**Behind the Fairy Tale: Exploring Mental Health of Disney Princesses**

First draft

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**Outline**

Introduction:

* Brief overview of Disney Princesses as icons
* Introduction to the topic of exploring mental health themes in their stories

Paragraph 1

* Belle from “Beauty and the Beast”
* Schizoid personality disorder

Paragraph 2

* Ariel from “Little Mermaid”
* Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Paragraph 3

* Cinderella from “Cinderella”
* Cinderella Complex

Conclusion:

* Recap of the mental health themes explored in Disney princess narratives

The enchanting world of Disney Princesses has captivated audiences for generations, presenting tales of bravery, love, and triumph over adversity. However, beneath the glittering surface lies a more complex reality where many of these iconic characters grapple with mental health issues, mirroring real-world struggles. This essay explores the psychological dimensions of some of the most beloved Disney princesses, shedding light on the mental health challenges they face.

First, Belle from "Beauty and the Beast" exhibits several characteristics that align with Schizoid Personality Disorder (SPD), which is classified as a pervasive pattern of detachment from social relationships and a restricted range of expression of emotions in interpersonal settings, beginning by early adulthood. For Belle, her rough childhood, marked by the loss of her mother, sets the stage for her later detachment. Belle’s symptoms of SPD are highlighted by her social interactions. She is a beautiful, independent, however, a headstrong bookworm, shunned by the villagers for her love of books and labeled as "odd," which is a typical symptom of SPD that individuals develop a solitary activity and struggle with social interactions. Throughout the story, she finds herself lacking close friends and has stronger connections with non-human entities like teacups and footstools. Additionally, she befriends and falls in love with a beast. Her deeper connection with the Beast, rather than with humans, aligns with SPD, as individuals with this disorder often find stronger intimacy with animals. Furthermore, when she is pursued by Gaston who wants to wed her, she portrays the typical behavior of "having little, if any, interest in having sexual experiences with another person” as stated in one of the diagnostic criteria.

Aside from Belle, Ariel from "The Little Mermaid" displays behaviors aligned with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which is characterized by persistent obsessions, repetitive behaviors or mental compulsions that an individual feels compelled to perform. Ariel’s compulsive collection of human artifacts which she does not even understand what are them, driven by an intense fascination and desire for a world beyond her own, reflects the classic symptoms of OCD. Moreover, her connection to her gathered items extends beyond simple curiosity, showing signs of an emotional reliance and distress at the thought of parting with them. As a mermaid longing to explore the human world, Ariel is also obsessed with “legs.” This fascination is not merely a whim but a profound obsession that dictates her actions and thoughts. She is even willing to use her voice to trade legs with Ursula, the witch who has always longs for her lovely voice. This is also a classic symptom of OCD that individuals obsess something to pursue some identity originally not belonging to them.

Finally, Cinderella from "Cinderella" not only exhibits characteristics of a mental health issue but has also become a symbol of a new psychological phenomenon. Cinderella Complex, a term coined by Colette Dowling in her book "The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence." This psychological condition refers to an unconscious desire to be taken care of by others, particularly by a male figure, and a fear of independence. In Cinderella's story, her submissive and dependent nature is obvious in her interactions with her stepmother and stepsisters, who treat her as a servant. Despite her mistreatment, Cinderella remains passive, polite and obedient, rarely asserting herself or challenging her situation. Her longing for a savior appears in her dreams as a prince who will rescue her from her hardships and provide her with a better life. This fantasy is ultimately fulfilled when she marries Prince Charming, who delivers her from her oppressive household and grants her a new status and identity. The journey to independence and self-empowerment of Cinderella is intertwined with the deep desire for care and rescue.

Disney princesses' tales reveal deeper psychological struggles. By analyzing Belle, Ariel, and Cinderella, we uncover their mental health challenges, reflecting real-life issues and adding depth to their timeless stories.