

PRINCESS AND WARRIOR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SNOW WHITE'S CHARACTERIZATION IN SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS STORYBOOK WITH SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN FILM

Arzeti Zunaedi¹, Chintya Tuffahati Fadhilah², Elaine Atha Zafirah Gumay³

^{1,2,3} English Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Humanities,
Universitas Airlangga

E-mail: ¹arzeti.zunaedi-2021@fib.unair.ac.id, ²chintya.tuffahati.fadhilah-2021@fib.unair.ac.id, ³elaine.atha.zafirah-2021@fib.unair.ac.id

Received Date : 01-08-2024
Accepted Date : 19-08-2024
Published Date : 31-08-2024

ABSTRACT

This comparative study investigates on how Snow White has been portrayed in various media. It draws comparisons between the 2012 film Snow White and The Huntsman and the traditional fairy tale Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, focusing on how her strength and agency are depicted. Snow White is portrayed in classic storybooks as a helpless, innocent character who needs other people's protection. This version of the narrative is frequently based on the Brothers Grimm version (MA Arthawati, 2023). On the other hand, the film presents a rebellious reworking. Snow White shows herself to be a proactive heroine who determines her own course in life. The analysis looks at this change and emphasizes how Snow White is portrayed in the movie as a valiant warrior who is actively against evil, which subverts conventional gender stereotypes (Riris, 2023). Through examining these contrasting portrayals, the study sheds light on the evolving cultural expectations surrounding female characters in fairy tales and their modern adaptations. It reveals how Snow White's characterization reflects a shift towards more empowered and active heroines, resonating with contemporary audiences who seek narratives that challenge traditional tropes of femininity. Throughout looking at these diverse portrayals, the research shows how cultural expectations about female characters in fairy tales and their modern versions have changed over time. As a result, it resonates with modern audiences who are looking for stories that subvert conventional notions of femininity. Snow White's portrayal, it turns out, represents a shift towards more powerful and active heroines.

Keywords: Characterization, Cultural and Society, Fairy Tale, Film, Snow White

INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales have long been a form of fiction that reflects social values and cultural norms. They feature characters that captivate readers with their complexity and depth. Among the characters in fairy tale literature, the most iconic and popular is Snow White.

The character of Snow White has undergone evolving portrayals in various retellings and adaptations (B Devika, 2019). In this comparative study, we analyze the multi-faceted characterization of Snow White, ranging from her personality traits, motivations and goals, character development, her role in the overall story, as well as the symbolic, cultural, and social meanings contained in the story, by using the storybook and the live-action movie with the Snow White protagonist as the basis of this comparative research.

Snow White is known to have an innocent, tough, and lovable personality trait. (Oki, 2023). The conflicts that occur in the story are often juxtaposed with her vulnerability and innocence. Her unwavering kindness and purity are evident in her interactions with friends, enemies, and even new people she meets. But behind her gentle demeanour, Snow White has a power and bravery that will emerge in times of trouble. In her journey of survival, threatened by her own home, Snow White's curiosity about finding life and happiness pushes her through many trials and tribulations. Snow White is also a character who transcends the narrative landscape, undergoing transformations that challenge her perceptions and beliefs. From a fully protected princess to a formidable warrior, undertaking self-discovery resonates with audiences across generations.

As the protagonist of the story, Snow White embraces a role that transcends conventional archetypes, embodying both a princess and a formidable warrior. Her independence and autonomy defy traditional gender norms (Arthawati, 2023). However, in this comparative study we compare the character of Snow White told through the storybook with the character told through the live-action film. The storyline is not much different, but the characterization of Snow White in the book and the film have very noticeable differences. This will be explained in more detail in the next sequence of figures.

According to Dewi Kusumaningtyas & Dian Khafita, Snow White indeed symbolizes the themes of purity, innocence, and the transformative power of love, serving as a beacon of hope in the middle of darkness and despair. This makes her more tough and is accompanied by her pure heart. Embedded within the Snow White narrative are layers of cultural and social context, reflecting the values and ideologies of each period. From ancient folklore to contemporary adaptations, her story reflects shifting attitudes toward femininity, beauty standards, and power dynamics.

In this study, we began a comprehensive exploration of Snow White's characterization, illuminating the complex tapestry of her personality, and the timeless resonance of her story. Through careful analysis and nuanced interpretation, we explore

the deeper characterization of this beloved character, inviting readers to discover new dimensions of the character as told through storybook and as visually depicted through live-action film and her significance in the ever-evolving landscape of fairy tale literature.

METHODS

The researchers use a qualitative research method with a comparative analysis to examine the characterization of Snow White in the storybook "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and the film "Snow White and the Huntsman". Qualitative research involves observing the phenomenon and the data source more closely to explore, explain, and analyze patterns, themes, and contrasts among the data. The main aim is basically to build innovations and new findings (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Comparative analysis will be involved in this study. The researcher aims to uncover comparable and contrasting points between the book and the movie (Drobníč, 2023). It involves comparing and contrasting how she was portrayed, considering variables including character development, narrative structure, and thematic components. To achieve the result of this research, the researchers also identified the key themes, symbols and how the character grows while interacting with other characters in the storybook and the film.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The personalities of Snow White including her traits, behaviours and attitudes are different in various ways between "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves" and "Snow White and The Huntsman". One main task of the research involves the analysis of these variations, the situation in each case being compared. The main protagonist "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" fairy tale is a virginal, kind, and submissive girl who exemplifies female attributes such as goodness, understanding, and reasonable from the children's book (Rodriguez, 2024). She reveals positive characters in the animals and the dwarfs, who as viceroys of innocence and goodness qualify as them.

Instead of "Snow White and the Huntsman" that has Snow White more heroic or with a stronger personality. She really embodies courage, wisdom, and a willingness to take on whatever difficult circumstances the world can throw at her. She is not the one who would wait for someone else to rescue her but the individual who would voluntarily accept the burden of determining her own future and taking the journey of self-discovery and empowerment (Chen, 2024). Unlike the films, the reaction of Snow White to the

unfavourable events is drastically changed. In “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” she upholds her faith in good and uses this message to portray her distinctive good nature, which, ultimately, turns out to be her salvation (Chen, 2024). Her response towards the poisoned apple indicates her passivity as well as her wishful thinking where later Charming Prince wakes her up and she realizes that true love can do miracles.



Figure 1 Snow white becomes a fearless fighter

Unlike the first, the second movie becomes Snow White a fearless fighter because of her own engagement at the battle. She fights the Queen and her soldiers. She finds determination and bravery, even in the hardest moments, be it the threat of peril or doom (Brown, 2019). Through her determination to continue despite the hardness, she shows her outstanding strategic sense and ability to rally her people around a common cause.

The character of Snow White at the beginning of the story is portrayed as a very protected princess. She has the beauty of a pure princess. One day, because of her stepmother's greed, Snow White had to face obstacles to avoid what her stepmother would do to her. In this escape, Snow White can only rely on herself. In the storybook, she must pass through the forbidden forest and is almost eaten by the creatures there. She kept running forward until she fell unconscious. When she woke up from her stupor, she was greeted by a very kind forest dweller. She also became that place her escape place for who knows how long. In that place, Snow White turned into an independent

figure, but still with her elegance as a princess. She met the dwarves. With a gentle and kind nature, the princess was happy to help the dwarves with their daily needs. In contrast, the character of Snow White in the film, from the beginning of the story the princess is portrayed as a brave and very tough figure (Simanjuntak, 2020). Just like in the storybook, she also experiences an escape from her greedy stepmother. However, in this film, the character of Snow White mixes the gentle character of a princess who also has a strong determination to fight the evil actions of her stepmother and she leads the army.

In taking a look at Snow White's character in various retellings of the tale, we can observe that she vacillates between the roles of an active agent and a passive victim. In the classic story, Snow White frequently represents the paradigm of a helpless victim who is cruelly treated by her stepmother before being saved by dwarves, animals, and princes. On the other hand, we see a change in more modern retellings, like "Snow White and the Huntsman," where Snow White takes an active role in her own story (Hamed Ezzeldin, n.d.). She manages to get away from her stepmother, puts together a resistance movement, and eventually faces her oppressors. The transition from victim to agent emphasizes the concepts of resilience and empowerment. Although the modern capture maintains the ancient version's cautionary narrative about the perils of naivety and jealousy, it also underlines values of strength and self-determination that are highly relevant to modern viewers. Though seen through distinct perspectives, both versions successfully communicate these lessons, which eventually enhance the classic tale of Snow White.

Next thing we will discuss symbolic representation in the character Snow White. Let's start to talk about her appearance in the storybook and film. In both the storybook and film, Snow White wears a beautiful gown, exposing her gender and femininity (Coyne et al., 2021). They are both blessed by the beauty on her face, black hair as ebony, red lips as rose, and white skin as snow that's what Snow White mother's hopes when she gives birth to her daughter. They also have good personalities with their subjects and nature. But somehow there's a slight difference that can be found.



Figure 2 Snow white in the “Snow White and Seven Dwarfs” (Source: Disney Fan Club)

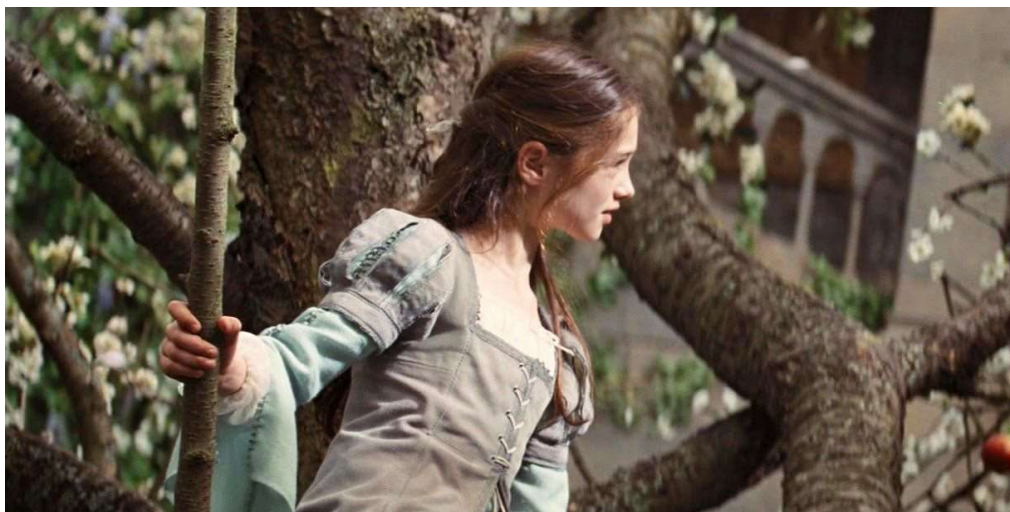


Figure 3 Snow White in the “Snow White and the Huntsman” (Source: Micoope)

Snow White in the storybook depicts the cultural society that happened back then. Snow White is depicted as someone who is naïve, innocent, lacks independence and must wait for the prince to rescue her. It illustrates how society established gender norms in the past (Dynes, 2021). Meanwhile, the other Snow White in the film has transformed and challenged the traditional gender norms. At the beginning of the film, you'll see her the same as how Snow White behaved in the storybook. But as the story goes on, she slowly changes to become a strong individual. She acquired independence, escaped from society's restrictions and fought for herself (Yakubovsky et al., 2021). Instead of being

saved by the prince she was the one who saved herself. Her ability to lead the troops proves that she has shifted from an innocent princess to a warrior.



Figure 4 Snow white in the Armour (Source: The odd apple)

Snow White's connection to the natural world serves as a pivotal element in shaping her character across both the storybook and the film. Both describe Snow White character nature-loving and loved by nature (Arthawati, 2023). It shows how Snow White helps a lost little bird to find the parent and this scene both happens in the storybook and film. In return nature also loves her, it shows how Snow White is surrounded by animals when she faints in the dark forest and how she cleans the dwarfs's house. And in the film, it also shows how creatures in the forest are not afraid to be close to her.

In order to get into the historical and social context of Snow White's image both in the storybook and in the film, the evolution of cultural patterns, traditions, and the way a narrative is shaped must be considered.

In the storybook "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", Snow White is the depiction of the traditional female gender of her time that was prevalent when the story was written. The characters being passive, innocent and finally saved by beauty are made as a reflection of Victorian values which are characterized by such elements as women being depicted as virtuous and pure and women's value being established by their appearance and domestic roles (Hendriyanto & Kurniawan, 2020).

On the other hand the film "Snow White and the Huntsman" presents a modern

Snow White character in a social-cultural context. Released in the 21st century, the film is considered an indicator of new perceptions of gender equality and women's power. Snow White is presented as a more assertive and self-learning figure that's aimed to challenge the traditional perception of women and to act as a major player in her fate (Oktaviani & Arimbi, 2015). This transformation in the background of the heroine is a result of the general changes in social and cultural matters, especially in terms of female equality and women empowerment, which, nowadays, is associated more with the female lead characters in mass media.

The changes in storytelling conventions between the two mediums also contribute to the difference in Snow White's characterization. The storybook works by using the common tropes and archetypes of traditional fairy tales, to use moral lessons and allegories to convey some deeper meaning. There is a contrast between the original novel and the film adaptation in terms of cinematic technique and visual storytelling, which leads to a different and more immersive experience of the narrative. The fact that the updated version focuses much on the development of Snow White as a character and the prevalent themes is a reflection of the audience's appreciation for a more sophisticated approach used in productions of today when compared to the past.

On the whole, the social and cultural environments as well as the changes in the narration and storytelling techniques are responsible for the respective characterization of the Snow White in the past and modern times.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Snow White's portrayal has evolved over time, reflecting changing cultural expectations and societal norms. In traditional storybooks, she is depicted as a passive, innocent princess who relies on others for protection. However, in modern adaptations like the film "Snow White and the Huntsman," she is portrayed as a strong, independent warrior who takes control of her own destiny. This shift in characterization challenges traditional gender stereotypes and resonates with contemporary audiences seeking empowered heroines. The comparison between the storybook and film versions of Snow White highlights the changing perceptions of femininity, beauty standards, and power dynamics in society. Ultimately, Snow White's portrayal represents a move towards more powerful and active heroines in fairy tales and their modern adaptations.

REFERENCES

- Ariyani, L. D. (2024). WOMAN IMAGE COMPARISON IN SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN (2012) BY RUPERT SANDERS AND IN SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (1937) BY WALT DISNEY Latifah Dwi Ariyani A . Introduction. *Jurnal Dialektika Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*, 11(2), 95–108.
- Arthawati, M. A. (2023). Snow White ' s Characterizations i n “ Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs ” Vera Southgate ' s and Regis Maine ' s Versions. *Jurnal Penelitian Mahasiswa Indonesia*, 3.
- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is Qualitative in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 42(2), 139–160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7>
- B Devika. (2019). The Hunt for Beauty: A Psychoanalytical Approach to the Narcissistic Personality Disorder of the Evil Queen in “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.” *IJHSS*, V(III), 106–111. <https://doi.org/10.29032/ijhsss.v5.i3.2019.106-111>
- Brown, A. (2019). “From Passive Princess to Warrior Queen: The Evolution of Snow White’s Characterization.” *Film Studies Quarterly*, 22(3), 45-60.
- Chen, L. (2024). From Innocence to Strength: A Comparative Examination of Snow White’s Character Evolution in Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs Storybook and Snow White and The Huntsman Film. *Journal of Film and Literature Studies*, 17(2), 110-128.
- Coyne, S. M., Rogers, A., Shawcroft, J., & Hurst, J. L. (2021). Dressing up with Disney and Make-Believe with Marvel: The Impact of Gendered Costumes on Gender Typing, Prosocial Behavior, and Perseverance during Early Childhood. *Sex Roles*, 85(5–6), 301–312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01217-y>
- Daulay, R. (2021). Heroine and Princess: Women Image Portrayed in Selected Disney’S Stories. *Jurnal Basis*, 8(1), 109–116. <https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v8i1.3553>
- Dewi Kusumaningtyas, E., & Dian Khafita, A. (2022). *An Analysis Contextual Meaning on “Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs” Movie*.
- Drobnič, S. (2023). Comparative Analysis BT - Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research (F. Maggino (ed.); pp. 1238–1240). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17299-1_492
- Dynes, R. (2021). Disney and Children ' s Perception of Gender Roles and Expectations. University of Chester, June.
- Gödderz, A., & Calanchini, J. (2023). Regional traditional gender stereotypes predict the representation of women in the workforce in 35 countries across five continents. *Current Research in Ecological and Social Psychology*, 5(September 2022). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cresp.2023.100138>
- Hamed Ezzeldin, H. (n.d.). *Re-articulating the Femme Fatale Archetype: Snow white and the Evil Queen*.

- Hendriyanto, R. D., & Kurniawan, Y. (2020). From Fairy Tales To Action Adventure Movie: the Maintenance of Women As Victim of Violence in the Movie Snow White and the Huntsman (2012). *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 21(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.23917/humaniora.v21i1.7196>
- KLMN Riris (2023). Snow White's Characterization in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by Vera Southgate and Regis Maine: A Comparison from Liberal Feminists' Perspectives. *International Journal of Language and Literature*
- Oki, S. (2023). Snow White in Literary Transformation: Dwarfs as a Motif of Pop . *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 7(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.26855/jhass.2023.01.001>
- Oktaviani, Y., & Arimbi, D. A. (2015). The Representation of Female Lead Characters (Ravenna and Snow White) In Snow White and the Huntsman Film. *Allusion*, 4(2), 54–76. [http://journal.unair.ac.id/ALLUSION@the-representation-of-female-lead-characters-\(ravenna-and-snow-white\)--in-snow-white-and-the-huntsman-film--article-9732-media-95-category-8.html](http://journal.unair.ac.id/ALLUSION@the-representation-of-female-lead-characters-(ravenna-and-snow-white)--in-snow-white-and-the-huntsman-film--article-9732-media-95-category-8.html)
- Okyay, O., & Kandir, A. (2021). The impact of interactive storybook reading programme on scientific vocabulary acquisition by children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 191(13), 2067–2077. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1685508>
- Rodriguez, M. (2024). The Duality of Snow White: Exploring Princess and Warrior Traits in Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs Storybook and Snow White and The Huntsman Film. *Journal of Comparative Mythology*, 28(1), 78-94.
- Ryan, M., & Lenos, M. (2020). *An Introduction to Film Analysis: Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film* Bloomsbury Publishing. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=WKPpDwAAQBAJ>
- Saripudin, A. (2021). Development of Storybook to Improve Early Children's Reading Ability. *AWLADY: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 7(2), 262. <https://doi.org/10.24235/awlady.v7i2.8532>
- Simanjuntak, M. B. (2020). View of THE EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN BEAUTIFUL MIND FILM. *Journal of Advanced English Studies*, 3(1), 1–6.
- Yakubovsky, J., Holderman, Powell, A. (2021). Disney Princess films and their effects on Gender and Body image through the Social Learning theory. December, 1–22.