

Module 3 – Study Guide: Fairy Tales, Film, and Gender

Key Themes for Module 3

- Fairy tale structure (roles like hero, princess, reward)
- Archetypes vs. stereotypes in storytelling
- Gender roles and expectations in classic fairy tales and modern adaptations
- How film adaptations shift meaning compared to books
- Agency: which characters make meaningful choices?

Scholarly Article: Ming-Hsun Lin – Fitting the Glass Slipper

Main ideas to understand:

- The princess role is often defined by narrative function rather than personality.
- The princess is frequently positioned as the “sought-for person” or the “reward” for the hero.
- Archetypes are flexible roles; stereotypes occur when characters become predictable and shaped by cultural expectations.
- When stories prioritize cultural comfort over narrative complexity, archetypes become stereotypes.
- Film adaptations often change emphasis, which can shift whose story feels most important.

Cinderella Comparisons

Grimm Version:

- Harsher tone, stronger focus on suffering and endurance.
- Less romanticized; emphasizes obedience and endurance.

Disney 1950:

- Romantic, idealized version of Cinderella.
- Strong focus on marriage and rescue.
- Cinderella often functions as a reward in the narrative structure.

Disney 2015:

- Attempts to modernize Cinderella with emotional depth and choice.
- Still follows traditional structure where recognition and romance resolve the story.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (2001 Film)

- Focuses on Harry's identity, belonging, and emotional journey.
- The story's 'reward' becomes friendship and home rather than romance.
- Hermione complicates fairy-tale roles by contributing intelligence and action rather than functioning as a reward.

- Film adaptation emphasizes Harry's internal experience over other characters' perspectives.

Important Concepts to Remember

- Agency: Does the character make choices that change outcomes?
- Narrative function vs. personality: What role does the character serve?
- Adaptation: What does the film emphasize or remove compared to the text?
- Gender representation: Who gets to act? Who gets rewarded?

Questions to Practice

- Which version of Cinderella shows the most agency, and why?
- How does Lin's idea of the princess as a 'reward' change how you view Disney films?
- How does the 2001 Harry Potter film avoid or reinforce fairy-tale structures?
- Where do you see archetypes becoming stereotypes in modern media?