ON “RAPUNZEL”

In our culture, folktales are often classified as “children’s stories”. But folktales have always been part of our universal heritage and they are meant for everyone. It has even been said that Grimms’ folktales rank next to the Bible or Shakespeare’s plays in importance.

The brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm first published *Kinder und Hausmaerchen* in German 1812 and 1815. *Tales for Children and the Home* later went through several edition. They collected these tales from storytellers among ordinary people. In general, folklore scholars feel that their collection faithfully retells the stories as they were handed down among the folk.

In English, the Brothers’ collection is popularly known as Grimm’s Fairy Tales, but the title is misleading because few of the stories are about fairytales – they are folk tales – come from “the people” as a whole.

There are folk tales all over the world, every culture has stories that its people repeat to each other in homes, villages and towns. And because, they were originally told out loud (orally), folk tales are different from stories “written” by one person. The stories take place in a kind of never-never land where anything is possible. Humble heroes can kill giants and become kings, young people can be bewitched into animal shapes and castles can vanish overnight or reappear in an instant.

There is no single “right” interpretation of the tales. Folk tales have been compared to many facet jewels, which show different meanings as they are turned this way and that. Each storyteller will retell it differently. The MEANING of a folktale does not lie in the story itself but in the minds of the audience. A tale may have different meanings for different people and all those meanings may be true.

Many of the motifs found in folktales concern objects and events that appear to be changed with meaning even today, such as Rapunzel’s hair and its being cut off. These images come from the unconscious dreams. Modern audiences seem to recognize them intuitively, as if they already knew them. The character types, the motifs, the plot types – all these seem to present ARCHETYPES, emotionally realistic description of universal human experiences.

Folk tales seem to be about critical stages of life. Some people argue that helping children work through their conflicts is one of the folktale’s most important situations. “Rapunzel” was collected by the Grimms for the first edition of *Children and Household Tales*, initially published in 1812. It came to the Grimms through the French aristocracy story retold in German among the folks, the story “Parslinette”, published by Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de La Force in 1697. The daughter of marquis, she was a protégé of one of Louis XIV misstresses, Madam de Maintenton. De la Force used this relationship to become a maid of honour to the queen and influencing person in the society. She also wrote romances and fairy tales. “Parslinette” is a story of forbidden desire. In this story a woman craves for the forbidden parsley in the neighbor fairy’s garden, her husband steals for his wife and pays for it with unborn child. The child is taken away and kept in a tower – a historical reality of the author’s life is that she was watching children, legitimate and illegitimate, taken from mothers and hidden away in convents, or in secret houses, since ladies at court could not have a privilege to have children by their side. Also, when Praslinette gets pregnant she is kicked out of the tower – in France of the time, women were driven from luxurious home after becoming pregnant illicitly, giving birth behind couvent Walls, in secret houses, in distant towns or even in the streets.

“Rapunzell”, set around the turn of the century is about a young girl’s struggle with independence. It centers around the relationship of a young girl and her “mother” (a witch). The story is filled with important symbols – Rapunzel’s hair is a symbol of the growth and maturity, but it is also the thing that binds her. She must cut it (or it must be cut) for her to be free. The tower shelters her adolescence, but it also isolates her from others.

“Tangled”(2010) is a remake of Grimm Brother’s “Rapunzel”. Disney took liberty and changed almost the entire story to meet Disney standards. The film tells the story of how a young woman achieved her dreams and how a bandit like Flynn Ryder also finds his aim in life. Disney keeps the heroine with long golden hair and the evil witch known as mother Gothel, but changed the plot and added many characters. At present, literature is gradually being replaced by visual media such as movies, cinemas, animated movies and the other forms of visual representations are becoming more acceptable and popular than written forms Disney, one of the most famous film productions, has adopted many fairy tales over the years. It modifies them to the new age and new ideologies, including feminism and colonial studies.

Since adaptations are “palimpsest” (stories change over time) and different media forms have different methods of conventional meaning to an audience, we should consider adaptation as repetition of a story, not it’s replication. We leave behind us the fidelity discourse (the belief that adaptation should be faithful to original book) and the adaptation is not secondary to the original. So, keep appreciating both books and movies as valuable sources in which the same story is being converted in different culture and ideological context!

Task

1. Please, read the following story:

Grimm,J and Grimm W, “Rapunzel”, Internet izvor: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

Please, watch the following film:

Greno, N, and Howard, B, (dir.), “Tangled”, Walt Disney Studios, 2010.

2. Try to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Grimm’s story about?

2. What is the main character like?

3. What can you learn from the story?

4. What is the film about?

5. Is the heroine of the film different from the character of a story by brothers Grimm? Explain.

6. Do we get a different message from the film? How child you define it?

7. Which version is closer to today’s children? Why?

8. What can you, as a nursery teacher, do about children to appeath both socies and to make a first judgment?

3. If you want, write down your observations and interpretation in as essay.