditionally feminine as she does masculine traits , citing her bravery , independence and assertiveness as masculine , and her sensitivity and fearfulness as feminine . According to Hard Bodies : Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era author Susan Jeffords , " Belle 's credentials as heroine are established ... when she is the only one of the town 's single women not to swoon over Gaston , " while the character 's love of reading is essentially manipulated " to mark her as better than the rest of the townspeople . " Writing for The Statesman , David O 'Connor cited Belle 's intelligence and bibliophilia as " in stark opposition to the insensitive and significantly dim @-@ witted Gaston . " Critics continue to debate over whether Belle or the Beast is the film 's protagonist . Susan Jeffords , author of Hard Bodies : Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era , felt that although Belle appears to be the protagonist in Beaumont 's original fairy tale , the character becomes " less the focus of the narrative " in Disney 's adaptation and more of a " mechanism for solving the Beast 's ' dilemma ' . " In her article " The Tangled Evolution of the Disney Princess " , Noelle Buffam felt that Belle arrived just in time when Disney 's heroines were " in a dire need for some change , " awarding her " the red stamp of approval " for her intelligence and spirit .

Analyzing ways in which Disney 's heroines have evolved overtime due to " the approach to the characterization of the princesses chang [ ing ] " as the characters gradually transformed from

passive young women into heroines who " had ambitions and desires aside from finding true love , " critics often divide the Disney Princesses into three separate categories and rank Belle among the middle of the timeline , with Kit Steinkellner of HelloGiggles observing that the character improved upon " the Disney princess archetype " by simultaneously serving as both a " dreamer " and a " doer " in her film , as opposed to exclusively the former . Film historian Paula Sigman Lowery explained to the Daily Express that Belle 's personality is a combination of Ariel 's spirit and burgeoning independence , and Pocahontas ' maturity , while Belle is " a little older [ than Ariel ] and a little further along in their journey towards independence . " About.com 's David Nusair believes that Belle belongs to a category of Disney Princesses known as " The Lady Vanishes , " in which the heroines , in spite of being brave , outspoken and independent , nonetheless " are forced to behave passively as others help them achieve their respective goals . " Michelle Munro , writing for Durham College of Applied Arts and Technology , felt that even though Belle shares several traits with her more passive predecessors , the character introduced " new possibilities for princesses . " Girls in Capes wrote that Belle pioneered a generation of princesses who taught " about ambition , self @-@ discovery and the pursuit of what we want . " Additionally , Belle remains Disney 's first and only princess to have hazel eyes .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Film and television = = =

Belle debuted in *Beauty and the Beast* ( 1991 ) as a beautiful bibliophile who , although praised by her fellow villagers for her unrivaled beauty , is at the same time ridiculed for her intelligence and non @-@ conformity . Having grown weary of her uneventful provincial life , in which she is relentlessly romantically pursued by an arrogant hunter named Gaston , Belle longs for adventure . When her father Maurice is imprisoned by a cold @-@ hearted beast , Belle sacrifices her own freedom in return for his , promising to remain with the Beast in his castle among his staff of enchanted objects forever . Although she initially dislikes her captor , Belle gradually learns to accept the Beast in spite of his appearance and eventually befriends him . Belle and the Beast 's strong bond greatly envies Gaston to the point of which he storms the castle and kills him , only to fall to his own death in the process . However , Belle confesses her love for the Beast just in time to break the spell under which he had been placed by an enchantress as punishment for his selfish ways , and the Beast ultimately transforms back into a handsome prince .

In *Beauty and the Beast : The Enchanted Christmas* ( 1997 ) , Belle attempts to reignite the castle 's waning spirit by reintroducing and celebrating Christmas , in spite of the Beast 's strong resentment towards the holiday . Meanwhile , a solemn pipe organ named Forte grows determined to sabotage Belle and the Beast 's burgeoning friendship because he longs to maintain his co @-@ dependent relationship with his master . Tricked by Forte into retrieving a large Christmas tree from a frozen pond , Belle nearly drowns , only to be rescued by the Beast . The Beast , however , having been misinformed by Forte , wrongly accuses Belle of trying to escape again , and locks her in the dungeon as punishment . When the Beast finally discovers the truth , they forgive each other , and Belle helps him thwart Forte 's plan to destroy the castle . *Beauty and the Beast : Belle 's Magical World* ( 1998 ) , depicts Belle as she interacts with both the Beast and his enchanted servants in various segments , exploring themes such as forgiveness , friendship , cooperation and respect .

In Belle 's *Tales of Friendship* ( 1999 ) , a spin @-@ off of the film series , Belle owns a bookstore in which she teaches valuable lessons to children by reading and retelling well @-@ known stories and fairy tales , narrating four classic Disney animated shorts : *The Three Little Pigs* ( 1933 ) , *Peter and the Wolf* ( 1946 ) , *The Wise Little Hen* ( 1934 ) and *Morris the Midget Moose* ( 1950 ) . For the first time , Belle appears as both animated and live @-@ action versions of herself , voiced and portrayed by actresses Paige O 'Hara and Lyndsey McLeod , respectively . In the television series *Sing Me a Story with Belle* ( 1995 ? 1999 ) , Belle , in a role reprised by McLeod , owns her own music and bookshop , where she is visited by children to whom she tells and sings stories .

== Broadway musical ==

Belle appeared in the Broadway musical adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast*. The role was originated by actress Susan Egan, who was initially reluctant to audition for *Beauty and the Beast* because she "thought it was a terrible idea for Disney to put a cartoon on Broadway." However, her agent managed to convince her otherwise, and Egan ultimately turned down callbacks for roles in the musicals *My Fair Lady*, *Carousel* and *Grease* in favor of starring as Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* because she had always wanted to originate a Broadway role. Egan had never watched *Beauty and the Beast* prior to her audition, relying solely on "her own creative instincts" instead. Egan's performance earned her a Tony Award nomination for Best Actress in a Musical at the 48th Tony Awards. A total of seventeen actresses have portrayed Belle in the Broadway musical, among them recording artists Debbie Gibson and Toni Braxton, The Sopranos' Jamie-Lynn Sigler, and Disney Channel alumnae Christy Carlson Romano and Anneliese van der Pol, the latter of whom became Broadway's final Belle when the show ended its thirteen-year-long run in 2007. Actress Sarah Litzsinger remains Broadway's longest-running Belle.

A best-selling R & B singer, Braxton made her Broadway debut when she was cast as Belle in 1998, turning down actress Halle Berry's role in the film *Why Do Fools Fall In Love* (1998). Braxton's desire to pursue an acting career stemmed from a series of conflicts with the singer's record label at the time, in turn making her the only African American to portray Belle in the show's history. Belle's ballad "A Change in Me" was written by songwriters Alan Menken and Tim Rice specifically for Braxton. However, the song was ultimately so well-received that it has been included in the musical ever since. During her tenure as Belle, Braxton was stalked by an "obsessed fan." The stalker had reportedly "bombarded" Braxton with threatening e-mails and letters. Several measures were taken to ensure the singer's safety, including forcing Braxton to dress in full disguise when traveling to and from the theatre in addition to reducing her total number of weekly performances from eight to seven. The stalker was eventually arrested and charged with "aggravated harassment."

== Miscellaneous ==

Belle along with Beast and Chip appeared at the 64th Academy Awards as presenters for Best Animated Short Feature. She also makes a brief cameo appearance in Disney's 34th animated feature film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) during the "Out There" musical sequence. Belle appeared in the animated television series *Disney's House of Mouse* and its direct-to-video films *Mickey's Magical Christmas: Snowed in at the House of Mouse* and *Mickey's House of Villains*. In the television series, Belle is voiced by American actress and singer Jodi Benson, while O'Hara reprises her role in the film. She was featured as one of the seven Princesses of Heart in the *Kingdom Hearts* video game series. A live-action version of Belle appears as a main character in the ABC television series *Once Upon a Time*, where she serves as the love interest of Rumplestiltskin (who is the show's version of the Beast). She is portrayed by Australian actress Emilie de Ravin. Another live-action version of the character appeared in the 2015 television film *Descendants*, where she was played by Keegan Connor Tracy (who is also a cast member on *Once Upon a Time*, except she plays The Blue Fairy / Mother Superior in the series) and serves as the Queen of the United States of Auradon. The series *Sofia the First* included a cameo by Belle in a 2013 episode. In January 2015, English actress Emma Watson announced that she will be portraying Belle in a live-action adaptation of the film, scheduled for a 2017 release.

Belle was also the main character in various comic books based on the film, including one set during Belle's stay at the castle published by Marvel Comics, and a prequel set several years before the film distributed by Disney Comics. In the former, the storylines generally have the servants trying to coax Belle into doing something with the Beast, only for it to backfire and nearly ruin their friendship before they make up. In the latter serial, Belle ends up locked up in a cellar by

village children after reluctantly playing pirates with them , and later nearly goes down the path leading to Beast 's castle . The latter serial also implies that she holds misandric views and refuses to associate herself with the village children , especially the males , due to their not being as well @-@ versed in literature as she .

Belle and the other characters from the first movie appear in the stage show , Beauty and the Beast Live on Stage at Disney 's Hollywood Studios , Walt Disney World . Belle appears in a meet @-@ and @-@ greet attraction at Magic Kingdom 's Fantasyland called Enchanted Tales with Belle . In season 18 of Dancing With the Stars , Danica McKellar played Belle while performing a Quickstep on a Disney themed episode . Ginger Zee and Edyta ?liwi?ska also both portrayed Belle while performing a Foxtrot and Waltz respectively during the Disney night episode of the 22nd season of Dancing with the Stars .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Belle has garnered widespread acclaim from film critics , several of whom voiced their preference for the character over her predecessor , Ariel from The Little Mermaid . Hal Hinson of The Washington Post described Belle as a " compelling " character who is " more mature , more womanly and less blandly asexual " than Ariel , as well as " a more worldly girl " , describing her as " a bookworm , with gumption and a mind of her own . " Similarly comparing Belle to Ariel , John Hartl of The Seattle Times wrote that , in Beauty and the Beast , " there 's rarely a sense of deja vu , perhaps because the heroine is so different from ' Mermaid 's ' dependent Ariel , and her dilemma is more poignant , " while Boxoffice scribed , " Undoubtedly in response to criticism that the cute little ' Mermaid ' Ariel was nothing more than a precocious sexpot , the idea @-@ people behind this beauty ? aptly named Belle ... chose to make her an icon of self @-@ reliance and a voracious reader with a curiosity and love for everything around her . " Jennie Punter of The Globe and Mail extolled Belle as a " smart , courageous ... ' take @-@ charge kind of gal ' , " while crowning her the " main attraction of Beauty and the Beast . " Emma Cochrane of Empire hailed Belle as " a feminist heroine who [ is ] more rounded than previous Disney characters " , while Paste 's Annlee Ellingson similarly enjoyed the character 's " feminist kick . " Stephen Hunter of The Baltimore Sun wrote that " Belle ... is no passive fairy tale princess , but a real live girl , with a spunky personality and her own private agenda . " TV Guide wrote that " The familiar narrative is strengthened by the independent , self @-@ assured character of Belle , " concluding , " Unlike Disney heroines from Snow White through Ariel , Belle is smart , knows what she wants , and doesn 't spend her time pining away for the love of a handsome prince . " Marc Bernardin of Entertainment Weekly praised Belle 's heroism , dubbing her " the hero " of Beauty and the Beast , while Entertainment Weekly 's Christian Blauvelt opined , " Unlike previous Disney heroines who needed to be rescued by a prince themselves , Belle not only saves the Beast 's life , she saves his soul . " TLC 's Vicki Arkoff received Belle as a " smart " and " sharp @-@ tongued " heroine , crediting the character for " break [ ing ] Disney 's passive @-@ princess mold . " About.com 's David Nusair described Belle as an " admirable " heroine . AllMovie 's Don Kaye and Perry Seibert echoed each other 's reviews of the character , with Kaye describing both Belle and the Beast as " three @-@ dimensional ... complex individuals who defy stereotyping and change over the course of the story , " and Seibert calling Belle a " strong female character " who " sidesteps most of the clichés surrounding Disney heroines . " Common Sense Media hailed Belle as " one of Disney 's smartest , most independent heroines . "

Meanwhile , Belle 's relationship with the Beast has also been met with positive reviews . About.com 's David Nusair wrote that " the palpable chemistry between Belle and The Beast ensur [ es ] that Beauty and the Beast lives up to its reputation as one of the most memorable romances of all time . " Describing it as an " unconventional romance , " Charles Solomon of the Los Angeles Times opined , " The idea of a young woman learning to love a gentle heart hidden beneath a baleful exterior represented a major break with tradition . " Likewise , critics enjoyed O 'Hara 's



performance . According to Variety , Belle was " magnificently voiced by O ' Hara . " The Star @-@ Ledger 's Stephen Whitty enjoyed O 'Hara 's " pretty soprano . " John Hartl of The Seattle Times wrote , " O 'Hara does a spirited job of investing the character with warmth , intuition and maturity , " while the Sun @-@ Sentinel 's Candice Russel felt that O 'Hara " does a good job of creating Belle as intellectual , wisely feminine and disarmed by the stirrings of her heart . " According to the Young Writers Society , Belle remains the best @-@ reviewed Disney Princess to @-@ date .

One of the character 's few negative reviews was written by Ethan Alter of Television Without Pity , who opined :

[ T ] he movie ... present [ ed ] audiences with a willful female protagonist that was firmly in control of her romantic destiny and regularly placed reading books above chasing after boys . And it 's true that in that respect at least , Belle stood in stark contrast to past Disney heroines ... Still , the filmmakers didn 't do the character any favors by swapping out that boy crazy trait for a pronounced maternalistic streak that comes across as a little creepy . Besides being utterly devoted to her father , Belle 's relationship with the Beast possesses a distinctly mother / toddler dynamic ... Their romance also lacks spark because ? due to the fundamental set @-@ up of the narrative ... it 's always clear that he needs her far more than she needs him . Particularly when compared to some of the dynamic animated heroines that came after her ... today Belle can 't help but seem ... bland .

= = = Feminist analysis = = =

Jezebel determined that Belle " is often held up as the standard of the ' feminist ' Disney princess . " According to Tales , Then and Now : More Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults author Anna E. Altmann , Disney heavily promoted Beauty and the Beast as " a feminist fairy tale " due to Belle 's characterization and role in the film . In his book Hearing a Film , Seeing a Sermon : Preaching and Popular Movies , author Timothy B. Cargal agreed that the character indicated " Disney 's ... continued efforts to reshape their heroines for a more feminist age . " According to Girl Culture : An Encyclopedia author Claudia Mitchell , Belle 's feminism was influenced by third @-@ wave feminism and the relatively new concept of girl power during the 1990s . Feminist critics have been generally mixed in their analyses of Belle , arguing over whether or not the character is in fact " feminist enough . " Although Beauty and the Beast was initially lauded upon release for starring a " forward thinking and feminist " heroine , critics tend to agree that , in spite of Belle 's independence and resentment towards Gaston , Beauty and the Beast essentially remains a romance about a girl who finally " meets her ideal man . " Acknowledging that Belle " represented significant change from [ her ] sweet , mop @-@ wielding predecessors , " Twilight and History author Nancy Reagan observed that " the end result of fulfillment through marriage has been maintained . " Kathleen Maher of The Austin Chronicle cited Belle as an example of " pseudo @-@ feminism " because she rejects one man , Gaston , in favor of another , a prince . While commending Belle for " seeing past the beast 's appearance , " Judith Welikala of The Independent in the end accused the character of " melting back into the role of wife when he turns back into a handsome prince . " Fairy Tale author Andrew Teverson referred to Belle as Disney 's attempt to address " feminist criticism of its representation of women in earlier films , " but ultimately criticized the character 's curiosity for " extend [ ing ] only to romance , " additionally accusing her of being " a zealous individualist with a pathological hostility to common men and women . " Meanwhile , Stylist ranked Belle among the most feminist Disney characters , describing her as an " incredibly intelligent " woman who " doesn 't stand for a man who considers her as just a piece of meat ... she wants someone who loves her for her mind too . " Acknowledging the character 's " feminist longings , " Daniel Eagen , author of America 's Film Legacy : The Authoritative Guide to the Landmark Movies in the National Film Registry , cited Belle as Disney 's " modern @-@ day corrective to Snow White . " Beyond Adaptation : Essays on Radical Transformations of Original Works author Phyllis Frus wrote that , initially , Beauty and the Beast does not seem " remotely feminist . " However , the author did acknowledge Belle as " an appealing character with a noticeable feminist streak , " but in the end criticized Disney 's Consumer Products of reversing what the film had nearly accomplished by inducting the character into the Disney Princess franchise . In Refinery29 's " Definitive Ranking Of

Disney Princesses As Feminist Role Models , " author Vanessa Golembewski ranked the character eighth but described her personality and ambitions as " confusing . " Complex 's Tara Aquino described Belle as " a kinda feminist ... who 's well @-@ read , self @-@ sufficient , and with standards high enough that she doesn 't fall for the town 's brain @-@ dead pretty boy . "

Commentators have generally reacted more cynically towards Belle 's relationship with the film 's male characters , particularly the Beast , questioning its morality . Writing for the University of Central Florida , Faith Dickens felt that after Belle 's introduction , the character becomes little more than " a vehicle for exploring the Beast 's dilemmas , " while her initial pining for adventure is replaced by romance . Dickens went on to criticize the fact that while Belle appears to be " perfect the way she is , " the Beast " need [ s ] to be reformed . " Anna E. Altmann , author of *Tales , Then and Now : More Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults* , disliked the fact that Belle appears to share a motherly relationship with both the Beast and Maurice . Altman also panned the fact that Belle 's interest in reading appears to be limited to fairy tales , ultimately dismissing the character as little more than " a feisty North American version of " Beaumont 's heroine . Orange Coast writer Henry A. Giroux felt that Belle serves as little more than " a prop for resolving the Beast 's problems . " Sonia Saraiya of *Nerve* ranked Belle the sixth most feminist Disney Princess , writing that , unlike Ariel , " Belle 's sass doesn 't come from teenage rebellion , but rather from intellectual acuity . " Saraiya commended Belle for resisting " her village 's expectations of what her life should look like , " crediting her with being " the first princess to express some skepticism about married life . " While calling Belle 's sacrifice " brave , " the author also labeled it " not much of a step for womankind , " in the end accusing her of falling " for a domineering man . " Similarly , Kit Steinkellner of *HelloGiggles* expressed concern over the " abusive undercurrents running through Belle and Beast 's relationship . " Meanwhile , *Bustle* 's Mary Grace Garis also commended Belle 's aspirations and love of reading , but criticized her relationship with the Beast , concluding , " Though the '90s showed a move toward princesses wanting to buck conventions and free themselves from their fathers ( or the town misogynist ) the endgame is the still the same , elaborating , " When the movie ends , they 're still solidly with a man , their dreams of adventure abandoned . Therefore , the Disney renaissance is characterized more by theoretical want of adventure rather than a genuine pursuit . "

= = = Accolades and legacy = = =

Deemed an " iconoclast " by Boxoffice , Belle continues to be recognized for her role in *Beauty and the Beast* . Established as an icon , the character holds the distinction of being Disney 's first feminist princess . According to Kevin Fallon of *The Daily Beast* , before Belle " being a Disney princess meant singing songs about how much you love combing your hair with a fork and giving away your voice if it meant you got to marry the guy with that dreamy chiseled jaw . " Commentators believe that the character 's performance in *Beauty and the Beast* as one of Disney 's first strong female leads is responsible for changing the way in which women would be depicted in future animated films . According to *About.com* 's David Nusair , Belle " updated the princess formula for an entirely new generation . " *The Atlantic* 's Lindsay Lowe echoed Nusair 's sentiment , citing Belle as the character responsible for ending Disney 's " long history of ... docile heroines . " *The Daily Campus* ' Cathy Schmidt recognized Belle and Ariel as " the beginnings of the more modern Disney princesses . " Writing for *Virgin Media* , Limara Salt believes that the character " proved that audiences could fall in love with a brown @-@ haired intellectual . " A survey conducted by Disney proved that Belle inspired young woman to read after the film 's release . Justin Humphreys of *The Hook* expressed , " Belle remains a most successful princess because people can relate " to her . Meanwhile , the *Los Angeles Times* ' Charles Solomon ranked Belle among the four Disney Princesses responsible for breaking " the bonds of convention . " Elina Bolokhova of *Parenting* believes that Belle 's " bravery and independence helped redefine the meaning of a Disney princess . " The character was placed first on *E!* 's ranking of the Disney Princesses due to her lack of vanity , relatability and intelligence , while *Cosmopolitan* ranked her fourth . In the magazine 's " *Definitive Ranking Of Disney Princesses* " , *Seventeen* ranked Belle fifth . Similarly , *BuzzFeed* also ranked

the character fifth , praising her love of reading . BuzzFeed also determined that Belle is the most popular Disney Princess , with the character having garnered 18 % of votes . Belle is the fifth most successful Disney Princess in terms of box office revenue , with her film grossing over \$ 350 million . However , following the release of Frozen and popularity of its heroines Elsa and Anna , even though neither of them are officially part of the line @-@ up , Belle became the lowest @-@ selling Disney Princess on eBay in 2013 , with sales of less than \$ 7 @,@ 000 despite the fact that she is often cited as a favorite among customers .

Belle remains one of Disney 's most beloved animated heroines . The character was the only animated heroine to be nominated for the American Film Institute 's greatest heroes in film ranking . CNN ranked Belle among " Merida and other animated heroines " , a list recognizing some of Disney 's greatest heroines . According to the Daily Mirror , Belle is Disney 's second most iconic character , describing her as a " portrait of bravery , teaching us to look beyond appearances and stand up for what we believe in . " Meanwhile , PopMatters ranked Belle Disney 's second best hero . Considered to be both a sex symbol and fashion icon , Belle has garnered accolades for both her appearance and costumes . The character was ranked 64th on UGO 's list of the most attractive female cartoon characters , while being ranked 14th on Complex 's " 25 Hottest Cartoon Women of All Time " . E ! ranked Belle the second best @-@ dressed Disney Princess , crowning her " the most couture of all the Disney princesses . " Author Emily Popp went on to praise the character 's ballgown for being " off the Oscar de la Renta runway , " while Vogue included it among the " Most Famous Dresses " , with author Sarah Karmali dubbing it " One of the most instantly recognisable dresses in Disney history . " Revered as iconic , the dress is currently among the most famous in film history . Belle appeared on BuzzFeed 's " Definitive Ranking Of 72 Disney Princess Outfits " four times , ranking the character 's green , blue , pink and yellow dresses 51st , 37th , 31st and 15th , respectively . Similarly , Belle 's blue , pink , yellow and green costumes were ranked 18th , 10th , ninth and fourth by Official Disney Blogs , whose author believes that the character 's ballgown " went down in the history books . " Belle appeared on Stylist 's list of the " Best beauty looks in Disney " twice , both for the character 's hairstyles . Entertainment Weekly ranked Belle 's hair fifth in the magazine 's " Disney Princesses : Ranking Their Hairdos ? and Don 'ts ! "

Belle helped establish Woolverton as a " legendary screenwriter " ; the writer continues to be commended for her dedication to creating strong female characters ; ever since Belle , the majority of Woolverton 's female characters have been headstrong , independent women , namely Nala in The Lion King ( 1994 ) , Mulan in Mulan ( 1998 ) , Alice in Alice in Wonderland ( 2010 ) and Maleficent in Maleficent ( 2014 ) . Susan Wloszczyna of Indiewire wrote that " Woolverton set a new standard for fully fleshed @-@ out fairy @-@ tale heroines ... with Belle " , in turn paving the way for The Hunger Games ' Katniss Everdeen , and Frozen 's Anna and Elsa ( 2013 ) . Woolverton remains protective of Belle , explaining , " [ she ] was my first @-@ born child , so there ? s a little bit of possessiveness , which really I had to let it go " . Beauty and the Beast , Belle performs the film 's opening number , " Belle " , which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song at the 64th Academy Awards in 1992 . In 1998 , O 'Hara was nominated for an Annie Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement for Voice Acting by a Female Performer in an Animated Feature Production for reprising her role as Belle in the second of Beauty and the Beast 's three direct @-@ to @-@ video sequels , Belle 's Magical World . To commemorate her work on Beauty and the Beast and various contributions to Disney , O 'Hara was honored with a Disney Legends award on August 19 , 2011 . Disney hired Spanish actress Penélope Cruz to pose as Belle in photographer Annie Leibovitz 's Disney Dream Portrait Series , while actor Jeff Bridges posed as the Beast . The Daily Mail described the image as Cruz " wearing Belle 's gorgeous yellow gown and being lifted high into the air by her prince , " accompanied by the phrase " Where a moment of beauty lasts forever . "