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FREE WILL IN "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST": THE OVERLOOKED LESSON
AND FIRST STEP INTO ADULTHOOD

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BY

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When children read or hear fairy tales, they enjoy stories filled with magic, princes saving damsels in distress, and the happy endings. For literary scholars, fairy tales entail so much more than these simplicities that children search for in their fairy tales. Jane Yolen writes in *Touch Magic: Fantasy, Faerie & Folklore in the Literature of Childhood*, “There are many layers inside the old tales, like nesting Matrushka dolls. Examining the layers does not wreck the story, but shows us how rich and fascinating they really are” (109), and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast” is no different. The most common interpretations of “Beauty and the Beast” that other scholars have written about involve sex and social expectations for children. Many fairy tale critics see Beauty’s interactions with the Beast as her becoming mature with the concept of her sexual desires, and that her acceptance of Beast’s proposals is her acceptance of sex. One such critic, Bruno Bettelheim, discusses this in his book, *The Uses of Enchantment*: “‘Beauty and the Beast’ offers the child the strength to realize that his fears are the creations of his anxious sexual fantasies; and that while sex may at first seem beastlike, in reality love between woman and man is the only one which makes for permanent happiness” (306). Bettelheim continues his Freudian interpretation by connecting the rose Beauty’s father brings her as a symbol for the loss of her virginity (306). Also, critics see “Beauty and the Beast,” along with other fairy tales, as a tool to teach children the “definite normative expectations at home and in the public sphere” (Zipes 9). One category of these expectations is sexuality: “they (beauty and beast tales) were and are important because they set standards for sexual and social conduct that complied with inhibiting forms of socialization and were to be internalized by the readers and the authors of the tales” (Zipes 48). Keeping with the Freudian reading, this tale type exposes the reality of sex, making the taboo aspect of it disappear once Beauty has matured. Another category of the expectations “Beauty and the Beast” shows what the appropriate

behavior of each gender is: “The mark of beauty for a female is to be found in her submission, obedience, humility, industry, and patience; the mark of manliness is to be found in a man’s self-control, politeness, reason, and perseverance” (Zipes 56). Leprince de Beaumont shows these qualities in her characters of Beauty and Beast, giving her audience examples to live by.

While “Beauty and the Beast” does provide readers with the manner in which to teach children social cues, the fairy tale also provides young readers with vital lessons that they will carry with them from childhood to adulthood. As written in *New Tales for Old: Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults*, “The initiatory scenario of the folktale has particular resonance for teenagers, who face a number of high thresholds all at once: leaving home, choosing a trade or profession, entering into adult sexuality, taking responsibility for themselves” (de Vos & Altmann 24). These are the situations that teenagers want to read about because they see examples of what to expect and how to act in their own lives. Other critics focus their work on the allusions and the socialization of children, leaving the lessons to be overlooked. The lessons that fairy tales provide have a more immediate effect on children because children can see and understand these lessons. Very few, if any, children will read “Beauty and the Beast” and think it is an allusion to sex. But they will see the lessons that they can use in their lives from childhood all the way into adulthood.

When readers think of the lessons from “Beauty and the Beast,” the most common ones that come to mind are “Beauty is on the inside” and “Love conquers all.” These lessons come through in all the variations that have been written over the years, but they are not the only lesson for young readers. These other lessons include free will, parental control, and rewards for actions.

Contemporary novels like *Beastly* by Alex Flinn, *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* and *Rose Daughter* by Robin McKinley, *Beast* by Donna Jo Napoli, and Francesca Lia Block's short story retelling "Beast" in her collection *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold* incorporate all of the lessons from Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's original fairy tale and present them to today's adolescent audience. Alex Flinn gives teenage readers a direct insight into the story because *Beastly* takes place in a 21st-century New York City high school, and she gives the Beast a voice in the tale by writing it through his perspective. Writing her retelling of "Beauty and the Beast," Flinn changes the lessons from Leprince de Beaumont's tale by taking away Lindy's (Beauty) chance to go freely to the beast. She also allows the beast to question his identity: at the beginning of the book, he is Kyle Kingsbury, but he changes it to Adrian after the curse happens.¹ *Beast* by Donna Jo Napoli also tells the tale through the beast's point of view and limits Belle's free will, but Napoli surrounds "Beauty and the Beast" in an Islamic religious context that brings together the familiar tale with the less familiar world of Persia. On the other hand, *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* follows Leprince de Beaumont's version step by step with the only differences being the details that Robin McKinley adds to elongate the book. Her creativity comes more in her second retelling of "Beauty and the Beast": *Rose Daughter*. McKinley focuses on the roses themselves and changes the reason for the Beast's appearance and the result of Beauty's confession of loving the Beast. In her author's note in the back of *Rose Daughter*, McKinley explained her reaction to a friend of hers asking her to write a short story of "Beauty and the Beast":

I said no, I can't; I've said all I have to say about that story. But as I sat at my typewriter... I didn't feel up to anything too demanding, like the novel I was

¹ From here on out, the name Kyle is used to talk about the beast when he is in his human form. Adrian is used to refer to the beast while he is still under the curse.

supposed to be working on. I thought, I'll have a go at this short story. Something might come of it. I can do a little more with roses; that'll be fun. *Rose Daughter* shot out onto the page in about six months. (*Rose Daughter* 305)

Then there is Francesca Lia Block's short story, "Beast," which changes the happy ending of Beauty's marriage to the Beast into a trap for her. She is given a taste of freedom from society, but the Beast's transformation back into a man takes that freedom and happiness away from her. All of these retellings of the fairy tale have deep connections to the lessons from Leprince de Beaumont, but each one has been molded to take these life lessons in slightly different directions.

The most widely known lessons from Leprince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast" are about beauty being found on the inside and the power of love because Beauty learns them in time to get her happy ending. During her time with the Beast, Beauty develops a relationship with him. They spend every evening meal together, and they simply talk. Beauty begins to see his generosity and kindness through his manners. She no longer sees a beast to be afraid of, but a kind, dependable man with a beastly exterior. While the Beast has given Beauty's father gold when he left the palace, the ultimate kindness he shows Beauty and her family is letting her go home when her father is ill, even though that means the Beast will die.

Yet, Beauty does not realize that her relationship with Beast is romantic. She knows that he loves her and wants to marry her because he proposes to her after every evening when Beauty is on her way to bed. She takes his company for granted while she is in his palace. When he encourages her to go home to her father, Beauty begins to miss Beast's company and feels like she is not part of her family's life. This is when Beauty starts to realize that she loves Beast, and this realization spurs her to hurry back to him. Upon her arrival, she finds Beast on the verge of

death, but her love is powerful enough to bring him back to life and to his human form. The power of Beauty's love saves Beast's life and brings his inner beauty out for everyone to see.

The lessons "beauty is on the inside" and "love conquers all" combine to give hope to children and teenagers when they read "Beauty and the Beast" because these audience members are going through their own anxieties over body image. The Beast's struggles with his hideousness are what most kids go through to some degree, and each person with body image issues wants to find someone like Beauty to accept them. Not only does the Beast want to find someone to love him, but he wants to find a beautiful woman to love him. The Beast buys into society's definition of beauty even though he contradicts this definition himself. Readers finish the fairy tale with this sense of hope of finding a love that conquers the boundaries of outer beauty to reveal the inner beauty by someone who is beautiful themselves.

While these lessons give Beauty her happy ending and the reader a sense of hope, they were just the final stepping stone of the lessons that are in this fairy tale. As the fairy tale progresses from the beginning, there are lessons for both Beauty and Beast to learn along with the reader. The other secondary lessons center on family relations like a child's duty to his or her parent, and how much free will a child has. Yet these lessons are directed towards teenagers because there is a sense of rebellion and a romantic relationship that has roots deeper than appearances. Beauty rebels against her father when he tries to force her to stay home instead of saving him. Beauty, being the obedient daughter almost all of her life, takes a stand to save her father, as many adolescents start to do when they hit their teenager years. Adolescents start to push their parents' control to see how far they can go to find themselves. In Beauty's case, she finds a love that does not focus on appearance, but is based on personality and generosity. She and the Beast get to know each other in the time they are together, making their love a realistic

example for young readers to strive for. Beauty does not fall head over heels for Beast when they first meet; Beast has to earn her love through his actions, a value that is not always considered by teenagers. To put these concepts in perspective, the Grimm Brother's "Cinderella" shows the young child's perspective on parent–children relationships and romantic relationships. The central lessons of "Cinderella" teach young children how to deal with step-mothers and step-siblings and how to be the youngest child. As for romantic relationships, Cinderella is barely courted with Prince Charming before they get married. He does not even know what Cinderella looks like as he goes searching for her. With Leprince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast," readers see more realistic relationships with parents and romantic partners for adolescents to model their own relationships after. The main lessons of inner beauty and the power of love help make these relationships more believable, but the lessons' prominence only comes at the end of the tale. The lesson of free will and how a child can deal with parental control come through in the middle of the tale, though they are overshadowed by the ending lessons. Even so, contemporary authors like Robin McKinley and Alex Flinn have recognized and incorporated them in their versions of the tale.

Free Will

While readers have seen the lessons of "Beauty is on the inside" and "Love conquers all," most readers of Leprince de Beaumont's fairy tale miss the free will theme that runs through Beauty and Beast. In the original fairy tale and many of its variants, Beauty chooses to take her father's place at the Beast's home against his wishes. Her unconditional love for her father drives her desire to save him, but Beauty's agency is what overpowers all of his objections. Beauty's free will also causes her to act out like getting into heated arguments with her father and slipping out of the house while everyone is asleep. In Robin McKinley's *Rose Daughter*, Beauty's gentle,

kind nature gives way to her determination to save her father, and an intense fight erupts between father and daughter. “He would not hear of it; but she would hear of nothing else... Beauty, always the gentle one, the peacemaker, was roused to fury at last; she crossed her arms tightly over her stomach as if she were holding herself together and roared like Lionheart—or like the Beast” (*Rose Daughter* 84). Beauty’s free will fills her with such a ferocious determination that she becomes beast-like. Her love for her father combined with her free will make Beauty an unstoppable force that almost transforms her into an animal. Beauty allows her emotions to rule over her for just a short time, but this is the first time she loses her self-control. After years of being the dutiful daughter, Beauty finally lets loose the rebellious feelings she has bottled up and the suddenness of this unleashing makes Beauty appear like an animal escaping a prison after years of being trapped.

Yet Beauty’s free will is taken away when her father has full control over her. In Flinn’s *Beastly* and Napoli’s *Beast*, both of the Beauty characters are dropped off with the Beast character unceremoniously. Specifically in *Beast*, Belle is pushed off the horse and left alone with the lion after a short exchange with her father. There does not seem to be any regret on her father’s part; he just wants to fulfill his promise to save himself and get out of there before Orasmyin, the beast, changes his mind. Lindy’s drop off is similar to Belle except she is traded for drugs and her father’s legal freedom.

Even though the fathers in both of these variants take away their daughter’s free will, the girls get some of it back by deciding on their own to stay with their Beasts. Napoli’s Belle finds that living with a lion is better than her life at home, where her sisters make her do all of the chores and her father is not the best parent, adding a “Cinderella” scenario to the retelling of “Beauty and the Beast.” As Orasmyin learns from reading Belle’s journal, “Belle’s sisters and

brothers treated her as a servant. Her father gave her no protection” (Napoli 227). This entry makes Orasmyin feel a little better about keeping her with him because he assumes that “[s]he’s no worse off here with me than there with them. Maybe she’s even better off here” (Napoli 227). Even though Belle still does all the cooking, cleaning, and other chores, the beast sees, or hopes rather, that she is happy with him. It also reassures him that she does not have a fantastic life to run back to.

Lindy from Flinn’s variant shares a similar situation with Belle. She is ungratefully dropped off at Adrian’s house so her father can get his drugs back and Adrian will not turn him over to the police for drug possession and breaking and entering. Her life with her father consists of her keeping him alive and off of the streets. She has been left alone with him ever since her older sisters left home, and she has been juggling her school work along with her extra responsibilities. Despite her home life, Lindy got a scholarship into the same private school as Kyle, but she loses her scholarship because her father forces her to live with a beastly young man.

On top of this, she has lost her free will to save her father. But she seems to exercise a smaller level of free will by staying with Adrian. She is afraid that Adrian will turn her father in if she leaves. What she does not know is that Adrian does not intend to have her father arrested: he is depending on her love for her father to keep her with him. This foresight on Adrian’s part undermines Lindy’s free will because he has manipulated her move-in to be this way. Therefore, Lindy has been stripped of her free will by the two men in her life: her father and Adrian. This is the only variant where the Beauty figure loses her free will so significantly, which is a reflection of Alex Flinn’s interpretation of “Beauty and the Beast” which she shares in her Author’s Note.

As a writer, I write about what disturbs me, and what disturbed me about many versions of *Beauty and the Beast* was that beloved as Beauty is said to be, in each case, her father gives her over willingly to the Beast, in order to save his own life (the Disney movie version is a gentler version of the tale, in which Belle's father has no choice in the matter). Thinking of this led me to think about the Beast himself, how he was alone in the castle, possibly abandoned by his own family, the circumstances of which are unexplained in most versions. So the romance is really the story of two abandoned teens who find each other. (Flinn 303)

I disagree with Flinn's reading of "Beauty and the Beast." She sees Beauty's move to the Beast's castle as the father's selfish act to save himself. As I discussed earlier, Beauty chooses to sacrifice herself for him in most versions. Her unconditional love for her father drives her to use her free will to save him since he got into the life or death situation to fulfill her wish. She feels responsible for the incident; therefore, she chooses to take the consequences. For example, in Robin McKinley's *Beauty*, Beauty plainly states: "'I am not offering,' [Beauty] said. 'I am going'" (75). This determination is met with arguments from her father and sisters, who do not want her to leave. In other variants, the father and sometimes the sisters argue for Beauty to stay home, showing that she is, indeed, beloved. More often than not, the father figure is willing to give up his life to save his daughter. In one variant, Francesca Lia Block's "Beast" from *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold*, the father actually keeps the encounter with the Beast a secret from Beauty at his own great peril. The Beast tells the father that he may be free for picking the rose if he sends Beauty to live with the Beast, or he would become severely ill when he returns home. The father chooses to become sick, and he keeps his secret from Beauty for as long as he could. It is not until the father starts talking about the Beast and the rose in his sleep as

Beauty takes care of him; she then makes him tell her what happened when he wakes up.

Beauty's father does everything he can to protect her; he is even willing to die to keep her home.

As for the Disney movie version, I believe simpler is a more appropriate term than gentler to compare it to the books. The father does not have a choice like most of the other versions, but he does not make a deal with the Beast in order to save Belle. The Beast throws him into the dungeon for intruding, and Belle makes the agreement with the Beast to take his place as prisoner. In all the other versions, including Leprince de Beaumont's original tale, the Beast makes the deal with the father, who has to make the decision to share the information with his family. The Disney movie eliminates the father's role as the middle man, which ultimately gives him no choice in the matter. But this agreement is reached because Belle's love for her father motivates her to save him, and she chooses to follow her love with her free will.

Yet, the elimination of Belle's father being a middle man is not the only thing that the Disney movie has taken away from the tale. As "Beauty and the Beast" scholar, Betsy Hearne, writes, the Disney movie further reduces Beauty's active role of the fairy tale by: "(1) subtracting her request for the rose; (2) further subtracting from her role in rescuing the Beast by multiplying villains in the form of wolves and secondary humans; and (3) adding a triangle of two guys fighting for a girl instead of the mutual triangular transformation of Beauty, Beast, and Family" (Hearne 204). The Disney movie has limited the power that Beauty has in Leprince de Beaumont's version. Flinn says that the movie is a "gentler" version of the tale, and that interpretation comes from the fact that so many important elements have been taken out of the movie, reducing Belle's free will and power of her own story. This movie is not a viable source to use an exception to Flinn's reading of "Beauty and the Beast" because it is not a complete version of the tale.

Since Alex Flinn does not interpret Beauty's sacrifice as a sacrifice, she has written *Beastly* based on a misreading of the other versions of the fairy tale. Flinn does not see this sacrifice, so she neglects to give it to Lindy. Because she leaves out Beauty's sacrifice, *Beastly* has a gap in the traditional story line of "Beauty and the Beast." In the other versions, Beauty chooses to go to the Beast, which is a step for her to fall in love with him. Flinn takes away Beauty's chance to allow her filial love to naturally develop into a romantic love. Instead Flinn depends on Lindy's and Adrian's loneliness to bring them together. The two teenagers' love does not spring from the love of their family because both of their families have abandoned them. Circumstances are the foundations of the love between Lindy and Adrian, while the other versions of "Beauty and the Beast" allow their love to be based on a different form of love. Free will allows love to grow into different forms, but when the author takes away that free will, love comes from the circumstances that the author creates.

Even so, Flinn has been able to write a novel that has been read by many teenagers and accepted by them. Something to possibly explain this comes from *New Tales for Old: Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults*: "The depthless, typical characters and undeveloped settings allow writers to elaborate their particular version of a tale, just as readers or listeners will fill in details meaningful to themselves" (de Vos & Altmann 15). The vagueness of Leprince de Beaumont's tale allows for author to make their own decisions with the tale, even those that come from a misreading. And since Flinn keeps the common motifs of the tale, readers see *Beastly* as a contemporary retelling that matches the world they are living in now. Also, as Betsy Hearne writes, "researching a fairy tale text aesthetically or even in its sociopolitical context can be limited if we do not realize how individually it connects with the researchers' personal mythology, family lore, and oral history" (Hearne 195). Flinn's interpretation comes from her

and her personal experiences. While there is plenty of evidence to show how her interpretation has been misled, her personal connection may overshadow this evidence.

While Beauty's free will is pivotal for the fairy tale to work, the Beast also uses his free will, but not to save anyone. With *Rose Daughter* being the only exception, the Beast becomes cursed because he chooses to be a horrible person, either by being vicious and rude or trying to impress others. At the beginning of *Beastly*, Kyle invites Kendra, a gothic student who is really a witch, to a dance with the intention of humiliating her. When he sees Kendra, he gives his real date a kiss and greets Kendra with "What are you looking at, Ugly?" (Flinn 30). He expects her to start crying, but she only says "You really did invite me to a dance even though you had another date, just to make me look stupid?" (Flinn 31). That moment sealed Kyle's fate of being placed under his curse. In *Beauty*, the Beast's actions make him succumb to a family curse:

My forebears were, um, rather overpious, and overzealous in impressing their neighbors with their piety. After the first few generations of holier-than-thou the local magician got rather tired of them, and cursed them; but unfortunately their virtue was even as great as they made it out to be... being a magician, he settled down to wait for their first erring step... that erring foot was mine. (*Beauty* 240–241)

For Beauty, free will allows her to save her father, but free will is the ticket for the Beast's curse. With the different results in using free will, the fairy tale shows a gender commentary: males use free will to be beastly while females use free will to act nobly. Society views men as being the dominant sex: powerful and arrogant, which sometimes lead to rudeness and cruelty. Women are labeled as the kind, understanding, and loving sex. By society's definition, a man's actions are more likely to be monstrous, while a woman's actions are able to change a beast back into a man. Yet,

these distinctions are clear only in the retellings of Leprince de Beaumont's tale because she does not reveal the reason for the Beast's curse: "A wicked fairy condemned me to this form, and forbade me to show that I had any wit or sense till a beautiful lady should consent to marry me" (Leprince de Beaumont 17). Readers are not told whether the Beast has been cruel to other people, but contemporary authors have assumed these gender roles. Leprince de Beaumont may have laid down the foundation for gender commentary, but contemporary authors like McKinley, Flinn, and Block are the ones who advocate that the beastliness of men and the compassion of women.

Even so, the Beast also acknowledges Beauty's free will because he does not want to force Beauty to do anything she does not want to. In all of the variants, Beauty has some reason to go home to her family, leaving Beast, her captor, with the decision of whether to let her go or not. He can tell that she wants to go back, and he cannot refuse her. With the Brothers Grimm's "The Singing, Soaring Lark" being the only exception, the Beast character always allows his Beauty to return home, most of the time with the promise to return after a certain amount of time. In Robin McKinley's *Rose Daughter*, Beast is straightforward with Beauty about how he respects her free will: "I can deny you nothing. If you will go, then I give you leave to go. I have never been able to hold you here against your will" (247). The Beast recognizes Beauty's free will because he loves her, and his love has changed his beastly nature. Beauty has changed the Beast's inner animalistic nature by seeing his inner goodness and loving him, which means that he has been changed back into a human before his physical change. This change is seen when the Beast shows that he cares for Beauty by letting her go, but there is also the sense that he cannot retain his inner human nature hidden inside his beastly exterior because he warns Beauty that he will die if she does not come back to him in the time they agreed on.

When Beauty fails to come back to the Beast by the end of the allotted time they agreed upon, the Beast uses his free will to wish himself to death. Without Beauty, the Beast has lost his will to live. In Napoli's novel, *Beast*, Orasmyn waits in one spot for Belle to return: "I don't eat, I don't drink. I drift in and out of sleep, always on my haunches. Thought is often absent, and, when it comes, it yields easily to delirium" (Napoli 251). As more days pass, Orasmyn loses even more hope that Belle will ever return: "I feel myself contract, wither. Life ebbs" (Napoli 252). After working so hard to find a woman to love him, the Beast loses his will to believe that she loves. Instead, he uses his will to try to kill himself through dehydration or starvation. The Beast may have freely allowed his Beauty to leave, but her absences also allows him to freely will death to come to him when he is so close to breaking the curse. Before his curse, the Beast uses his free will as a weapon to cause misery and destruction for others, but losing Beauty makes him turn his weapon against himself.

Adolescent readers are in the time of their lives where they want to exercise their own free will against their parents, and "Beauty and the Beast" gives these readers examples of what happens for the different scenarios. When will is used to help or save someone else, the person is rewarded for their noble action. Beauty chooses to save her father, arguing for her decision, and she is rewarded with an engagement to the man she loves. When will is used to be malicious and arrogant to others, the person is cursed to be a beast. Kyle fails a test that a witch gives him on kindness, and he is condemned to be a beast alone in New York with the only hope of being human again resting in the love of a girl. By showing adolescent readers the rewards and consequences of using their free will, "Beauty and the Beast" and its variants teach the importance of using free will to help others and not yourself.

Unconditional Love

With the various Beauty characters, most of them have an unconditional love for the father that drives their sense of duty to him. Most of the Beauty characters demonstrate an unconditional love for their father that drives Beauty's love for her father pushes her to save him by willingly taking his place at the palace. Beauty and her father believe that her death is imminent, but she still insists on saving her father. Beauty's unconditional love allows her to exercise her free will to sacrifice herself for father. Her love also pushes her to defy her father's wishes for her to stay home while he goes back to the Beast's palace to be killed.

In Robin McKinley's *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast*, Beauty demands that she will go to the Beast. After a long argument, her father grudgingly consents, mostly because Beauty leaves him with no choice other than to accept her decision. When her father tries to convince her on the day of Beauty's trip to the palace she says to him, "The decision is long past now—you cannot revoke it; and you agreed because you had no choice" (*Beauty* 101). Beauty becomes the dominating figure in her relationship with her father, and she takes away his choices as he tries to do with her. Her love allows her to exercise her free will to do what she believes is right. Also, her unconditional love overpowers her sense of obedience in favor of protecting her father.

Like *Beauty*, McKinley creates a similar scenario in her second retelling of "Beauty and the Beast" called *Rose Daughter*. In this book, the fight over whether Beauty would go to the Beast's palace or not is the first time Beauty has ever disobeys her father's wishes and has a violent verbal fight with him. She refuses to let him go, and her sisters back her up. But instead of letting her go, the father falls ill with the image of his youngest daughter spending the rest of her days with the "hugely, grotesquely bigger than man" beast he met (*Rose Daughter* 75).

Beauty wants to be a dutiful daughter and take care of her father, but she feels like it is her fate to go to the Beast's palace in the place of her father. Beauty allows her unconditional love for her father to use her free will to leave and to overpower her duty to obey her father's every command.

Both of the Beauty characters that McKinley has created refuse to be the obedient daughter they have been before the Beast came into their lives, but Alex Flinn's Beauty character does not have the same disobedience. In *Beastly*, a 21st century adaption of the fairy tale, Lindy's father forces her to go live with Adrian, the beast of the novel. Since *Beastly* is in the point of view of the Beast character, the reader cannot see the unwritten motives of Lindy or her father, but the appearances show that Lindy has no choice in the matter. There is no sign of her willingly coming to prevent her drug abusing father from going to jail, and he certainly does not have the same level of remorse for giving her up like the fathers in McKinley's books. In fact, Lindy is furious with her father and Adrian for being forced to live with someone she does not know. Any love for her father is not seen until later when Adrian realizes that she misses him and when the two teens discover that her father is sick and homeless. Lindy's unconditional love for her father does not come out until the end of the novel when she leaves to help him. This decision prevents Lindy from exercising her free will to make her own decision to help her father, and it forces her to be an obedient daughter. Even though she is disgruntled with her father's decision, Lindy goes through with it like there is not another option for her.

This unconditional love that all of the Beauty characters feel for their fathers is the driving force behind their free will. This love is so powerful that any selfishness is forgotten and gives Beauty a purpose to use her free will. If Beauty had not loved her father as deeply as she does, she would not have been willing to save her father. She would also not be able to develop

the romantic love for the Beast without her filial piety. As Bruno Bettelheim says of Leprince de Beaumont's tale in *The Uses of Enchantments: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, "Beauty joins the Beast only out of love for her father, but as her love matures, it changes its main object" (284). Beauty's love for the Beast grows slowly, but her romantic love for the Beast becomes as strong as her filial love to save him from death. The possibility for the Beast to be loved as unconditionally as Beauty loves her father comes from Beauty's free will.

Most young readers feel the same unconditional love that Beauty feels for her father. In the fairy tale, readers see Beauty sacrifice herself for the love of her father, and her sacrifice leads to a romantic love with the Beast. Beauty has a large capacity of love that she shares with the other characters in the tale, and she shows the good things that come with loving unconditionally. Adolescents are starting to discover what romantic love is, and Leprince de Beaumont's tale shows them how much stronger that love can be when they already have a powerful love for their family.

Parental Control

One theme that makes "Beauty and the Beast" so appealing to teenagers and young adults is the parental relationships that appear in the original tale and its variants. In many versions, Beauty's father does not control her. She is an obedient and loyal girl who does what is best for her family, and she is often the kind one compared to her sisters. When her father loses his fortune, the sisters believe that they could still find suitors to marry them, but no one will. Instead, "everyone pitie[s] poor Beauty, because she [is] so sweet-tempered and kind to all, and several gentlemen [offer] to marry her, though she had not a penny" (Leprince de Beaumont 5). Though she has a chance to get away from her family's troubles, Beauty willingly becomes the one who takes of everyone in their new lifestyle. That situation changes when the father comes

back from the Beast's castle, believing he is saying good-bye to his family because Beauty refuses to remain the obedient daughter she has been up to this point. She refuses to listen to her father as he tries to persuade her from sacrificing herself: "If you go back to the palace, you cannot hinder my going after you: though young, I am not over-fond of life; and I would much rather be eaten up by the monster than die of grief for your loss" (Leprince de Beaumont 10). Beauty's determination dominates any attempt her father makes of controlling her. Because he never had the occasion to control or discipline Beauty, he is inept to do so consciously.

The only way that Beauty's father seems to have any sort of control over her is when she leaves the Beast's castle to go back home to nurse her father back to health. Beauty is the one person who can make him feel better because in most variants, the father is grieving for the loss of his youngest daughter. But in this aspect of the trip home, it is not the father's control that leads Beauty to come back to him; it is her unconditional love for her father: "I long so much to see my father that if you do not give me leave to visit him, I shall break my heart" (Leprince de Beaumont 14). Where the father's authority partially comes into play is when he and the rest of Beauty's family convince her to stay longer than her promised allotted time away from Beast. She allows her love for her family to overpower her love of and promise to Beast.

While the role of the father is mostly a loving, caring figure in "Beauty and the Beast", Donna Jo Napoli's young adult novel *Beast* changes the role of Beauty's father to being more forceful with his daughter. In this case, the beast, Orasmyn, is a lion and is only able to communicate by scratching words and pictures into the ground. When a man becomes lost and decides to take some of Beast's roses, he assumes that he will die. But when Orasmyn makes the demand that the man bring his youngest daughter to him, the father does not fight like the fathers in other variants. "He emits a little scream. His head shakes again. Spittle flies onto his cheek....I

roar. He flattens himself on the ground, hands over his ears. Now he's mumbling, 'I swear, I swear, I swear'" (Napoli 164). While the father is frightened by the Beast, he does not overcome his fear to stand his ground or ask to die to protect his daughters. Instead he gives into his fears and promises to do what the Beast says. When the father delivers his daughter, Belle, he dumps her on the castle's stoop with only a few last words in an attempt to sooth her fears. Belle has been forced to live with a beast, leaving her with no will in the matter.

Napoli adds to the parental control of her novel by adding Orasmyn's parents into the novel. Orasmyn's father is the Shah, or ruler, of Persia, which gives the prince a status to uphold in front of his people. Orasmyn feels the pressure of being a prince, and he shows it by agreeing to help with the sacrifice for Feasts of Sacrifices: "As a child I ran from the sacrifices, from the spilling of blood. As an adult, I take no part in the hunts. ... Still, today I fight off trepidation. The sacrifice is compassionate; as my father's heir, I must understand that" (Napoli 6). Orasmyn feels that he must rely on no one to handle the burden of being a prince and learning how to rule a country. Even when his mother tries to give him support, the young prince fights against her kind words: "Her strength? A prince should rely on no one" (Napoli 6). This reluctance to rely on anyone leads Orasmyn to be ashamed to ask for help when he does not fully know the answer. He uses the status his parents have given him as an excuse not to ask for help:

But is it written anywhere that a camel who has been violated in this way cannot be sacrificed? ...I could ask the *imam*—the prayer leader—just to be sure. But the Feast of Sacrifices is one of the two most important holy days of the lunar year—so the Shah should know the rules that govern it. Likewise, the Shah's son should know. Consultation would be a sign of weakness. (Napoli 11)

In his fear not to appear ignorant or bring shame to his father, Orasmyn decides to break Islamic traditions by allowing a camel that has been defiled to be sacrificed for the Merciful One. His arrogance that the Prince of Persia cannot make a mistake and does not need to depend on anyone else is the reason Orasmyn is cursed to be a beast, a lion. He believes that he can do anything on his own, but once the curse sets in, it is the first time Orasmyn has been all alone. In other versions, the Beast is isolated from the general public, but most of the Beasts either have other people paid to live with him or magical devices that give him some comfort. Orasmyn is completely alone as a lion, a situation that allows him to see how he took his life for granted. By having the curse happen to Orasmyn in this manner, Napoli has shown young readers what could happen when people are arrogant and takes life for granted.

Orasmyn's father adds another layer to his control over his son: the Shah of Persia wants to kill a lion with his bare hands, and his son has been turned into the object of his father's desires. The *pari* who curses the prince also adds to the curse that his father will kill him. In the early morning of his second day of being a lion, Orasmyn is ready to give himself up to his father so he may die. He mourns the death of a lioness, and he cannot think straight. When his father comes to him, Orasmyn offers himself to his own father to kill until he realizes the *pari*'s plan: "the Shah standing over the body of Prince Orasmyn, looking at his hands aghast. A father who has killed his son. An excruciating pain that can never lessen" (Napoli 84). At this realization, Orasmyn runs away from his father and home. Orasmyn is afraid for his life, but he is mostly afraid of what his father almost did. The prince knows that, as a lion, he will be hunted in his dear Persia by his father, and that if his father should kill him, the Shah would not be able to live with himself. Orasmyn's only chance at survival is to be exiled from his home, but he knows that he cannot let his father kill him. That would be a burden his father would never be able to lift off

his shoulders. Here Orasmyn shows his love for his father by leaving, a demonstration that has been reserved for Beauty to show. Orasmyn shows that not only can a male be compassionate, but a beast can do so also.

In another variant, Alex Flinn's novel *Beastly*, the Beauty character faces the same selfish father as Belle from *Beast*. Fearful what Adrian, the Beast character, would do to him, the father offers his daughter to Kyle without hesitation: "Please, just take her, do what you want with her. Take my daughter, but let me go," (Flinn 152). The father only thinks of saving himself from the horrible fate he believes is coming that he disregards any notation that he may be putting his daughter in the same danger he fears, contradicting the actions of Beauty's father in the *Leprince de Beaumont* fairy tale and most of the variants. The father agrees to either die or allow one of his daughters to save him, but he never leaves planning to offer his daughter up for death. Lindy's father's selfishness takes away her free will to decide to come to live with Adrian to save her father. She is merely a commodity to be traded for drugs. Since Lindy does not choose to live with Adrian with her own free will, her filial love keeps her prisoner. Adrian even recognizes this when he states "I counted on her staying to protect her father" (Flinn 163). Even though he claims that Lindy can leave at any time, Adrian knows she will not because she believes he will give police incriminating evidence against her father.

Another difference in *Beastly* is an addition to the parental roles is added: the beast's father. Since this novel is told from Adrian's perspective, the reader sees him learning that looks are the only thing that matters in the world from his father. Both of these male characters are cruel, arrogant, and uncaring, depending on their looks to help them get what they want. But when Adrian becomes a beast, he becomes an ugly burden that his father dumps in a house in Brooklyn. Mr. Kingsbury is not able to give the love and support Adrian needs, leaving Adrian

alone to figure out how to love someone else. By following his father's beliefs, Adrian has put himself under his father's control. He does not resist the horrible ideology of looks meaning everything—he goes along with it to make himself lovable for his father. His father is so busy with work that he barely sees his son, making Kyle feel that he can only tell his father the things that will make him noticeable like Kyle making the court for a school dance. But when he tries to tell his father, Kyle is silenced: “‘What? I’m sorry, Aaron. I didn’t hear you. Someone was trying to talk to me.’ He waved his hand to me to keep quiet and gave me a ‘Shut up!’ look. He was using the Bluetooth” (Flinn 15). So once the curse hits and Kyle is emotionally abandoned by his father, Kyle tries to cut off his ties with his previous life, including his name. “I’ve changed my name. There was no Kyle anymore [and after searching for another name, he] finally settled on Adrian, which means ‘dark one’” (Flinn 122).

While he mopes around the house, feeling sorry for himself, Adrian has started to loosen the reins of his father's control because he starts to learn how wrong his past actions were. He becomes more vulnerable, and his eyes are open to how other people feel. Before Lindy comes into the picture, Adrian asks the witch who cast his curse, Kendra, to use her magic to help his blind tutor see and his maid go home to her family. He also feels sorry for Lindy when she comes to his home because he believes that his “father would have done what hers had” (Flinn 155).

By having both Lindy and Adrian grow up with irresponsible parents, Flinn has given the two characters a connection that allows them to become closer. Their first conversation is about their fathers. Adrian explains “My mother left a long time ago. And my father... well, he couldn’t handle that I looked like this. He’s into normalcy,” and Lindy shares “When things started getting really bad with my dad, my sisters moved out to live with their boyfriends” (Flinn 179,

180). Since Flinn takes away Lindy's free will to decide to live with Adrian, she needs the two teenagers to bond somehow, and their family backgrounds provide that initial bonding experience.

On the other hand, Beauty and the Beast find independence when they are free from their parents' control. The Beast's home becomes a place of independence because the Beast's family either has abandoned him or become part of the past. He is forced to learn to be independent since he is alone for the many years he is under the curse. In most versions, when Beauty comes to live with him, she enters a world of independence where she can do anything she wishes. In Francesca Lia Block's short story, Beauty leaves a world of confinement, and she enjoys the freedom she feels on the ride to the Beast's house:

But then she got to the wood and saw the house and she became afraid. She had had so little time to feel herself, without the weight of her sister's jealousy, her father's love. She wanted more wind and sea and zebras. Now she was going into another locked place. (Block 185–6)

Yet she finds happiness with the Beast, who teaches her to be wild. Beauty becomes immersed in her independence that she leaves society behind her. Beauty leaves her father to gain her independence, but she loses her independence when the Beast is human again, which makes her resent him.

Beauty's journey to the Beast is supposed to be one of maturation, but Beauty's transformation with the Beast is regressive. She learns to be an animal with her tangled hair and enhanced senses. The other Beauty characters learn how to be independent away from their fathers. Betsy Hearne describes Beauty's journey in her essay "Bringing the Story Home: A Journey with *Beauty and the Beast*" as a "journey away from family and society 'into the woods'

mirrors her journey of maturation, during which she succeeds at tasks involving perception and loyalty to make a triumphant rescue of the vulnerable but charismatic Beast waiting passively for her to save him” (199). Block’s Beauty finds wild freedom instead of maturity, but the Beast brings her back to society because he is dependent on her. The Beast waits for Beauty to come to him twice, and he almost dies when she does not come back to him on time. In Block’s version of the tale, “he understood freedom, her Beast. He understood shackles. He never wanted her to feel chains around her neck as he had once felt them. But now she had become his chain in a strange way, and he knew it” (191). The Beast becomes dependent on Beauty after years of being independent. Now that he has someone else with him, the Beast does not want to go back to being alone. His dependence on Beauty is part of the reason that she comes back in a rush; she knows that he will die if she does not find him in time. Because Beauty loves the Beast, she handles the Beast’s dependence with grace, unless he reduces her independence and freedom as Block’s Beast does.

In “Beauty and the Beast” parental control does not match the same levels as real life constraints that many adolescent readers feel they are under. Beauty is not ruled by her father’s control because she has been so obedient until she has to fight to save her father. The resistance that Beauty’s father shows is his reluctance to let his youngest daughter leave him. She has grown up, and she is making her own choices. She has decided to leave home to make a life for herself and her own independence. With the Beast, Beauty does as she pleases and finds out what life is like without her family being constantly around her. Beauty’s growing independence that she gains from being with the Beast mirrors the independence that the young readers will find when they either go to college or into the work force. Beauty shows a responsible example of

how to find independence that does not involve partying, and there are not many examples of this quiet search for independence that Beauty shows.

Supernatural Elements

In all fairy tales, there are supernatural elements that influence the characters throughout the plot, and “Beauty and the Beast” is no different. The lesson of free will becomes buried under the magic because it overshadows its effects on the characters’ decisions and wishes. While these elements make the tales even more fantastical, the magic of this Leprince de Beaumont’s tale and its variants prevents characters from obtaining things they want. In many of the variants, Beauty wishes that the Beast would have stayed in his animalistic form because that is the appearance she had fallen in love with. In *Beastly*, Kendra can cast spells, but she is unable to reverse anything that she has already cast, and the Beast cannot be transformed back into his human form without becoming a feared man in *Rose Daughter*.

Beast pays attention and honors Beauty’s free will and desires, but Beauty’s wishes are not always acknowledged by magical forces outside of her control. In most of the retellings of “Beauty and the Beast,” the Beast is transformed back into a handsome human when Beauty confesses her love. Once this transformation happens, Beauty is shocked, and sometimes dismayed by the change: ““But where is my poor beast? I only want him and nobody else”” (Leprince de Beaumont 17). Many Beauties from other variants echo this same sentiment from the original fairy tale, and most of them seem to adjust with Beast’s transformation fairly easily. But there are some cases where Beauty begins to resent his change because magic makes it happen against her choice. Block’s Beauty finds liberation when she is with her beast that she becomes wild herself: “she bathed less often, her skin smelled of the garden and the forest, she was almost always barefoot... Her senses were so sharp that she could smell and hear things she

had never known existed before. This was the happiest she had ever been in her life” (Block 190). Beauty becomes an animal herself as she spends more and more time with her Beast, and she enjoys the freedom from the human world. So when the Beast changes, she loses the freedom she once had. The beast starts to become more human, and she is forced to return to being human too. Even though Beauty loves “her Beast boy” more than anything, “she wish[es] that he would have remained a Beast” (Block 198). By confessing her love for him, Beauty ruins the happiness she has found living in the wild without human conventions.

In most cases, the Beast’s transformation is a reward for Beauty’s goodness to love him as a beast, but Francesca Lai Block’s adaptation makes the Beast’s change a punishment for Beauty. She finds freedom as she lets herself fall into the life style of her Beast, but she loses that freedom when he is human again. Beauty breaks the curse just as she is supposed to, but she is not happy by the end of “Beast” in *The Rose and the Beast*.

One of the obvious lessons of “Beauty and the Beast” is that “beauty is on the inside,” but the Beast’s transformation back to his human form contradicts this lesson. If readers are supposed to learn that looks do not matter, the lesson becomes muddled because of this transformation. Beauty has already decided that she loves the Beast the way he is, and she has accepted him. Time and time again, after the transformation, Beauty becomes disoriented, and many times she starts looking for her Beast even though he is right in front of her. For example, in *Beastly*, Lindy is confused to see the person she knows as Kyle Kingsbury lying where Adrian once was, and she panics that Adrian has disappeared: “Where is the boy who was here before? His name was Adrian, and he was...hurt. I have to find him!” (Flinn 273). Lindy’s urgency shows that she has learned the lesson of loving someone despite their looks, but the magic of the curse prevents her from showing everyone else that she can look past someone’s looks to see

who is underneath the exterior. Because of the magic, it does not matter whether Lindy or the other Beauties learned that beauty is on the inside—all that matters is that they break their Beast's curse.

On the other hand, magical forces have listened to Beauty's wishes about whether her Beast should be changed back to human form or not. In *Rose Daughter*, Beauty and Beast are attacked by evil magic when Beauty confesses her love for him. An old greenwitch speaks to Beauty's mind, telling her that Beauty must choose to either have her Beast transformed back into a human with all of his riches and influences from before he was transformed, or to take him home the way he is now. After finding out that their names would "be spoken in fear and in dread" if she would chose to have Beast transformed back into a human, Beauty "choose[s] Longchance, and the little goodnesses among the people we know" (*Rose Daughter* 293). Beauty is allowed to freely choose the form she wants to have her husband in, and she is the only one in all of the Beauties in the retellings to be given a choice. The curses in all the others make the change happen once it is broken.

While Beauty gets to choose to have her Beast stay in the way she loves him, she makes her decision largely to avoid that fate of having their names "spoken in fear and in dread" like the greenwitch prophesized (*Rose Daughter* 293). The Beast does not even have the option to having a happy ending in his former human form like the other Beasts—if he changes back to being human, his character will become monstrous despite his appearance. In Leprince de Beaumont's original tale and the other variants mentioned, the Beasts become cursed because they have failed some sort of test, most of the time a test of generosity and hospitality. But the Beast in McKinley's *Rose Daughter* is not cruel to anyone to deserve his fate; instead he is transformed into a beast because he finds the secrets of the universe. Instead of being forced to

be a beast for years for being a horrible person, the Beast in *Rose Daughter* is punished for being ambitious enough to discover a great secret. Then when it comes time for him to possibly return to his former life, magic poisons this option because he will turn monstrous after his curse.

While the magic lessens the options for free will in *Rose Daughter*, Beauty's free will is the reason she even finds the Beast in the first place. Once she arrives back to the palace after going home, Beauty's life-long nightmare comes true. She is running up and down the hallways in darkness, looking for the Beast, but a thrumming surrounds her. She cannot hear this thrumming, but she feels it, and it prevents her from talking. All Beauty can see is the endless corridors with no Beast in sight. Beauty senses that this thrumming is either magic or a magician trying to keep her and the Beast apart, but she refuses to succumb to the dark magic:

She turned around and started to walk back down the corridor she had come up. No! No! No! shrieked... something. Some soundless subvibration of the hum that filled the corridor demanded that she turn round; but she had made her choice, and now she put one slow, heavy foot down after the other by her own free will and of her own choice, and while each footstep was very hard, dragged as it was in the opposite direction, it was also a victory for her, and the hum changed its inaudible note and became fury. (*Rose Daughter* 278).

Magic tries to prevent Beauty from finding the Beast, but her will gives her the power to defy this dark magic. Because Beauty is strong enough to resist the thrumming and humming, she is able to find the Beast outside, in the opposite direction she had been pulled earlier. Magic may try to limit free will, but it does not always win out in the end.

Another character who becomes bound in the limitations of magic is Kendra, the witch from Alex Flinn's *Beastly*. Under disguise, Kendra witnesses the horrible ways that Kyle treats

people, and she decides to cast a spell to teach him a lesson. Yet when she turns Kyle into a beast, she cannot undo the spell: “The spell, it’s yours to break. The only way to undo it is by its terms—finding a true love” (Flinn 74). Even though she is the character who has control over the magic, Kendra is helpless to do anything to change or remove the spell. She is restricted by the same magic that she wields. She is restricted to the point that she cannot undo what she has done when she is sorry for casting the spell, like she is with Kyle’s curse. But when Kyle/Adrian asks Kendra to help his friends, Will and Madga, she still cannot do anything for them immediately at his request: “I can’t grant wishes just because someone asks for something. I’m not a genie. If I try to act like one, I could end up stuck in a lamp like one” (Flinn 147). The only thing she can do is to add Kyle’s wishes to the result of his success of breaking the spell.

In this variation, the magical restriction posed on Kendra is a decision made by the author to keep Kyle from getting out of his punishment before he learned his lesson. Kendra mentions that she regrets casting the spell, so giving the ability to reverse it would have potentially derailed the narrative in the way that Flinn has it structured. The other restrictions caused by magic in the other versions make sure that Beauty and Beast have a happy ending in the eyes of the reader, but Flinn chooses to keep Kyle under his punishment until the end of the book. In the end of each of the renditions of “Beauty and the Beast,” magic restrictions are tools of the author to explain his or her choices in why the novel is the way it is.

Though there are no magical forces to interfere with readers’ quests for love, circumstances and fate act as the manipulating force against them. Magic sometimes prevents Beauty from getting what she wants, but she adapts to these disappointments. Adolescents do not get everything they want either, and they can learn how to handle their own disappointment by gracefully adapting as Beauty does. Magic also acts as an obstacle that tries to keep Beauty and

the Beast apart, but they overcome it. Life gives everyone obstacles, and teens need to learn that no one is exempt from life's challenges. But when they are determined like Beauty and have a love like she does, they can see that all obstacles can be overcome. At an age where giving up is an easier option for them, teenagers see the rewards of fighting for their love and desires through "Beauty and the Beast."

Conclusion

Throughout Leprince de Beaumont's tale and many of the other variants, Beauty's free will and defiance against her father's wishes act as catalysts for the two primary lessons of the tale: "Beauty is on the inside" and "Love conquers all." When Beauty freely decides to take her father's place at the Beast's castle, she shows that she is able to make her own decisions. She goes to the Beast's palace or house with the expectations her father gives her: she is either going to be eaten by or have to live with a horrible monster. But as she gets to know him, she realizes that the Beast is a gentle and kind man underneath his animalistic features. Beauty freely decides to change her opinion of Beast, and this decision allows her to get close to him. As she gets closer to him, she begins to fall in love with him. As Beauty and Beast spend more time together, their love grows and has a deep root in their personalities rather than appearances that makes it more powerful than a love based on looks or class status. This deep love Beauty has for Beast proves to be strong since she is able to break the curse and brings the couple their happy ending.

Even though Belle and Lindy do not decide to come to their Beasts on their own free will in their novels, they are both forced to live with their beasts, both of whom have an unspoken threat against her family. Because Belle and Lindy feel that they have no choice, they are shoved into a situation that allows them to get to know their beast. Each Beauty characters discover that the beast she lives with is kind to them, and each of the young girls' experiences urges them to

freely change her minds about her captor. From there, each girl falls in love with her beast, and that love proves to be strong enough to break the curse.

Since the women of the story and its variants are the ones to break the curse to save the Beasts, “Beauty and the Beast” is predominantly geared toward girl readers. Beauty is the heroine of the tale, and she is a strong literary role model for young girls. She is an example of sacrifice, honor, and love, and she is also a teacher to the Beast and the reader. Beauty reinforces the idea that appearances do not matter. In many cases, the Beast almost gives up hope of ever finding a woman to love him, but Beauty’s father gives the Beast a ray of hope by taking the rose for Beauty. In order to woo her, the Beast has to depend on his own kindness and generosity, and that is what gets her to fall in love with him. This lesson is especially important in *Beastly* and *Beast* because the Beasts are teenagers. Kyle grows up believing that your appearance is the only way to power, but his experience with being Adrian and falling in love with Lindy show him how to be humble and kind. Orasmyn thinks that being a prince means that he should not rely on anyone, but he learns from Belle that with love it is okay to rely on someone else. As for young female readers, they also learn that appearances are deceiving, but not in the same way as the Beast does. Readers learn not to judge people based on their looks because you never know what type of person is on the inside. Beauty finds love behind the face of a beast, and she finds happiness with him. No one knows where love is hiding, and young people starting their own quest for love should learn this lesson in order to find their own happiness. “Beauty and the Beast” also provides readers with a lesson of how to make decisions. As Jane Yolen says “A condition of choice overlies the best stories and that is what is missing in so much of new literature for children” (Yolen 60). The decision making that Beauty and the Beast do throughout

the tale make “Beauty and the Beast” popular centuries after Leprince de Beaumont wrote it because of how it models how decisions are made.

Whether Beauty goes to the Beast on her own free will or if her father forces her, she is set on a path that ends with marriage, which is a path that most adolescent readers are about to start or have started. Many teenagers start their journey into adulthood as soon as they can because they want to be on their own, and, as an award for their journey, they want to find their own happy ending: marriage. The three lessons of “Beauty and the Beast” about free will, inner beauty, and love act as stepping stones for these young audience members to accomplish their goal of finding a happy ending. First, the teenager needs to learn how to make decisions on her or his own. Then the teenager starts to rebel against her or his parents in an effort to show that she or he can make their own decisions. As the adolescent makes more and more decisions, she or he start to learn that appearances are not always what they seem, and they start to look for deeper connections with other people. In a search for deeper connections, the young adult will eventually find someone to love, love enough to marry.

“Beauty and the Beast” shows Beauty being rewarded for learning how to be a compassionate adult and finding true love in the end, and that is why the lessons about inner beauty and love are so prominent in the tale. But Beauty would not have received this reward without exercising her free will to make her own decisions—the first step of her journey into adulthood that has made this fairy tale very popular with adolescents on the brink of starting their own journeys.

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