

Power Relationships in Rumpelstiltskin: A Textual Comparison of a Traditional and a Reconstructed Fairy Tale

Jane E. Kelley

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Abstract Reconstructed fairy tales provide a different point of view and challenge the assumptions of a common set of values; for that reason, these stories provide a medium in which to examine power relationships in texts by applying a critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, forthcoming, 2008, *A critical multicultural analysis of children's literature: Mirrors, windows and doors*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum) to identify and analyze power relations of *Rumpelstiltskin* (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1987, New York: Bantam) and *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Stanley, 1997, New York: Morrow Junior Books). Specifically, this study examines how power is exercised on a continuum: domination, collusion, resistance, and agency. Findings indicate that by identifying and questioning text ideologies, critical readers can consider how texts maintain, counteract, or promote alternative systemic power structures.

Keywords Folk literature · Power · Ideology · Critical multicultural analysis · Rumpelstiltskin

It is a common misconception that children's literature is nonpolitical and thus absent of power relationships. The issue of power, in its various forms, is often a central theme in stories written for children. Scholars (e.g., MacLeod, 1995) have long understood that the purpose of early children's literature, such as Puritan literature, was explicit and direct dissemination of ideology. Moreover, literature is also subversive in nature, that is, implicit and indirect. In *Should We Burn Babar?*, Herbert Kohl (1995) argues that power relationships are indeed embedded or hidden in children's literature consequently promoting political ideology: "Power relationships also provide examples and models for children of social and moral behavior" (pp. 4–5). That is, literature suggests ways of acting and behaving.

Fairy tales, a popular genre with children, are not exempt from political power relationships because they provide guidelines for mores, values, gender, and power in a

J. E. Kelley (✉)
Washington State University, P.O. Box 642132, Pullman, WA 99164-2132, USA
e-mail: jekelley@wsu.edu

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what guidelines?
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civilizing process (Zipes, 1994, p. 8). Storytellers reproduce fairy tales either by duplication or by revision. "Duplicate" fairy tales copy the original fairy tales without questioning or challenging the beliefs, customary habits, or attitudes of the original tale, thereby reinforcing dominant modes of thinking. "Revised" fairy tales re-envision beliefs and attitudes. "As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader's views of traditional patterns, images, and codes" (p. 9). Thus, fairy tales provide narrative tactics that can either promulgate correct behavior or question social practices as dictated by the ruling class (p. 11).

Although some folk literature has been altered and changed to question social beliefs, many literary critics and educators believe traditional literature (myths, legends, fables, folktales, and fairy tales) aimed at children communicates a universal set of values and beliefs. "Traditional literature helps children understand the world and identify with universal human struggles" (Norton & Norton, 2007, p. 12). Because of the perceived universality of folk literature, many articles, books, and curriculum guides suggest the use of folktales to promote multicultural awareness. Folk and fairy tales continue to be disseminated because they purport to or are seen to present a rich source of information about cultures and provide metaphors for modern day literature.

The crux of the issue is: If folk and fairy tales are supposed to convey universal truths, or validate the past, why do storytellers change the stories? When a tale is reconstructed, the ideology, or social belief, is also reconstructed, thereby bringing the question of universal truths to the forefront. Using a critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, forthcoming, 2008), this article compares the power relations of a traditional fairy tale, *Rumpelstiltskin* (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1987), and a reconstructed version, *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Stanley, 1997), to highlight power relations embedded in a fairytale.

Critical Multicultural Analysis

Critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, forthcoming, 2008) is a theoretical framework. *Critical* in this sense means to analyze how power works. *Multicultural* indicates ways to consider the historical and sociopolitical dynamics that influence social practices. *Analysis* means to examine how cultural characters transpire and proliferate (Rudman & Botelho, 2005, p. 11). A critical multicultural analysis is an approach that helps to identify oppressive social practices. Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman assert the need "to move toward an understanding that acknowledges the existence and importance of culture in all literature. Literature itself is not multicultural; rather culture resides in all literature. People must learn to take a critical, knowledgeable stance about culture" (Rudman, personal communication, October 24, 2006). Further, critical multicultural analysis provides educators and scholars ways to re-imagine how social practices may become socially just.

Botelho and Rudman's work evolved from Michel Foucault's (1995, 1972) essays about power because an understanding power dynamics is essential to a critical multicultural analysis of children's literature. In describing notions of power, or "*analytic of power*," Foucault (1980) asserts that in order to understand how power is rationalized in the present, one must learn how power existed in history (p. 242). He argues, "power in the substantive sense, '*le pouvoir*,' doesn't exist" (p. 198). That is to say, a person does not own power; rather power, to some extent, entails organized hierarchal relations that are enabled and maintained through *micro-relations* and can be

provoked from the top downwards or from below to above (pp. 198–201). Botelho (2004) contends that Foucault is important to critical multicultural analysis

...because he argues that we [society] create discourses as much as they create us. It is within this discursive grid that we learn about how we may or may not access power, how to exercise this power as well as how power is exercised on us (p. 75).

In addition to Foucault, many theoretical constructs inform critical multicultural analysis,¹ such as the contradiction, construction, and function of texts (Parker, 1999); discourse as a social practice (Gee, 2001); discursive threads (Rudd, 2000); ideology in children's literature (Hollindale, 1988; Stephens, 1992); subjectivity (Weedon, 1997); dialogical relationships (Bakhtin, 1981); and self-reflexivity and agency (Davies, 2000). Thus, critical multicultural analysis is a multi-layered lens that encourages readers to read "toward a sociopolitical imagination and social change" (Botelho, 2004, p. 94).

A critical multicultural analysis helps readers to unpack power relationships, and that power can be examined on a continuum: domination, collusion, resistance, and agency. Rudman asserts that power

can be detected in almost all that we see: domination (or oppression, as I prefer to call it) is the extreme negative use of power. We can recognize its use in literature and note how it interacts with other forms of power. We are particularly interested in collusion because this is a form of power that is often masked, even though it is invidious and dangerous. Resistance grows out of the recognition that oppression can be overcome by various means, even by seemingly powerless people, and eventually it is possible to achieve agency if resistance is consistently applied and appreciated (Rudman, personal communication, November 8, 2006).

In sum, domination is *power over* someone or something. Collusion is internalized oppression that is either conscious or unconscious. Resistance is the conscious effort to challenge oppressive practices. Agency is *power with* someone or something (Botelho and Rudman, forthcoming, 2008).

Text Beneficiaries

When critically analyzing texts, it is important to identify "whose interests are served by such representations and such readings" (Morgan, 1997, p. 2). At the onset, critical readers need to determine who benefits from a 'dominant' reading of a text. When authors write, they usually have a particular audience in mind. Also, either consciously or unconsciously, authors maintain an ideology that they want to promote. Consequently, the ideology benefits someone. For example, writers of feminist fairy tales depict women in assertive and independent roles. This type of representation benefits women who want to be viewed as equals and/or not as the submissive gender. For the purpose of this study, I will use the term "text beneficiaries" to identify the people, or the cultural institutions, whose interests are served by a text's ideologies. It is important to identify which characters benefit and how, since this portrayal sends clear messages to children about how society works.

¹ For a thorough explanation of critical multicultural analysis of children's literature, please see Maria José Botelho's (2004) dissertation.

How Do Characters Benefit? How are Characters Disadvantaged?

To say that a character benefits from various types of power requires descriptors to help identify ways to benefit. Benefit means “something that promotes well-being,” and “well-being” is “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2004). I will use these indicators (i.e., happy, healthy, prosperous) as a starting list of how people benefit. However, since power needs to be examined in a sociopolitical context, it is important to add social and political indicators of benefits, as well. Accordingly, when a person is happy, this is an emotional benefit. When a person is healthy, this constitutes a physical benefit. When a person has financial security and is able to secure material resources, such as food, clothing, housing, and entertainment, this is an economic benefit. When a person has companionship and the respect of others, this is a social benefit. And when a person is in a decision-making position, this is a political benefit.

Just as characters can benefit emotionally, physically, economically, socially, and politically, they can also be disadvantaged in these same ways. Therefore, it is important to examine how characters fail to receive benefits where others simultaneously obtain benefits. Thus, the indicators are binary. By highlighting the binary indicators, I will illuminate inequities that have an impact on the characters portrayed in literature.

A Critical Multicultural Analysis of *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter*

In this section, I complete a textual comparison of *Rumpelstiltskin* (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/1987) and *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Stanley, 1997) by applying a critical multicultural analysis approach. First, I examine the characters' actions in regard to how power is exercised by identifying the power on a continuum of domination through agency (see Table 1). Second, I will identify which characters benefit from or are disadvantaged by the power that is exercised. Third, I examine how the benefits and disadvantages occur. Following each analysis of the versions is a discussion about implications for society on this four-point spectrum.

Rumpelstiltskin by the Brothers Grimm (1812)

Rumpelstiltskin, a “rags to riches” story first recorded by the Grimm Brothers nearly two centuries ago, is a problematic fairytale. Rumpelstiltskin is a tiny man who can spin straw into gold and saves the life of the poor miller's daughter. In turn, the miller's daughter promises to give Rumpelstiltskin her first-born child when she is queen. A year later, when Rumpelstiltskin returns and demands that the queen fulfill her promise, he is moved by her tears and grants her three days to guess his name. On the eve of the third

Table 1 How characters exercise power

Story	Domination	Collusion	Resistance	Agency
<i>Rumpelstiltskin</i> by Grimms	King	Daughter Rumpelstiltskin		
<i>Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter</i> by Stanley	King		Daughter Rumpelstiltskin Villagers	Hope

night, the queen's trusty servant spies Rumpelstiltskin in the woods as he proclaims his name. The next day the queen 'guesses' his name, she is able to keep her child, and Rumpelstiltskin flies away on his cooking spoon. In some versions he stomps himself into the earth, never to be seen again. Thus, all is well in the kingdom. Or is it? In this folktale, the poor miller's daughter, through deceit and renegeing on her promise, becomes queen, enters the world of wealth and gains social power. What are the messages that this story sends to children?

Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter by Diane Stanley (1997)

Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter begins like the traditional Grimms' Rumpelstiltskin folktale; however, on the third night of straw spinning the story takes a 'spin' in another direction. When Rumpelstiltskin bargains for the firstborn child because he wishes to be a father, the miller's daughter offers him an alternative solution. She affirms that she is fond of short men, likes his ideas on parenting and prefers to marry Rumpelstiltskin and not the king. Years later, they have a daughter, and together they have a quiet life on a farm. Rumpelstiltskin only spins straw into gold when the family needs money, and one day when the daughter buys supplies in town, someone recognizes the familiar gold spirals and informs the king. The king, thinking that the girl can spin straw into gold, sequesters the daughter and locks her in a room full of straw. Rather than request help from her father, Rumpelstiltskin, the daughter tricks the king into using some of his money to make more gold. She convinces the king to give money to the farmers to buy seeds. Months later, the king returns to the fields and sees gold everywhere (fields of golden wheat), and the farmers shower the king with fresh bread and goodies as a token of their appreciation. The story continues in this manner, and the king is so pleased with the admiration of his subjects that he announces he will make Rumpelstiltskin's daughter his wife; however, the girl refuses his pseudo proposal. She asks to be appointed Prime Minister instead, and the king grants her this position. In the end, the reader learns that the girl's name is Hope. Hence, her name symbolizes her role in the story.

The Power of Domination

The power of domination includes attributes such as "dehumanization, victimization, imposition from external sources, unequal power based on race, class, and gender" (Botelho & Rudman, forthcoming, 2008). Domination is conscious when it involves attempts to keep or gain power in deceitful and/or abusive ways. Lies, physical *power over*, coercion, and manipulation all contribute to and are part of dominant power implementation and maintenance. That is, domination is a conscious, intentional act for the purpose of gaining power over others. Further, domination is unconscious when a person takes his/her power for granted or assumes it to be an expected norm.

The quintessential example of de facto power is the medieval concept of the Divine Right of Kings. For centuries, clergy reinforced the notion that the king is chosen by God through the concept of the Divine Right. The power of the king usually went unchallenged, not only by the people in the kingdom, but also by the king himself. Through the clergy's teaching of Divine Right, the rulers truly believed that God had chosen them. In both the Grimms' *Rumpelstiltskin* and Stanley's *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter*, the character of the king has dominant power. Further, both kings are

what messages does Rumpelstiltskin convey to children?

portrayed as selfish or greedy. Despite their demeanor and intent, the kings exercise the power of domination; however, both the kings represent power in two different modes: (1) unjust and evil king, and (2) king who transforms.

The Unjust and the Evil King

The Grimms' king is unjust, evil, and greedy. He exploits his position in the hierarchy by utilizing de facto power to enforce imprisonment and to demand labor, which allows him to acquire additional wealth and add to his stores of gold. Even though the king's desire is iniquitous, he does not experience any negative consequences. He is known to be greedy, but by Divine Right, his actions are not questioned as morally wrong. He simply accepts the status quo of the hierarchical system because that is the way of things.

It is important to note that the king does not exhibit today's leadership qualities. Rather, his greediness, evilness, and unjust practices, are part of his cardboard character; his death threat and his greed are not considered menacing, just part of his role as king. The reader is able to take at face value the king's greed and immorality.

The Grimms' king is able to maintain benefits and simultaneously escape retribution for his greediness. It is important to note that during the time that the Grimms' version was set in print, Europe endured the French Revolution, and the confederate nations of Prussia were trying to establish themselves as one nation, modern Germany. Although the Divine Right of power was in extreme question at the time, the Grimms' version reinforces a king's de facto power.

On one hand, the Grimms viewed their purpose as recording folk literature to preserve their culture and to unite a newly formed nation. On the other hand, their duplication of the tale just reinforces outdated ideals and can add to the confusion of social justice for children. Despite the fact that American children are taught democratic ideals, they often fantasize about becoming a prince or princess regardless of the implications attached to such a monarchy.

The King Who Transforms

Kings, by definition, are born with power just because of their lineage. This fact does not necessarily indicate in any way how kings will govern their kingdom. Sometimes, kings can change during their reign. The story *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Stanley, 1997) depicts a king who changes, not because of a personal reformation or enlightenment, but because of the ingenuity of another character.

The king in *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* exercises the power of domination by commanding the miller's daughter, Meredith, to spin straw into gold. Although Meredith escapes his clutches, years later he encounters her daughter, Hope, who he assumes possesses the same talent of spinning straw into gold. Again, he exploits his position in the hierarchy by imprisoning Hope. Rather than depend on her father, Rumpelstiltskin, to save her, Hope convinces the king to give the farmers gold coins so that they may "grow" more gold for him.

At the end of the story, the king makes Hope the prime minister, thereby taking the first step toward a major systemic structural change. In her new position, Hope is able to help the people. However, the king continues to maintain wealth. He has the money and power to make all decisions that affect the people in the kingdom. A closer look at *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Stanley, 1997) reveals that the king is not consciously resisting the status quo, nor is his munificence to the farmers an act of goodwill, per se.

Simply put, Hope dupes him into circulating his wealth. He provides the farmers with economic resources, but with the purpose of increasing his capital. He offers the gold only as an investment because he thinks it will make him more gold. Further, he relishes the adulation from the peasants.

Although the peasants now benefit physically (food and clothing) from the king's generosity, they are certainly not yet his equal. Supreme rulers have advantages that are not available to the public. It is important to remember that the power of domination indicates an "inequality of voice, participation, decision-making, and access" (Botelho & Rudman, forthcoming, 2008). The king's subjects are dependent on the king for resources, such as food, shelter, and protection. They will need to act accordingly to stay in his good graces. If peasants speak their minds, the king will not act favorably toward them. A king may occasionally share resources and speak to his subjects with respect, but unless the hierarchical structure changes, the fact remains that the king's people lack equality.

At the beginning of the story, the king benefits politically, economically, physically, and socially; however, he is not happy. The transformation of the king's emotional well-being is demonstrated by the illustrations. At the beginning of the story, the king does not smile. By the end of the story, the king's expression changes, and he is shown smiling. Thus, the king does find happiness. He discovers joy in the respect and gratitude he receives from his subjects.

In sum, although the king changes, he doesn't transform himself; instead, he is transformed. It is not until Hope intervenes that the king changes, and he creates a fairer environment for his people. The king may help people in need, but he does not abdicate any power in the structure of the system. Readers may wonder what it will take to change a character. The king changes for the betterment of others, in a superficial way, in order to benefit himself. In *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter* (Stanley, 1997) readers learn that the person in a position of dominant power needs a *waking up*, a *critical incident* (Harro, 2000, p. 464) or a catalyst in order to change, contribute to change, allow change, or even only support change. These catalysts are analogous to the process of education and evolution. In other words, people transform themselves, or are transformed, based on educational experiences that ensue over time.

Collusion

The power of collusion either is when a person cooperates with dominating power, or does nothing to disrupt it. Collusion is complex because a person can be conscious or unconscious of oppressive practices (Botelho & Rudman, forthcoming, 2008). Collusive power is conscious when a person has knowledge of oppressive practices, and the person chooses to do nothing about it. Power is unconscious when a person internalizes or believes the oppressive practices to be morally right, or assumes things are simply that. A person may practice collusive power to obtain dominant power, to uphold the status quo, or merely to survive. Further, a person may practice collusive power to obtain a subject position that leads to resistance. The person may strategically "play the game" in order to gain and maintain many types of resources. Once a position of influence is obtained, the person practicing collusive power will have the ability to initiate agent actions to bring about social justice. In essence, this type of collusive power by the protagonist is considered necessary in order to eventually work against oppressive practices.

Supreme rulers have advantages not available to the public

A person may 'play the game', strategically, in order to gain and maintain many types of resources.

The Silent Daughter

In the Grimms' version, the miller's daughter gains access to the throne by remaining silent about the help she receives from Rumpelstiltskin. Therefore, by remaining silent about how the gold straw is spun, the miller's daughter exercises collusive power. Further, to save herself from death, she agrees to give the baby to Rumpelstiltskin. The miller's daughter is either not conscious of the power she demonstrates, or she does not realize it to be power but rather sees it as a survival technique. In either event, she is a victim of circumstances and simply tries to stay alive by "playing the game."

The Grimms' version reinforces the benefits of the power of collusion. The miller's daughter/queen uses silence to ensure benefits. By becoming queen, she has financial stability, which thereby enhances physical and social rewards. Concerning emotional benefits, the daughter is described as happy. Moreover, the daughter becomes queen and will have political advantage, something not typically available to daughters of millers. The lesson learned is that silence can bring good fortune.

Silence can
bring good
fortune

The Power of Resistance

The power of resistance requires a conscious effort. It also involves questioning, which evokes challenges of oppressive practices. Therefore to resist is to question oppressive practices. A person may demonstrate resistive power for personal reasons (e.g., divorce an abusive husband) or for societal reasons (e.g., Montgomery Bus Boycott). Resistive power is not reactive; it must be conscious and planned.

daughter
resists...
in Grimm
version?

Economic Resources

Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter (Stanley, 1997) is a story about resistance. At first, the miller's daughter, Meredith, practices the power of collusion by being silent about Rumpelstiltskin's talent of spinning straw. When the king promises that he will make her his queen, she chooses instead to take Rumpelstiltskin's offer and elopes with him. By rejecting the king, Meredith challenges fairy tale discourse of what makes a good husband; rather than marry a man for money, she has a deep sense of morality, and she chooses love over money and political power.

Although Meredith and Rumpelstiltskin resist the dominant structure, they do depend on the magical resources of Rumpelstiltskin to help her escape the king's imprisonment. Moreover, Meredith and Rumpelstiltskin rely on magic to obtain and maintain their wealth, or at least standard of living. The lesson learned is that resistance takes economic resources or a little magic.

The Power of Agency

The power of agency is a conscious action for the purpose of social justice. It is ongoing and continuous. Agency is constructive, as contrasted with resistance, which is power that acts against, or objects to, oppressive practices. Botelho and Rudman (forthcoming, 2008) describe agency as "initiation and *power with*...all inclusive...understanding...[and] conscious" (op sit). *Power with* is the contrary of *power over*; it means to share the power. To demonstrate agency in this sense is to take an

active role in ending oppressive practices, which includes suggesting alternative practices that are fair. Showing powerful new world where people share power and making decisions that are consistent with social justice are also ways to demonstrate agency.

Collective Action

Hope, the title character in *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter*, together with the people of the village, works to create change; no one acts alone. They were provoked to resist dominant power because they were starving. The characters in this story provide the foundation for change. The reader senses the transformation of the king and the collective action of the villagers and thus anticipates the storyline will be positive and socially just.

In *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter*, Hope is a superb example of a character who exercises agency. Hope's parents raised her in a certain way. They taught her a set of values and beliefs that influence the decisions she makes. When the king's guards transport Hope to the castle, she is heartbroken by what she observes along the way: "Everywhere the fields lay barren. Sickly children stood begging beside the road. Nobody in the kingdom had anything anymore, because the king had it all" (unpaged). Hope exercises the power of agency by imagining, then putting into action, what is within her power to help the people of the kingdom.

Although she employs deceitful actions to persuade the king to give away some of his gold coins, her intentions are morally just and so are her actions. She changes the discourse of power by asking to be Prime Minister, and she proves to the king that sharing (or investing) his money will be beneficial to him and subsequently benefits the people of the kingdom. By exercising the power of agency, Hope governs the kingdom so that everyone benefits and works toward *power with*.

Action and Sociopolitical Consciousness

Hope portrays a sociopolitical consciousness. Although the power of agency involves empathetic and humanistic qualities, to fully demonstrate the power of agency, a person must go beyond the cliché and beyond recognizing stereotypes. The underpinning of the power of agency is a firm conviction about social justice and the action of working toward *power with*. Social justice inspires the power of agency and to use agency is to make a positive difference in the world. Although Hope is not part of the dominant power structure, she works as an advocate for the peasants, while simultaneously showing the king how to be a better, more successful, leader of the people. She convinces the king to share just a little of his wealth. Consequently, it is she who acquires resources and thus is able to help the farmers become independent.

Conclusion about Agency

Hope's actions are exemplar of Paulo Freire's (1970/2000) teachings; in order to change the hierarchical structure, the change needs to come from the bottom and happens through grass roots efforts. Freire (1970/2000) asserts that the oppressed need to liberate themselves and not rely on the oppressors to do it for them.

This, then, is the greatest humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well...Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both (p. 44).

Like Hope, all agents need the help of others, both economically and influentially. Change must be a bottom up, grass root movement, and is obtainable only with the help of agents. Agency, although initiated by Hope, is a collective action. She relies on the farmers and grannies to do their part in assuring change. The farmers' and grannies' efforts and perseverance is as much a part of the structural change as Hope's action to secure and convince the king to share resources.

Conclusion about Power in Children's Literature

Power relationships are prominent themes in children's literature, which are especially evident in both the traditional and reconstructed versions of Tale Type 500. Teachers, parents, and librarians must examine the literature they have available to young readers in order to show power relationships because stories are much more than moral teaching tools. They reflect society and culture by showing different ways of being.

Children and young adults need to learn strategies to examine texts themselves. Books and stories should serve as discussion starters, opening the door to learning. Books can elicit empathy so that readers—as Hope empathizes with the peasants—can experience empathy too. Evidence of empathy, combined with a critical incident, establishes the foundation for change. Thus, a sociopolitical consciousness and the courage to act are necessary components for instituting social justice.

Readers of children's literature (teachers, librarians, administrators) must learn to apply critical multicultural analysis, as exemplified in this essay, to texts in order that they are better equipped to analyze and critique books for children. Although traditional analyses of folk tales and fairy tales can disclose the meaning of the text, as well as unconscious desires or stereotypes, studies are needed to demonstrate how some people or cultural institutions benefit from the dominant ideologies portrayed in these tales. By examining the actions of the characters in varied adaptations, readers will understand how power benefits and/or disadvantages characters and will re-imagine texts and social practices that are socially just.

Most traditional folk tales and fairy tales are predictable. Tales available to children in American society typically entail a battle between good and evil, with good emerging as triumphant. Who wins the battle and who loses the battle are notions that form a justification for power. The distribution and maintenance of power rely on cultural norms. Cultural norms are those ideologies that render themselves commonsensical and give the idea that that is just the way things are supposed to be. When these ideologies are not questioned, the distribution of power becomes a cultural norm. Power is embedded in all aspects of society, including literary texts. By analyzing texts using critical multicultural analysis readers can consider how texts maintain, counteract, or promote alternative systemic power structures.

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