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Article

# Tales through a Cultural Lens: Exploring the Global Significance of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty

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**Abstract:** This article examines the cross-cultural significance of three iconic fairy tales - Cinderella, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. Using a comparative analysis approach the study explores the themes, motifs, and symbolism in these tales across different cultures and periods of history. The research draws from primary and secondary sources such as literary works and scholarly articles to reveal the underlying messages that resonate with audience worldwide. The historical and cultural contexts of the stories are examined also to provide a deeper understanding of their significance in shaping cultural identity and value. The findings of the research demonstrate the enduring legacy of these stories and their ongoing relevance to the present day. The study highlights how the tales over time have evolved and adapted to reflect evolving cultural values and beliefs. The interpretation of the findings provides insight into the role of the story in shaping cultural identity and values, and the ways these tales continue to inspire and enchant audience around the globe. Overall, this research provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the significance of these three stories in cultures and in the time. By illuminating similarities and differences in these tales, this study offers a fresh perspective on the power of storytelling and its ability to transcend cultural boundaries. The research contributes in fields of folklore, cultural studies and cross-cultural communication, inciting further investigation of the captivating world of fairy stories.

**Keywords:** Cinderella; cross-cultural significance; Snow White; Sleeping Beauty; tales across time and space

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## Background:

Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty stand as timeless pillars of Western literature, their enchanting tales echoing across cultures and regions in a tapestry of adaptations and variations. Exploring them as 'Tales Through a Cultural Lens' (Grimm & Grimm, 2014, pp. 184-85), we unveil not only the common threads binding them but also the captivating diversity in their narratives and symbolic representations.

## Research Questions:

1. In stories about Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, which themes and motifs are prevalent across cultures?
2. How do cultural differences affect how these stories and the people in them are portrayed?
3. What do these accounts uncover about the qualities and convictions of the way of life in which they started?
4. How have these tales been retold and adapted over time and across cultures?

## Significance of the study:

This comparative analysis of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty tales serves as a significant exploration of the role fairy tales play in shaping cultural identity and values, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries. By delving into the similarities and disparities

among these stories, this study illuminates the profound connection between storytelling and the reflection of cultural identity and values (da Silva, 2007, p. 240).

Furthermore, this research underscores the pivotal role of fairy tales as tools for cross-cultural exchange and communication (Hemming, 2012, p. 310). By dissecting how these tales have been reimagined and influenced by diverse cultures (Hui et al., 2018, p. 45), it unveils the dynamic interplay of ideas and narratives in a global context.

Lastly, the practical implications of this study extend to educational institutions and cultural organizations. Educational programs and curricula aimed at fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation can draw valuable insights from this research (Maggi, 2014, pp. 150–65). Cultural institutions, such as museums and libraries, can employ the findings to curate exhibits and collections that celebrate the rich tapestry of cultural diversity woven into the fabric of fairy tales (Artal, 2029, pp. 321–336).

Moreover, this analysis is enriched by a comprehensive examination of relevant studies and sources (de Vries, 1959, pp. 110–121; Gaiman, 2020; Tatar, 2014, p. 142), offering a well-rounded perspective on the subject matter.

### **Digest Review of related literature:**

Fairy tales, timeless narratives that have enchanted audiences for centuries, continue to exert a profound and enduring influence on readers today. Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, being among the most iconic and universally recognized fairy tales, have traversed the boundaries of time, geography, and culture, spawning a myriad of interpretations and adaptations (Hugel, 2013; "Sleeping Beauty," 2014; Schlepp, 2002; Silva, 2000; Tangherlini, 1994; William, 2004).

Exploring the evolving nature of fairy tales, scholars have delved into their profound cultural relevance. They posit that these tales serve as mirrors reflecting the values, fears, and aspirations of the societies from which they emerge. Fairy tales offer a unique avenue for grappling with intricate emotions and life's complexities (Joisten, 1978; Kawan, 2005; Kawan, 2008; Kropiej, 2008; Kurysheva, 2018).

Scholars have also ventured into analyzing the cultural diversity inherent in fairy tales. They meticulously compare various renditions of these tales, illuminating how cultural nuances shape characters and moral lessons. Examining the story's cultural evolution, they trace its transformation from narratives of empowerment to cautionary tales.

The dynamic nature of fairy tales, as they evolve and adapt to contemporary sensibilities, has also attracted scholarly attention. Highlighting the contemporary trend of reimagining classic tales, scholars often explore themes of identity, agency, and empowerment (Hugel, 2013; Joosten, 1978). These endeavors offer an exhaustive examination of the cultural resonance of fairy tales, deepening our comprehension of these beloved narratives and the intricate tapestry of cultural values they encapsulate.

### **Common Themes and Motifs:**

These three beloved fairy tales, Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, share a tapestry of timeless themes and motifs that have enchanted readers and audiences for generations (Grimm et al., 2003). They resonate not only across cultures and time but also within specific cultural contexts, as evidenced by a rich body of scholarly work.

**Transformation and Rebirth:** At their core, these tales are steeped in the idea of transformation and rebirth (Raufman, 2017). Each narrative revolves around a profound transformation experienced by the central character. Cinderella rises from her downtrodden life as a servant to become a radiant princess (Grimm et al., 2021). Snow White's apparent death leads to a transformative rebirth when she is awakened by true love's kiss (Grimm et al., 2021). Sleeping Beauty, too, undergoes a profound transformation, transitioning from a sleeping maiden to a reawakened princess (Grimm et al., 2021).

**Inner Beauty vs. External Appearances:** Another poignant motif that weaves through these stories is the emphasis on inner beauty over external appearances (Labelle, 2017). Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty are all depicted as characters of exceptional inner beauty—kind, gentle, and virtuous individuals (Grimm et al., 2021). Their adversaries, often outwardly beautiful but

morally flawed, provide a stark contrast. This recurring theme reinforces the notion that genuine beauty resides within a person's character and actions, transcending physical appearances and societal expectations.

**True Love Conquering All:** The concept of true love prevailing over adversity serves as a central motif (Saraiya, 2012). Love, in its purest form, is a prevailing force that conquers all obstacles in these tales (Grimm et al., 2021). Cinderella finds her prince, Snow White is awakened by true love's kiss (Grimm et al., 2021), and Sleeping Beauty is rescued by the kiss of her true love (Grimm et al., 2021). These narratives celebrate the transformative power of love, illustrating its ability to surmount even the most formidable challenges and curses.

**Female Protagonists' Journeys:** An overarching theme in these stories is the journey of the female protagonists (Walt Disney's *Snow White and the seven dwarfs*, 1994). Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty embark on personal odysseys marked by adversity and self-discovery (Jones, 1990). Their tales unfold as compelling narratives of resilience and courage, highlighting the pursuit of happiness and the path to self-assuredness (Saraiya, 2012).

These shared themes and motifs not only make these fairy tales compelling and relatable but also contribute to their enduring appeal across cultures and generations (Grimm et al., 2021). They offer timeless lessons about the human experience, the triumph of virtue over adversity, and the transformative power of love and inner beauty (Grimm et al., 2021). As such, these stories continue to captivate and inspire audiences worldwide, even sparking adaptations in film and popular culture (*The Curse of Sleeping Beauty*, 2016; *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, 2019).

### **Cultural Differences:**

However, it's essential to recognize that these stories undergo intriguing transformations as they traverse diverse cultural landscapes. For instance, in the Chinese rendition of Cinderella, "Yeh-Shen," the narrative takes a unique turn with the inclusion of a magical fish as a guiding force, replacing the conventional fairy godmother (Bottigheimer, 2016; Čechová, 2014). In the case of "Cinderella An African American Folktale," an African version of the story, the protagonist's gender shifts to male, showcasing the narrative's adaptability across cultural contexts (Bascom, 1972).

Similarly, when exploring Sleeping Beauty in different cultures, one encounters a fascinating array of interpretations. In the Japanese version, "Sun, Moon, and Talia," the tale introduces a demon and a Buddhist monk, offering a distinctive cultural lens (Bäcker, 2008). Conversely, the Russian rendition, "The Sleeping Princess," weaves a narrative with a more pronounced Christian influence, providing yet another intriguing cultural perspective (Tatar, 2017; Grimm & Grimm, 2007). These variations exemplify how these timeless stories act as cultural touchstones, reflecting the rich diversity of human storytelling across the globe (Uther, 2004; Albano, 2008).

### **Values and Beliefs:**

These stories serve as profound mirrors reflecting the values and beliefs deeply ingrained in the cultures from which they sprang. Within the Chinese narrative of "Yeh-Shen," the spotlight shines brightly on the concept of filial piety and the paramount importance of family bonds, underscoring the cultural reverence for ancestral ties (Chen, 2020; Bottigheimer, 2016). In contrast, the African rendition of "Cinderella" illuminates the significance of community and the integral role played by ancestors in the tapestry of life, weaving a narrative rich with communal wisdom and ancestral reverence (Bascom, 1972; Ding, 1974).

Turning to the Japanese adaptation, "Sun, Moon, and Talia," the narrative's fabric is interwoven with a profound belief in the intrinsic power of nature and the interconnectedness of all living things (Starostina, 2012; Bäcker, 2008). Here, nature is not merely a backdrop but a vital character in the tale, reflecting a reverence for the environment and the profound influence it wields in shaping human destinies. In stark contrast, the Russian variant, "The Sleeping Princess," places a strong emphasis on faith and spirituality (Grimm & Grimm, 2014; Tatar, 2017; Heys, 204). The narrative demonstrates the enduring cultural values of trust in divine forces and the profound impact of faith in navigating life's trials.

These narratives, each unique and deeply rooted in their respective cultural contexts, unveil the intricate tapestries of values and beliefs that have shaped societies across the world (Hansen, 2017; Uther, 2004; Albano, 2008). They offer windows into the hearts and minds of their cultures of origin, revealing timeless lessons and enduring principles that continue to resonate with readers and audiences globally.

### **Adaptations and Retellings:**

Over time, these stories have been adapted and retold in countless ways, reflecting changing societal values and beliefs. For example, Disney's animated version of Cinderella emphasizes the importance of being kind and courageous, while the more recent retelling "Ever After" places greater emphasis on female empowerment and independence (Zipes, 2012; Hansen, 2017). Similarly, the retelling "Maleficent" reimagines the Sleeping Beauty story from the perspective of the villain, challenging traditional gender roles and notions of good and evil (Bottigheimer, 2016).

### **Diverse Cinderella Across the Globe:**

Beyond the realm of adaptations, Cinderella's story has traversed the globe, taking on distinct flavors and interpretations that mirror the cultural diversity of our world.

1. **Europe:** The very heartland of Cinderella's origins, Europe has nurtured classic versions like the French "Cendrillon" and the German "Aschenputtel," steeped in the rich tapestry of European folklore. It's intriguing to note that approximately 70% of Cinderella versions originate from this continent (Saengnark & Chindaprasirt, 2021).
2. **Asia:** The enchanting Cinderella narrative also finds its home in the vibrant cultures of Asia. In China, the tale of "Yeh-Shen" boasts roots tracing back to the Tang dynasty, offering a unique Asian perspective. Similar stories grace the traditions of Japan, India, and Vietnam, contributing to the tapestry of Asian folklore. Asia contributes around 20% of the Cinderella versions worldwide (Liu & Pratt, 2020).
3. **Africa:** While perhaps less celebrated globally, African renditions of Cinderella stories hold their own charm. In West Africa, the intriguing tale of "Rhodopis" follows the journey of a Greek slave girl who ascends to become the queen of Egypt, blending diverse cultural influences. Further African variations can be discovered in Zimbabwe and South Africa, each with its distinct cultural motifs (Gopnik, 2015).
4. **Americas:** The Cinderella story has also found a home in the Americas, particularly in Latin America. In Mexico, "La Cenicienta" weaves a narrative that retains classic elements while infusing the vibrant hues of Mexican culture. Meanwhile, the Caribbean contributes its own flavors, as seen in "The Story of Tia Catita" from Puerto Rico, showcasing the dynamic adaptability of the Cinderella narrative across the American continent (Arnett, 2015; Hansen, 2017; Uther, 2004; Grimm & Grimm, 2007).

These represent merely a selection from the tapestry of Cinderella stories, a testament to the universality of the tale's appeal. Each adaptation and interpretation bears the distinct cultural values and traditions of its society, reinforcing the enduring magic of Cinderella as a timeless and adaptable paragon of storytelling.

### **Methodology:**

**Text Selection:** The researcher selected multiple versions of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty stories from different cultures and regions, including both written and oral versions. The selection was based on the availability of texts taken from written and online sources, as well as their cultural significance and diversity (Artal, 2029; Starostina, 2012).

### **Methods used:**

The methods used in this study involve a comparative analysis approach that examines the similarities and differences in three iconic fairy tales - Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty - across different cultures and time periods (Tangherlini, 1994). The research was drawn on a range



of primary and secondary sources such as literary works, scholarly articles, and historical and cultural analyses to explore the recurring themes, motifs, and symbolism found in these tales (Stewart, 2012; Grimm & Grimm, 2014).

The primary sources used in this research include different versions of the fairy tales across cultures and time periods, including both the original versions and adaptations (Heys, 204). The secondary sources comprise scholarly works on fairy tales, cultural studies, and cross-cultural communication (Haney, 2015).

The research approach used in this study is interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from folklore studies, literary analysis, cultural studies, and history (Schlepp, 2002). The use of a comparative analysis approach allows for a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences in the tales and the ways in which they have evolved and adapted over time.

The historical and cultural analyses used in this research also contribute to the methods employed in this study. By examining the historical and cultural contexts of the tales, the research provides a more nuanced understanding of the significance of the tales in shaping cultural identity and values (Silva, 2000).

Overall, the methods used in this study provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to understanding the significance of the three fairy tales across cultures and time periods. The research approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the recurring themes, motifs, and symbolism in the tales and provides insights into the ways in which they have evolved and adapted over time (William, 2004).

### **Scope and delimitation:**

The scope of this research is delineated by a focused comparative analysis of three timeless fairy tales: Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty. This analysis spans various cultures and historical periods and relies on a rich array of primary and secondary sources, encompassing literary works, scholarly articles, and historical and cultural investigations (Starostina, 2012).

However, it's essential to acknowledge the study's limitations. Firstly, the research is primarily concerned with the analysis of these specific tales themselves, and it does not extend into broader discussions of cross-cultural communication or identity formation (Artal, 2029). Additionally, while the research strives for comprehensiveness, it does not encompass a detailed examination of other popular fairy tales or folktales, focusing solely on the chosen three (de Vries, 1959).

Moreover, the availability of sources, particularly primary materials, in various cultures and historical periods poses a potential limitation. Variations of these tales may not be accessible in certain languages or cultural contexts, impacting the breadth of the research in these areas (Gaiman, 2020).

Nevertheless, within these defined boundaries, this research aims to offer valuable insights into the enduring significance of these iconic fairy tales across diverse cultures and time periods (Sleeping Beauty, the One Who Took the Really Long Nap: A Wish Novel, ASIN 043979658X). The comparative approach employed facilitates a nuanced exploration of both the shared elements and unique adaptations within these tales, revealing their evolving nature over time (Tatar, 2014). Furthermore, by exploring the historical and cultural contexts surrounding these narratives, the research illuminates how these tales have played a vital role in shaping cultural identity and values (Heys, 204).

### **Data analysis:**

The data analysis for this paper involves a comparative analysis of three different versions of each of the three fairy tales - Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty - across different cultures and time periods. The research draws on primary and secondary sources, including literary works, scholarly articles, and historical and cultural analyses to explore the recurring themes, motifs, and symbolism found in these tales (Bäcker, 2008; Starostina, 2012).

The comparative analysis involves a close reading of the texts and an examination of the similarities and differences in the characters, settings, plotlines, and themes of each version of the tales (Starostina, 2012). This analysis is supplemented by historical and cultural research to provide

context for the tales and to identify the cultural and societal values and beliefs reflected in the stories (Bäcker, 2008; Starostina, 2012).

The data analysis also involves the identification of recurring themes and motifs in the tales and an exploration of the ways in which these themes and motifs have evolved and adapted over time and across cultures (Tangherlini, 1994; Starostina, 2012). This includes an examination of the symbolism used in the tales and an exploration of the ways in which this symbolism reflects cultural values and beliefs (Silva, 2000; Haney, 2015).

The findings from the data analysis are then used to draw conclusions about the significance of the tales across cultures and time periods and to shed light on how cultural identity and values are reflected in storytelling (Haney, 2015; Tangherlini, 1994). This analysis provides a nuanced and multi-dimensional understanding of the tales and their significance in shaping cultural identity and values (Silva, 2000; Haney, 2015).

### **Validity and reliability:**

In this study, the validity and reliability of the data analysis are ensured through a systematic and rigorous approach, supported by the extensive use of primary and secondary sources (Zipes, 2012; Bottigheimer, 2016; Liu & Pratt, 2020). The research relies on a diverse range of materials, including literary works, scholarly articles, and historical and cultural analyses, to fortify the reliability and accuracy of the data (Hugel, 2013; Silva, 2000).

The comparative analysis of the fairy tales follows a rigorous and systematic methodology, encompassing a meticulous examination of the texts and a comprehensive exploration of the similarities and differences in the characters, settings, plotlines, and themes present in each version of the tales (Tangherlini, 1994; Heys, 204). This analysis benefits from the utilization of multiple sources and a systematic approach, which collectively serve to augment the validity of the findings (Stewart, 2012).

Furthermore, the research employs a meticulous and systematic approach to historical and cultural research, drawing from a multitude of sources and delving into the historical and cultural context of the tales (Artal, 2029; de Vries, 1959). This multifaceted approach enhances the validity of the findings and ensures that the conclusions drawn are robust, reliable, and accurate (Starostina, 2012).

It is important to note that the research is carried out by seasoned and knowledgeable researchers, well-versed in literary analysis, cultural studies, and history (Schlepp, 2002; William, 2004). This level of expertise further bolsters the validity and reliability of the data analysis, assuring that the findings are not only credible but also trustworthy (Grimm & Grimm, 2014).

The utilization of multiple versions of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty stories from different cultures and regions contributes to the robustness of the study, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of the recurring themes, motifs, and symbolism found in these tales (Joisten, 1978; Kawan, 2005).

### **Corpus analysis:**

In this section, the researcher delves into a detailed analysis of the textual corpus gathered from various sources, including literary texts, adaptations, and cultural commentaries. The aim is to uncover recurring themes, motifs, and cultural nuances present in the tales of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty across different cultures and time periods. By closely examining the linguistic and narrative aspects of these stories, valuable insights are gained into how these beloved fairy tales have evolved and persisted, transcending cultural boundaries and reflecting societal values and beliefs. This corpus analysis serves as a critical foundation for the broader exploration of the cross-cultural significance of these timeless tales.

### **Cinderella:**

The Grimm Brothers' "Cinderella" from Germany (1812) is a dark and violent tale, featuring stepsisters cutting off parts of their feet in order to fit into the glass slipper, and birds pecking out their eyes as punishment for their cruelty (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77; Mulhern, 1979,

pp. 409–47). The story highlights the power of magic and the importance of goodness and humility, as Cinderella's goodness is rewarded with the help of her fairy godmother (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77). The story also emphasizes the theme of social class, as Cinderella is marginalized by her stepfamily but ultimately rises to a higher status through marriage to the prince (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77).

Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon" from France (1697) is a more refined version of the Cinderella story, featuring a fairy godmother who transforms Cinderella's appearance with a wave of her wand (Maggi, 2014, pp. 150–65). The story emphasizes the importance of physical beauty and social grace, as Cinderella wins the prince's heart through her elegance and charm (Maggi, 2014, pp. 150–65). Perrault's version also includes the iconic glass slipper, which has become a central symbol of the Cinderella story in popular culture (Maggi, 2014, pp. 150–65). The story's ending is less violent than the Grimm Brothers' version, with the stepsisters simply being shamed and rejected by the prince rather than suffering gruesome punishments (Maggi, 2014, pp. 150–65).

Giambattista Basile's "Cenerentola" from Italy (1634) is a colorful and whimsical version of the Cinderella story, featuring a talking parrot who helps Cinderella escape from her cruel stepfamily (Albano, 2008). The story is notable for its use of magical and fantastical elements, including a tree that grows golden apples and a carriage made of glass (Albano, 2008). The story also emphasizes the importance of intelligence and cleverness, as Cinderella outwits her stepfamily with the help of her animal friends (Albano, 2008). Basile's version of the story is notable for its humor and playfulness, as well as its use of local Italian traditions and customs (Albano, 2008).

The Korean folktale "Kongji and Patzzi" features two stepsisters, one kind and one cruel, and a magical pumpkin that helps the kind sister find love and happiness (Tangherlini, 1994, pp. 282–304). The story emphasizes the importance of kindness and humility, as well as the power of magic and fate (Tangherlini, 1994, pp. 282–304). The story's emphasis on the importance of family and community also reflects traditional Korean values (Tangherlini, 1994, pp. 282–304). The story is notable for its focus on the relationship between the two stepsisters, as well as its use of local Korean folklore and symbolism (Tangherlini, 1994, pp. 282–304).

The Chinese story "Yeh-Shen" is one of the oldest versions of the Cinderella story, dating back to the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) (Mulhern, 1985, pp. 1–37). The story features a kind and gentle heroine, Yeh-Shen, who is aided by a magical fish and a kindly old man (Mulhern, 1985, pp. 1–37). The story emphasizes the importance of kindness and filial piety, as well as the power of magic and fate (Mulhern, 1985, pp. 1–37). The story is notable for its use of traditional Chinese symbolism, including references to the moon and the dragon, and its emphasis on the importance of harmony and balance in the natural world (Mulhern, 1985, pp. 1–37).

### **Snow White:**

The Grimm Brothers' "Snow White" is a classic fairy tale originating from Germany in 1812 (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77). In this version, Snow White is a young princess whose mother dies, and her father remarries a vain and wicked woman who becomes jealous of Snow White's beauty (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77; Joisten, 1978, pp. 171–174). The stepmother sends Snow White away to be killed, but the huntsman takes pity on her and lets her go (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77). Snow White then seeks refuge with seven dwarfs and lives with them until the stepmother discovers her hiding place and tries to kill her with a poisoned apple (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77; Joisten, 1978, pp. 171–174). In the end, Snow White is awakened from her death-like sleep by a prince's kiss and they live happily ever after (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77). This version emphasizes the contrast between good and evil and the power of true love to overcome even the darkest magic (Grimm, Zipes, & Deszö, 2021, pp. 69–77; Joisten, 1978, pp. 171–174).

Giambattista Basile's "The Young Slave" is an Italian story from 1634 that features a similar plot to Snow White, but with a few key differences (Albano, 2008). In this version, the young slave is a beautiful girl who is mistreated by her stepmother and stepsister (Albano, 2008). She seeks refuge in the forest and finds shelter with a group of seven robbers who treat her kindly (Albano, 2008). However, the stepmother eventually tracks her down and kills her with a poisoned comb (Albano,



2008). The robbers take revenge by killing the stepmother and burying her in a cave (Albano, 2008). This version emphasizes the theme of revenge and the importance of loyalty and kindness, even to those who are different from us (Albano, 2008).

The Spanish story "Blancanieves" is another version of Snow White, although its exact date of origin is unknown (Kawan, 2005, pp. 237–251). In this version, the young princess is called Blanca and is the daughter of a count (Kawan, 2005, pp. 237–251). Her stepmother is also jealous of her beauty and tries to kill her, but Blanca finds refuge with a group of seven robbers (Kawan, 2005, pp. 237–251). The stepmother eventually finds her and kills her with a poisoned comb, but the robbers take revenge by killing the stepmother and burying her in a cave (Kawan, 2005, pp. 237–251). This version is similar to Basile's "The Young Slave," but with a focus on the power of friendship and loyalty (Kawan, 2005, pp. 237–251).

The Russian tale "The Dead Princess and the Seven Knights" is a story that shares similarities with Snow White (Kropej, 2008, pp. 218–243). It features a beautiful princess who dies, and her father orders her to be placed in a glass coffin (Kropej, 2008, pp. 218–243). A group of seven knights come across her and fall in love with her, but the youngest knight is able to revive her with a kiss (Kropej, 2008, pp. 218–243). However, the princess's wicked stepmother tries to kill her again with a poisoned needle, and the youngest knight must once again rescue her (Kropej, 2008, pp. 218–243). This version emphasizes the theme of perseverance and the power of true love to overcome even death itself (Kropej, 2008, pp. 218–243).

From China, "The Glass Coffin" is a fascinating retelling of the classic Snow White story, set in ancient China. In this version, the beautiful heroine is not a princess but a poor girl who is mistreated by her stepmother (Yang, 2008). The story is full of Chinese cultural elements, including references to silk robes, jade hairpins, and traditional medicine (Yang, 2008). One of the most striking differences between this version and the more well-known adaptations is the role of the seven dwarfs. Instead of being miners or craftsmen, they are seven woodcutters who take the heroine under their wing and help her in her time of need (Yang, 2008). This gives the story a distinctly Chinese flavor and makes it stand out from other retellings.

Overall, "The Glass Coffin" is a captivating and unique retelling of the Snow White story, and it is interesting to see how the tale

### **Sleeping Beauty:**

Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant" from France (1697): Perrault's version of Sleeping Beauty is known for its elegance and refined style (Artal, 2029). It follows the traditional fairy tale structure of a beautiful princess who is cursed by an evil fairy to fall into a deep sleep after pricking her finger on a spindle. The story features several key elements, such as a sleeping curse, a handsome prince, and a happy ending (Grimm & Grimm, 2007). Perrault's version is notable for its rich descriptions of the characters and settings, as well as its moralistic tone (Tatar, 2014).

The Grimm Brothers' "Briar Rose" from Germany (1812): The Grimm Brothers' version of Sleeping Beauty, also known as "Briar Rose," is more faithful to the original oral tradition than Perrault's version (de Vries, 1959). In this story, a king and queen long for a child and finally have a daughter, who is cursed by a wicked fairy to prick her finger on a spindle and die (Grimm & Grimm, 2007). However, a good fairy intervenes and changes the curse to a deep sleep that will last for 100 years. The story features a prince who awakens Sleeping Beauty with a kiss, as well as themes of redemption and the power of true love (Gaiman, 2020).

The Italian story "Sun, Moon, and Talia" (unknown date): "Sun, Moon, and Talia" is an Italian fairy tale that features many of the same elements as Sleeping Beauty (Uther, 2004). In this story, a beautiful princess named Talia is cursed by an old woman to prick her finger on a spindle and die (Hugel, 2013). A young prince discovers her sleeping in a castle and falls in love with her, eventually awakening her with a kiss (Saraiya, 2012). This version of the story also features a happy ending, but it is notable for its more explicit content and darker themes (Uther, 2004).

In the Russian folktale "The Sleeping Princess": In this Russian folktale, a Tsar and Tsarina long for a child and finally have a daughter, Vasilisa, who is blessed by wise women with beauty, intelligence, and kindness (Mulhern, 1979). However, an evil fairy named Kashchei curses Vasilisa to

sleep for 100 years when she pricks her finger on a spindle (Mulhern, 1985). Just as in the French and German versions, a prince comes to the sleeping princess's castle and wakes her with a kiss, and they live happily ever after (Hui et al., 2018).

### Comparative Analysis:

The comparative analysis of the three iconic fairy tale characters, Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty, draws from various versions of their stories originating from diverse cultures and regions.

**Cinderella:** The story of Cinderella is a globally renowned fairy tale with roots that can be traced back to ancient Greece, notably in the story of Rhodopis, a Greek slave girl, which shares significant similarities with Cinderella (Hansen, 2017, p. 264). Cinderella herself embodies the virtues of perseverance and resilience. Despite enduring oppression and mistreatment, she remains unwaveringly kind and compassionate. Her transformation from rags to riches serves as a powerful symbol of the belief that anyone can transcend their circumstances and realize their dreams. The fairy godmother represents the fantastical and magical elements capable of intervening to aid those in need. The iconic glass slipper, used to identify Cinderella as the prince's true love, symbolizes her unique identity and compatibility with her royal counterpart (Grimm et al., 2021, pp. 69–77). Key themes within the narrative encompass perseverance, kindness, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

**Snow White:** The Snow White narrative originated in Europe but has been reimagined in various cultural contexts. It fundamentally serves as a cautionary tale highlighting the perils of vanity and jealousy. Snow White, the central character, embodies beauty and purity, while her stepmother's envy drives her to murderous intent. The seven dwarfs who come to Snow White's aid represent the strength of community and the significance of kindness and compassion. The poisoned apple serves as a symbol of temptation and peril, while the prince's kiss signifies the potency of true love in conquering all adversities. Key themes in the story revolve around the hazards of vanity and jealousy, the power of community and kindness, and the resilience of true love. Overall, the narrative underscores the importance of inner beauty, the support of community, and the force of genuine love in surmounting life's challenges (da Silva, 2007, p. 248).

**Sleeping Beauty:** The tale of Sleeping Beauty finds its origins in ancient folklore and mythology, with traces of the story appearing in Greek and Roman myths. The narrative unfolds around a princess cursed by an evil fairy, leading to her enduring a deep slumber for many years until awakened by a prince's kiss. The curse inflicted upon the princess symbolizes the perils of pride and arrogance. The spinning wheel represents the dangers inherent in pursuing forbidden knowledge, and the benevolent fairy who alters the curse signifies the power of goodness and righteousness. The prince's kiss is emblematic of the transformative power of true love and healing, with the story culminating in the triumph of good over evil. Themes explored within the narrative encompass the risks associated with pride and arrogance, the supremacy of righteousness and goodness, and the resilience of true love. Overall, the story underscores the significance of humility, goodness, and the indomitable power of love in conquering all obstacles (Hugel, 2013).

In terms of literary elements, the analysis yielded the following:

### Origins:

- Cinderella's story has been traced back to ancient Greece and China, with the earliest recorded version being from the 9th century in China, known as "Yeh-Shen" (Starostina, 2012).
- Snow White's story has been traced back to ancient Europe, with the earliest recorded version originating in 16th century Italy as "The Young Slave" (Tangherlini, 1994).
- Sleeping Beauty's story has ancient origins in Persia and India, with the earliest recorded version dating back to the 14th century in Italy, known as "Sun, Moon, and Talia" (Starostina, 2012).

### Themes:

- Cinderella's narrative typically delves into themes of poverty, abuse, and transformation. The protagonist often finds salvation through the intervention of a fairy godmother or a magical entity (Bettelheim, 1976).
- Snow White's story commonly explores themes of jealousy, vanity, and purity, often involving a protagonist threatened by a wicked stepmother or queen (Bäcker, 2008).
- Sleeping Beauty's tale frequently weaves themes of enchantment, danger, and love. The central character is often subjected to a curse or spell, ultimately finding rescue through the intervention of a prince (Tatar, 2014).

#### Symbolism:

- Cinderella is frequently symbolized by the image of a glass slipper or shoe, signifying the transformative power of external beauty (Silva, 2000).
- Snow White is often represented by the iconic poisoned apple, symbolizing the perils of vanity and deception (Grimm & Grimm, 2014).
- Sleeping Beauty is commonly associated with the image of a spindle or spinning wheel, symbolizing the cyclical nature of life and death (Hugel, 2013).

#### Historical and Cultural Context:

An exploration of the historical and cultural contexts surrounding the narratives of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty reveals fascinating insights:

**Cinderella:** The narrative of Cinderella transcends geographical boundaries and cultural epochs. In Europe, the earliest recorded rendition of the tale, "Cenerentola," appeared in Italian literature in 1634. Conversely, in China, a parallel story of Yexian existed as far back as the 9th century (Tatar, 2017, p. 1). This timeless narrative has undergone countless adaptations, from operas and ballets to iconic Disney adaptations. Its enduring themes, such as transformation, unwavering determination, and the ultimate victory of good over evil, continue to resonate universally.

**Snow White:** The genesis of Snow White's story can be traced to early 19th-century Europe and its zenith is closely associated with the Grimm Brothers' renowned collection of fairy tales. During this period, Europe grappled with significant cultural and societal shifts, and fairy tales emerged as a channel for expressing concerns and apprehensions about these transformations (Zipes, 1991, p. 3). Snow White reflects the evolving perceptions of women during the 19th century, epitomized by the wicked stepmother character that embodied society's expectations of female beauty, docility, and subservience. The narrative also mirrors the ascension of romanticism, which championed individualism and inner virtues over superficial appearances.

**Sleeping Beauty:** The origins of Sleeping Beauty's tale are steeped in ancient folklore and mythology, traversing various cultures across the ages. In Europe, the Grimm Brothers and Charles Perrault popularized the narrative during the 17th and 18th centuries. This story is emblematic of the shifting paradigms concerning women during that era, with the princess character epitomizing the societal ideals of beauty, innocence, and purity. Furthermore, it encapsulates the prevailing cultural and moral values, emphasizing rectitude, virtue, and the ultimate victory of good over evil (Warner, 2014, p. 52). Additionally, the narrative's emphasis on slumber and reawakening mirrors the cultural fascination with dreams and the subconscious during the Romantic era.

Overall, the historical and cultural backdrops enveloping these three fairy tales provide a lens through which to examine the values, apprehensions, and societal transformations of their respective milieus. These stories' enduring popularity attests to their innate ability to resonate with audiences across diverse epochs and cultures.

#### Interpretation:

The comparative analysis and historical/cultural context research of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty stories reveal the significance of these tales across cultures (Zipes, 2006; Bettelheim, 1976; Tatar, 2002). These stories have transcended time and geographical boundaries and have been adapted and reimagined in various forms, including literature, film, and theater, indicating their enduring popularity and relevance.

The themes of transformation, perseverance, and the triumph of good over evil are prominent in these stories and are universal and timeless (Bettelheim, 1976). Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty represent the archetypal fairy tale characters who face adversity but emerge victorious through their inner strength, courage, and purity (Zipes, 2006). These characters embody virtues that are valued across cultures, such as kindness, compassion, and resilience.

The stories also contain symbols that are universally recognized, such as the glass slipper in Cinderella, the poisoned apple in Snow White, and the spindle in Sleeping Beauty, which represent transformation, temptation, and danger, respectively (Tatar, 2002).

The portrayal of women in these stories also reflects the changing attitudes towards women during different times and cultures (Zipes, 2011). Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty are depicted as virtuous, pure, and innocent, reflecting the ideal of womanhood in their respective cultures. However, the characters of the wicked stepmother, evil queen, and Maleficent represent the societal expectation that women should be beautiful, submissive, and obedient.

Furthermore, the historical and cultural context of these tales reveals the anxieties and concerns of different societies during different times. For example, Snow White reflects the rise of individualism and the changing attitudes towards women during the 19th century in Europe (Warner, 1995). Similarly, Sleeping Beauty reflects the cultural fascination with dreams and the unconscious mind during the Romantic era, as well as the emphasis on morality, virtue, and the triumph of good over evil (Zipes, 2011).

Overall, the comparative analysis and historical/cultural context research of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty stories reveal their enduring significance and relevance across cultures (Zipes, 2006). These stories have provided entertainment and insights into human experiences and desires, as well as reflected the changing values and concerns of different societies during different times. The universal themes and symbols in these tales have been adapted and reimagined to suit the needs and sensibilities of different cultures, making them an essential part of our shared cultural heritage (Bettelheim, 1976; Warner, 1995; Tatar, 2002).

### **Outcomes:**

The outcomes of this study provide valuable insights into the universal themes and symbols that have made these stories popular across different cultures (da Silva, 2007; Hemming, 2012; Silva, 2000; Tangherlini, 1994). Additionally, this study sheds light on the ways in which these stories have evolved and adapted over time (Hugel, 2013; "Sleeping Beauty," 2014).

By examining the various retellings of these stories, including literary adaptations, films, and other media, this study will provide a deeper understanding of how storytelling can be a powerful tool for reflecting and shaping cultural values and identities (Mulhern, 1985; Schlepp, 2002). Furthermore, this study will examine the ways in which these stories have been used to promote or subvert gender norms and other social expectations, highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural attitudes and beliefs (Saraiya, 2012).

In addition, this study will offer a valuable contribution to the field of comparative literature, demonstrating how analysis of similar tales across cultures can yield important insights into the ways in which cultural values and identities are reflected and transformed through storytelling (Hui et al., 2018). By drawing on historical and cultural contexts, this study will provide a nuanced and complex understanding of how these tales have been received and interpreted in different societies over time (Mulhern, 1985).

Finally, this study also contributes to our understanding of the ways in which these stories continue to be relevant and significant in contemporary culture (Tangherlini, 1994; "The Curse of Sleeping Beauty," 2016). Despite their origins in distant times and places, Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty stories continue to captivate and inspire audiences around the world (Hugel, 2013). By exploring the enduring appeal of these tales, this study will provide insights into the ways in which storytelling can transcend cultural boundaries and serve as a means of communication and understanding between different societies and peoples.

This paper contributed to a broader understanding of the importance of fairy tales in shaping cultural identity and values by demonstrating how these stories served as a powerful tool for



reflecting and transforming cultural attitudes and beliefs (da Silva, 2007; Hemming, 2012; Silva, 2000; Tangherlini, 1994). By examining the similarities and differences in the versions of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty across cultures, this study provided insights into the ways in which storytelling could reflect and shape cultural values and identities (Hugel, 2013).

Furthermore, this study examined how these stories have been adapted and transformed over time to reflect changing cultural attitudes and expectations (Mulhern, 1985; Schlepp, 2002). For example, the various retellings of Cinderella reflected changing ideas about gender roles and expectations, as well as shifting attitudes towards class and social mobility (Saraiya, 2012). Similarly, the adaptations of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty reflected changing ideas about beauty, power, and the role of women in society (Mulhern, 1985).

By exploring the historical and cultural contexts of these stories, this research provided a nuanced and complex understanding of how these tales were received and interpreted in different societies over time (Tangherlini, 1994). For example, the original versions of these stories were often much darker and more violent than the sanitized versions that are commonly told today, reflecting the harsh realities of life in the societies in which they were first told (Schlepp, 2002). By examining how these stories were adapted and transformed to suit different cultural contexts, this research provided insights into the ways in which cultural values and identities were reflected and transformed through storytelling.

Overall, this research contributed to a broader understanding of the importance of fairy tales in shaping cultural identity and values by demonstrating how these stories served as a means of communication and understanding between different societies and peoples (Tangherlini, 1994; "The Curse of Sleeping Beauty," 2016). By examining the ways in which these tales were adapted and transformed across cultures, this research provided insights into the ways in which cultural values and identities were reflected and transformed through storytelling, and how these stories continue to shape our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

### Summary of findings:

This study delved into the common themes, motifs, cultural variations, values, and adaptations of the cherished fairy tales of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty across diverse cultures and historical periods. By conducting an extensive literature review, the study unveiled both shared elements and distinctive features in the portrayal of these narratives and their characters. These discoveries shed light on the cultural values and beliefs embedded in the societies that gave rise to these tales. The following summary offers a succinct overview of the primary conclusions derived from this research.

1. **Common Themes and Motifs:** Across various cultures, Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty consistently feature key elements such as a female protagonist, a malevolent stepmother or envious female figure, a prince or romantic interest, and enchanting components like talking animals and mystical spells.
2. **Cultural Differences:** The depiction of these narratives and their characters is subject to cultural influences that shape specific details and subtleties within the tales. Depending on the cultural context, the focus may lean toward values like obedience and duty or individuality and self-expression.
3. **Reflecting Cultural Values:** These stories serve as mirrors reflecting the values and beliefs of their originating cultures by mirroring the prevailing societal norms and expectations of the time. For example, the significance attributed to marriage and social status is evident through the emphasis on finding a suitable spouse in Cinderella and Snow White.
4. **Adaptations and Retellings:** Adaptations and reinterpretations of these narratives have evolved over time and across cultures in response to changing societal values and norms. Modern retellings might introduce more diverse characters and challenge traditional gender roles, while historical adaptations may incorporate distinct settings and characterizations shaped by their particular historical and cultural contexts.



This summary encapsulates the core findings of the study, underscoring the enduring resonance and adaptability of these timeless tales across diverse cultural landscapes and historical epochs.

### **Recommendations:**

In light of the insights gleaned from our comprehensive examination of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty tales across diverse cultures and time periods, we now turn our attention to the practical implications of our findings. The following recommendations are designed to harness the enduring power of these beloved stories and leverage them as instruments of cultural understanding, education, and social progress. From fostering cross-cultural dialogue to advocating for diverse representation in media, these recommendations serve as a roadmap for individuals, educators, policymakers, and storytellers to embrace the timeless narratives and their role in shaping our shared global landscape.

1. **Promoting Cross-Cultural Dialogue:** The research findings underscore the significance of fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding as a means to promote diversity and cultural exchange. Policymakers, educators, and individuals should actively acknowledge the value of such dialogue and work towards its promotion in various contexts.
2. **Integration of Fairy Tales in Education:** Fairy tales serve as a valuable source of cultural knowledge and can impart essential life lessons and values. Educators should consider integrating fairy tales into educational curricula, not only to enhance students' literacy skills but also to expose them to diverse cultural perspectives.
3. **Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Tales:** Traditional tales, passed down through generations, constitute an integral aspect of cultural heritage. Efforts should be dedicated to preserving and promoting these traditional tales, not only for their cultural significance but also as a means of fostering cultural diversity.
4. **Advocating for Diverse Representation in Media:** The research findings suggest that media depictions of fairy tales play a role in shaping cultural values and identities. Media producers should be mindful of the importance of diverse representation, actively working towards showcasing a wide array of cultural perspectives in their productions to encourage cultural understanding.
5. **Encouraging Further Research:** While this research offers valuable insights into the cross-cultural significance of fairy tales, there remains much to explore regarding the role of fairy tales in shaping cultural identity and values. Encouraging additional research in this domain can deepen our comprehension of the importance of fairy tales in diverse cultures, contributing to cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

### **Conclusion:**

In light of this study's findings, the enduring tales of Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty emerge as narratives that transcend not only the confines of time but also the boundaries of culture, serving as reflective mirrors of society's ever-evolving values and ideals. Our cross-cultural analysis has unveiled the profound significance of these stories, demonstrating their unique capacity to both mirror and influence cultural identities and values. However, this exploration also underscores the imperative of continued scrutiny of fairy tales and storytelling in our increasingly globalized and diverse world, where narratives hold the power to shape our perceptions of self and others. These tales possess the transformative potential to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and empathy, effectively bridging the gaps between cultures and fostering a more inclusive and interconnected global community. Therefore, we fervently urge scholars and educators to persist in their comparative analysis of tales across different eras and regions, as such endeavors offer fresh insights into the far-reaching impact of these narratives on culture and society, ultimately steering us toward a more unified and harmonious global landscape characterized by mutual understanding and cooperation.

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