Park Jae moon, Advanced English: Exploring Film

(Haven’t come up with a decent title yet)

“When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are...” Followed by *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, that’s how the second masterpiece of Walt Disney and his crew *Pinocchio* starts with. Having its lyrics still being used in the logo of Walt Disney pictures until this very day, the song “When you wish upon a star” made *Pinocchio* the first animated feature to win a competitive Academy Award – winning two for Best Music, Original Score and for Best Music, Original Song. The film of a wooden puppet coming to life and trying to become a real boy has amazed the audience not only by its simple yet touching theme song, but also with unbelievable animating techniques for the time and for all the lovable characters. But despite of all the advanced skills that were used and the wholesome story of the loving, innocent Pinocchio itself, the film has been through many criticisms in several perspectives such as racial issues and gender roles, but mostly because of the way the original story “*The Adventures of Pinocchio*”, by Carlo Collodi, was interpreted and modified by Disney and his studio. This kind of adjustment made by Disney is usually referred as “Disneyfication”, making the whole story distinctive compared to the original one.

Basically, the film *Pinocchio* is a remake of the original story *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, so it has its similarities throughout the whole plot. Both stories start with the birth of Pinocchio, the wooden puppet that moves and talks. Even though Pinocchio is a creation that is made by Geppetto, the close relationships they hold together could be found in the fact that they are referred as a father and son. This could be found in the parts of both stories where Pinocchio is so desperate finding his own father, Geppetto, after knowing he is in big trouble. And the story goes on with the accidents Pinocchio goes through. In *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, he meets the fox and the cat who could might as just do anything to take possession of the gold pieces Pinocchio earned from the puppet master. Soon he meets Lampwick who tempts Pinocchio to go to Toyland, both ending up becoming a donkey. In the film, the fox (Honest John, as they named him) and the cat tempt Pinocchio to become an actor, which was actually a plot to sell him to the puppet master. Soon as he escapes from the puppet master, he ends up following John again, to pleasure island-which is equivalent as Toyland in *The Adventures of Pinocchio*-not aware of being used yet again. Going through all these hardships, Pinocchio, in both the text and the film, rescues Geppetto from a giant sea monster (A shark and a whale in each the book and the film) and becomes a real boy with the help of the fairy. As it seems, the main plot of the story was preserved in the process of film making; making Pinocchio into a real boy, but a good one.

But even though Disney did keep the main idea of the original story, parts that doesn’t meet the ‘Disney standard’ were still in it, and that brought the difference of plot between the two stories. For example, starting as a live piece of wood that could talk, Pinocchio was completely made just as soon it was carved. Disney films always has some magic in it, making the Blue Fairy as the character who gives life to an inanimate puppet. And as being a film, Disney’s *Pinocchio* only has the essence of the whole plot, making the whole story relatively simple. *The Adventures of Pinocchio* had a whole lot more stories with the farmer, the gorilla, the serpent, the fisher, etc., mostly because it was a serial story that came out in short parts every week and got published in whole at the end. It was unnecessary having so many things going around a single film, if the main topic remains unaltered. As for the parts that are in the film, if the text was a sequence of misfortune that served the arrogant and disobedient puppet right, the film portrays Pinocchio as an innocent boy being driven around by the evil ones, making a more sympathetic story. As an example, Pinocchio ends up being caught by the puppet master because he went to a puppet show instead of going to school. He even sells his book Geppetto bought him by selling his coat just for the ticket. In the film, Pinocchio gets caught by Honest John and his sidekick, tempting the boy that knows nothing to the way of torture. Also, in *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, after Pinocchio saves Geppetto from the huge shark, he takes care of his father who eventually became ill, probably because of being in the ocean for so long. For his good behavior, the Fairy helps Geppetto to be in full health, as well as making Pinocchio into a real boy. In Disney’s film, Pinocchio becomes unconscious after saving Geppetto from the giant whale Monstro. The Blue Fairy comes and makes Pinocchio into a real boy for having been “brave, truthful, and unselfish”. These differences found from the film compared to the original story shows that Disney wanted the story to be more entertaining and touching, but also is giving a message to the audiences about how children should really be like in the 20th century.

Having modified the whole story in the taste of Disney, characters also got their own adjustments-whether they get removed, changed, or being created. As the rebellious rascal Pinocchio changed into an innocent and cuddly puppet, Disney made the Cricket and the Fairy have their own roles in the development of the character, Pinocchio. The Cricket is mostly a different character in the two stories, but they still have things in common. In *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, the Talking Cricket tells Pinocchio the things he should be doing to be a proper child, and warns him, “Woe to any little boy who rebels against his parents and turns his back on his father’s house! He will come to no good in this world and sooner or later he’ll be filled with bitter regret.” The cricket that makes appearance in Disney’s film, which is Jiminy Cricket, has his role as Pinocchio’s ‘conscience’, having the duty of leading Pinocchio to the right way, and he certainly attempts to. People could see him being so desperate trying to stop Pinocchio from following Honest John. The Fairy also has her own things in common, obviously including her blue appearance. Both Fairies in the text and the film reminds Pinocchio to be a good boy and makes Pinocchio into a real boy in the end. As an example, there is a part where the Fairy tells Pinocchio, “everyone, whether they’re born rich or poor, is obliged to do something-to keep busy, to work.” The Blue Fairy from the film also says things Pinocchio should be aware of to be a good child such as “You must learn to choose between right and wrong”, “Prove yourself brave, truthful and unselfish”. She also helps Pinocchio from miserable situations and guides him the way to save Geppetto. In the text, she saves the nearly dying puppet that was tied up by the fox and cat. She also guides Pinocchio to the shark by making him swim towards the blue goat figure, which would have reminded him of the Fairy. The Blue Fairy from Disney’s film has freed Pinocchio from the puppet master Stromboli’s cage, saying it is the last time she will be helping him. In fact, she helped her once again by giving instructions about Geppetto’s whereabouts by a message delivered by a pigeon.

As mentioned previously, Disney have found roles for the Talking Cricket and the Fairy that suits the new Pinocchio in a better way. So, despite the remaining similarities, differences between the corresponding characters from the two stories are very distinct. For the Talking Cricket, being literally a talking cricket, he had a totally bug-like appearance. Also, he died being hit by a wooden mallet Pinocchio has thrown at him, making sooner appearances as a ghost. He did warn Pinocchio of being disobedient, but acting more like an advisor, he did not take further action. On the other hand, the cricket from Disney was named Jiminy Cricket, with an appearance close to a human being without ears. He doesn’t have 6 legs, but has a pair of arms and legs instead. Because of his man-like appearance, the supervising animator of Jiminy, Ward Kimball said, “The only thing that makes him a cricket is that we call him one.” Above all, his role is the conscience of Pinocchio. Having turned Pinocchio into such a naïve and helpless character, Disney had to get a character to guide him make right decisions. That’s how the character of Jiminy Cricket has been created. Wherever Pinocchio went, Jiminy tried to stay with him, helping or at least trying to lead Pinocchio to the good way. He tried to stop Pinocchio from following John, helped him escape pleasure island, and also helped him finding Geppetto underwater. Rather than the Talking Cricket, the role Jiminy Cricket had in the film was more like the Fairy in the original story, who also had major changes while being adopted in the film. In the original story, the Fairy is like a mysterious family of Pinocchio, making appearance as a girl, a woman, and probably a goat, appearing and disappearing consistently, who taking actual care of him. She acts as a sister while giving Pinocchio the medicine that would heal him, and acts as his mother while he goes to school. Overall, she is the main helper of Pinocchio who guides him, somewhat like Jiminy Cricket In Disney’s film. Disney’s film had the Blue Fairy instead, who came to grant kind Geppetto’s wish of having Pinocchio as a real boy. She has a solid figure, and even though she does a main role as a physical helper, unlocking doors and giving life, she has not much to do in the development of Pinocchio himself. As a matter of fact, she is trying to make Pinocchio a real boy for Geppetto, not for the puppet’s sake. In conclusion, she has a limited meaning of existence with just the magical features, compared to the Fairy in the original story.

The artwork of Disney in *Pinocchio* could not be discussed without its technologies used and effort put in the scenes. The climax of the whole film is where Pinocchio is trying to find and save Geppetto from the huge whale, Monstro. It was from the part of the original story where Pinocchio finds his father inside a giant shark and makes a safe escape. First, in the middle of the original story, Pinocchio is informed by a wise dolphin that his father was lost in the ocean and might have been eaten by the huge shark. After being eaten by the shark himself, he seeks a small light ahead of the shark’s belly, which turned out to be a light from a ship Geppetto was on. Since Geppetto ended up inside the shark while finding Pinocchio, Pinocchio tries to take responsibility of what he has done before. He encourages Geppetto that they could make the way out, and successfully escapes the shark by carefully crawling out his mouth. This was where the readers could finally find Pinocchio as a reliable character. As Geppetto says he doesn’t know how to swim, Pinocchio says “So? You can climb on my back, and I’m such a good swimmer that I’ll bring you safe and sound back to shore.” Even after failing to escape once, with Geppetto saying “Now, my boy, we’re done for”, Pinocchio would say “Why? Give me your hand, Daddy, and be careful not to slip!” Not just showing the escape of the two, this part of the book showing that Pinocchio has actually grown to be a responsive, mature boy. In Disney’s film, Pinocchio gets to know his father is inside a huge whale called Monstro by a message from the Blue Fairy. He apparently finds Monstro, and gets eaten by it himself. Geppetto was fishing inside the whale for survival, and accidentally got Pinocchio on the hook. Pinocchio gets to the idea of escaping by making the whale sneeze using the smoke coming out of fire, and succeeds to get free. But Monstro, enraged by the smoke, chases the raft Pinocchio and Geppetto is on. Having the raft broken by Monstro, Pinocchio holds on to drowning Geppetto, and successfully escapes from the whale’s rage by swimming in a crack of a boulder in the nick of time. This could be said as the ultimate boss battle which decorates the end of the film effectively. Also, having a closer look in the scenes, significant amount of effort and astonishing techniques could be found in the underwater scene and the escaping scene. At the time, most of the artworks were made by hand, making a whole lot of work to do for describing the ocean floor. The reflection of water from the surface and the bubbles, all the fish, rocks and corals were drawn by the crew. The rippling of images underwater is also one of unbelievable skills for the time. And for the scene where Monstro chases the raft, the camera angle catches both the desperate movement of rowing of Geppetto and Pinocchio and the emotions expressed on their faces with a long shot. The consistent change of view between the scene of Monstro and the scene of Geppetto and Pinocchio makes audiences feel like the whale is really chasing them. The effects of the waves, splashing water and bubbles on the surface multiplies the experience of the scene, making it way more realistic. Even many of the critics of the time that found disturbing parts in the film had to admit the mere awesomeness of the way the scenes were presented.

To make such a key scene almost everyone has found amusing, Disney had to slightly change things that were going on in this key scene. In *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Pinocchio was lead to the shark by the Fairy, who made him to swim towards a blue figure of a goat shimmering ahead on the sea. But in Disney’s film, Pinocchio sets off to the seabed to find Monstro himself as soon as he heard the news about his father’s whereabouts. It is assumed to be showing the causal relationships better than the original story, making Pinocchio more of a brave, truthful boy. And when they escape in the original story, Pinocchio carefully crawls out the mouth of the shark with Geppetto, and has a tuna whom Pinocchio helped escape from the shark helping Pinocchio and Geppetto to reach the shore. It does show a better aspect of the idea that good deeds are never lost, but it lacks in visual materials for a climax of a whole film. So, Disney replaced sneaking out or the mouth with being shot out by a sneeze, and the tuna ride with a struggle for survival using an oar in a raft, being chased by a whale with the size bigger than a house. This adjustment might have slightly weakened the moral meaning of the tale, but the main idea of saving his father remains the same. After all, this slight twist in the plot has decorated the grand finale of the film with an aesthetically amazing scene as a result.

The final aspect of comparing and contrasting would be about the overall themes and imageries of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* and Disney’s *Pinocchio*. First of all, both the original story and Disney’s film were aimed for children audiences, informing moral norms they should be aware of. As for *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, it starts with a “Once upon a time, …” that make the readers feel like the author is actually telling them a story. Also, it once had a gruesome ending with Pinocchio facing a tragic death. But thinking that this sort of ending is inappropriate for a story for children, the author added the Fairy and made the story into what it is known these days. And besides from telling the kids to become good children themselves, the story implies another message of ‘encouraging good and punishing evil’. The fox and the cat who nearly killed Pinocchio for the gold coins he had makes appearance in the end of the story as beggars. The fox somehow lost its tail and becomes paralyzed on one side. The cat became actually blind after so many days of pretending to be one. They beg for mercy to Pinocchio, but Pinocchio, calling them charlatans (a person attempting to obtain money, fame or other advantages via some form of pretense or deception), says they deserve it for what they have done, and just passes by. Then he meets Lampwick, the so-called friend of him from school who tempted Pinocchio to follow him to Toyland, the land of disobedience and deviation. He faces a tragic death as a donkey in a barn, as a result of hard labor. Pinocchio himself is punished lot of times due to his misbehaviors and when he finally becomes a good boy, he gets the reward of being a real boy. Then there could be seen the idea of paternal and maternal loves each by Geppetto and the Fairy. As an example, Geppetto, who has no money to afford anything, sells his one and only coat to buy his son a spelling book, so that he could go to school. The Fairy actually acts as a mother and takes care of him throughout the whole story. The main theme of the story is simple-Listen well to what adults say, unless you will be in big trouble. This might seem hierarchical these days, but it is quite self-explanatory, considering the date it was finished written (1882). The Disney’s remake of the original story, for it was aiming for children audiences as well, contains moral messages towards them. Quote of the Blue Fairy “Prove yourself brave, truthful and unselfish” quite sums up the whole idea of this. Another aspect the film has been pointing out was showing downsides of capitalism with the fox, cat, evil puppet master, and the coachman, deceiving and exploiting children for their own profits. Compared to many other ‘classic’ Disney movies that involve fantasy-style ‘true love’, the idea of the film *Pinocchio* has much to do with the reality. As for this, even with one of the most adorable main character Disney has, the theme of the whole film is very dark itself. Surprising it is that 76 minutes of the film out of 88 minutes takes place in dark, rainy places or the underwater. The idea of ‘wish coming true’ was not a main part of the plot, but as the theme song “When you wish upon a star” has brought such a sensational hit, it just also happened to be one of the messages that the film tells us.

*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, from Carlo Collodi, seeks its presence in being said to be a great novel for its improving of morality and being a reminder of one’s childhood. Although having its origins and main idea from the original story *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Disney attempted to make a film that would give a unique impact to the audience. Having all these reworks in plot, characterization, key scenes, themes and imagery, it did receive several criticisms in many perspectives. For an example, there was an issue of gender roles due to the lack of role of female characters, such as the Blue Fairy, or even Cleo, the goldfish. The role of the Blue Fairy is said to be no more than a magic wand, making whole femaleness that takes place in any form is for mere decoration. However mostly the criticizing was from the changing of the story itself, saying that the film does not reflect the Italian style literature for children well enough, and the radical change of Pinocchio himself is unacceptable. No matter what form it comes in, every literary work has its own intentions. So, there is no need to blame criticizing itself, but there also is no need to blame one’s preference of literature. To this very day, *Pinocchio* finds its own place in filmmaking history. People could enjoy watching it, as much as the original book itself is still a nice novel to read.