

# Animated Adaptations: A Study of Disney Animation as Modern Mythology & Folklore

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Disney animation has had a stronghold on the fairytale genre since the release of its first feature length film in 1937: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Since then it has released over 50 feature length movies from the Disney Animated Studios and countless more from its other branches of its company. In order to study the popularity of Disney animated films, I first analysed the origin of fairytales in mythology and folklore, with specific focus on European mythology and folklore. Then I looked at the specific versions of the stories that the Disney studio adapted for their films: such as the collected works of the Brothers Grimm. And then I analyzed three films from the studio for my case study: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Hercules* (1997) and *Tangled* (2010).

As part of the study, I also looked at how fairytales are structured. For this I mostly referred to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, which I use as a theme throughout my paper. When compared with their adapted texts, the Disney films reveal the same basic story-structure, or Monomyth as Campbell describes it. The study revealed some interesting perceptions on religion, and the changing relationship between monotheistic and pagan religions throughout the history of storytelling. This is further echoed in the changing attitude within society towards technology, including communication technologies like animation.

Disney animation has become the most popular medium, especially in America, through which to tell mythology and folklore. In a country where the traditional forms of European folklore never had the underlying strength that it does in its places of origin, Disney adaptation have taken hold in America. Jack Zipes describes the "Disney Standard" (1997, p.90) against which "any other filmmaker who has endeavoured to adapt a fairy tale for the screen" must measure, not just in America anymore, but the world over. Thus, Disney Animation has become the mythology and folklore of the modern world.