

Is It Time to Rewrite Fairy Tales?



My daughter is two and a half. She recently received a book called 'Snow White' that seems to be encouraging her to enter the "princess phase" -- as many moms seem to call it. As I was reading to my daughter; "Snow White and her prince had recently been married, and they lived happily ever after at the castle," I realised that from a very young age, we are programmed to believe that life is happy and carefree.

Earlier this year, I was visiting my mom and she brought out a bunch of old books from her attic from when we were children. One of them was an original Brothers Grimm fairy tale book. As I skimmed through the pages, I was shocked by some of the stories. People were dying, drowning and hurting each other. And I thought, "*Wow, I can't believe mom used to read this to us.*" The modern-day parents would have completely abandoned this story book as it comes with negativity— the suffering and cruelty of humans. When I'm reading to my daughter about a princess living happily with her prince, and it struck me: We have completely sanitised our children's stories and it's going to be detrimental to their growth as they're conditioned to think life is good all the time.

Sometimes, people do disagree and they hurt each other. Are we hoping that if we hide this information from our children, they will not argue or fight with each other? It's in our basic human nature to fight, to be sad, hurtful, angry and scared. When we censor our children's stories to exclude the suffering that is inherent in the human condition, we isolate our children to the real world and they might not have the ability to deal with the obstacles or the compassion to help others suffering.

If everyone is living happily once they find their prince, what does that tell young women about how their relationships "should" be? If women are valued for looking pretty and for finding a prince rather than for hard work, resilience, courage and powerful vulnerability, what is that telling our children -- sons and daughters -- about how women "should" behave and what they "should" focus on? Hence, when reading any fairy tales, maybe we should just change the storyline a little for the world shouldn't be that patriarchal.



How far do you understand the writer's point of view? Match the correct explanation to each of the paragraphs.

Paragraph 1

The writer compared Brothers Grimm story book which events closely associated with real life to the fairy tale that she read to her child. She realised that the fairy tales today omitted all the sufferings of life and would be affecting children's growth negatively.

Paragraph 2

It is natural to feel negative emotions. When we are too protective of our children by isolating all the downs and evils of life, they don't get to experience the real world and might have difficulty to cope with problems or the loving heart to help others with problems.

Paragraph 3

When the writer was reading the story to her child, she realised that from a very young age, they were taught to think that life should be happy without any worries.

Paragraph 4

The writer questioned how badly these fairy tales taught young men and women to behave and women to think how a relationship should be. She suggested parents to change the storyline a little as she believed the world should not see men as heroes and girls should be saved by them.



Read the view of the writer. Choose no more than 5 words from the text for each answer.

1. Based on paragraph 1, what have fairy tales taught us to think about life?
Life should be _____.
2. The horrifying _____ belonged to the writer and her siblings.
3. How did the writer feel when she turned the pages of her old story book?
She was _____.
4. How did fairy tale authors censor children's stories?
By excluding _____.
5. The writer thinks authors shouldn't hide negativity from children because it is natural to _____ and to feel and embrace negative emotions.
6. How can parents play a role to create gender equality when reading to their children?
By changing _____.

