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HANSEL AND GRETEL

Fairy tales have been read to children for many years in helping kids grow, teaching them morals and life values. Some features that make up a fairytale are the characters such as fairies, goblins, elves, witches, trolls, talking animals and giants. But more so the psychology plays a major effect in fairy tales. *Hansel And Gretel*, by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm is a great example of a fairy tale with many deep meanings and effects behind it.

Hansel And Gretel is about a young brother (Hansel) and sister (Gretel) being abandoned by their stepmother while the father puts no effort to save them. Somehow they need to find their way back home but they get lost and kidnapped by a cannibalistic witch. A major factor that makes a fairy tale is a tale of a journey, and in *Hansen And Gretel* it shows that journey. In the story it says, "Oh Hansel, we're lost. Hush Gretel said Hansel. Don't worry. I'll find a way." "Don't worry little sister. Just go to sleep, God won't forsake us" (101). This quote shows that the older sibling Hansel is taking the lead, maturing, following his own path and intuition. That is a mini hero's journey because he ended up bringing him and his sister back home by using bright colorful pebbles as a track map.

Most fairy tales teach young kids core values and how to deal with problems. For instance, the stepmother became furious when she saw the kids making it back in one piece the first time. She's in shock that the kids didn't get lost and found their way back home. But, the outcome is different the second time. The father and stepmother decided to abandon them again, but deeper into the forest. According to Bettelheim *The Uses Of Enchantment* he states that, "the debilitating consequences of trying to deal with life's problems by means of regression and denial, which reduces one's ability to solve problems"(160). The first time Hansel used his thought of thinking, he figured out a plan of using bright pebbles to mark a path home. The second time around, Hansel showed that he in fact is still a kid because he didn't use his intelligence again. Using bread crumbs as a path back to home isn't the smartest choice to make knowing the birds and other animals out there can eat it. At the end of the day Hansel doesn't have enough wisdom yet and he let in denial and regression which led him not being able to return home.

Fairy tales show some type of growth in a character even though the stepmother is evil, abandoning the children so that she and her husband may survive. On the contrary, she is actually helping the kids become more independent than dependant, letting them find their own destiny. As Bettelheim states in *The Uses Of Enchantment*, "the mother represents the source of all food to the children. When the mother is no longer willing to meet all his oral demands which leads him to believe that suddenly Mother has become unloving, selfish, rejecting"(159). This is allowing the kids to grow and to overcome their obstacles. Making them

believe that now they gonna have to be responsible for themselves. In *Hansel And Gretel*, they have gotten so hungry that finally a house “was made of bread, and the roof was made of cake and the windows of sparkling sugar. Let’s eat said Hansel”(103). So then Hansel and Gretel began eating the house like pigs. For the past three days Hansel and Gretel are hungry and starved of food. The house had someone inside living, an old lady comes out. She greets them with open arms and leads them into her home with more food. However, Hansel and Gretel didn’t know she was actually a wicked witch who eats kids and this was a trap to bring them into her home.

Now the witch brought them in and has taken Hansel away to a shed to eat him. Gretel has fallen in such a tough position she doesn’t know what to do. But, only knows that she has to save her brother. She finally gained the courage, used her thoughtfulness and took the right action at the right time to save herself and her brother. In the fairy tale, the witch wants Gretel to get in the oven to see how hot the oven is to bake some bread. As stated in *Hansel And Gretel*, “I’ve heated the oven and kneaded the dough. Crawl in and see if it’s hot enough for the bread. I don’t know how. How do I get in ? Silly goose, the opening is big enough. Look. Even I can get in”(104). Gretel took advantage of this moment she knew why the witch wants her to go inside the oven, so that she will close the door and roast her. Instead she played dumb and used it to make the witch get inside the oven. As soon as the witch stuck her head and hands into the oven Gretel pushed her in and closed the iron door. The wicked witch burned to death.

Gretel saved her brother and in a way she grew as a person. As her brother in the beginning, he was the responsible one and now Gretel became a responsible girl herself and saved her brother. Now Hansel and Gretel have to get there way back home again. The children encounter an expanse of water and now there going to have to cross to get to the other side. Which means that there going to be seperated and rely on themselves. Bettelheim states that, "The school age child should develop consciousness of his personal uniqueness, of his individuality"(164). This means that Hansel and Gretel can no longer share everything with each other, one has to live to some degree by themselves and succeed on their own. Gretel sees a way to help them cross the water. She spies a white duck and asks it to help them cross the water. Hansel seats himself on the ducks back and asks his sister to join him. But, she doesn't because the duck won't be able to carry them both. There gonna have to cross separately and they do.

After crossing the water there on the other side of the shore. According to *The Uses of Enchantment*, by Bettelheim he states that, "The children's experience at the witch's house has purged them of their oral fixations; after having crossed the water, they arrived at the other shore as more mature children, ready to rely on their own intelligence and initiative to solve life's problems"(164). Hansel and Gretel now return home to find out that the stepmother has died and with them they brought treasures from the witch's home. Now they have money to buy food and live a better life. Bettelheim also mentioned that, "It is females the stepmother and the witch who are inimical forces in this story. Gretel's importance in the children's deliverance reassures the child that a female can be a rescuer as well as a destroyer. Probably

even more important is the fact that Hansel saves them once and then later Gretel saves them again, which suggests to children that as they grow up they must come to rely more and more on their age mates for mutual help and understanding”(164-165). A child will get along more with people their age and have more connections than someone older. Someone older can't always understand the emotions going through someone younger just because times have changed. For example, an older person won't be able to understand how someone can be gay, what made them be gay and what's the reason that person is gay. A person that's younger is more open minded, wants to seek truth and accept it. Also, parts of the world people have become more giving and receiving, less judging and more understanding. To add on, in *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bettelheim it also states, “a young child, driven into his adventures by oral or oedipal problems, cannot hope to find happiness outside the home. If all is to go well in his development, he must work these problems out while still dependent on his parents. Only through good relations with his parents can a child successfully mature into adolescence”(165). Meaning that happiness should start and be found from home first because if it's not then the individual will not be able to overcome obstacles given by life. Like how to overcome problems being faced, what type of decisions to make and someone to trust. To end it, Hansel and Gretel lived happily ever after.

In conclusion, fairy tales have many psychological effects on kids, especially very young children. It allows them to explore their imaginations and feelings. Making them to think and be more in depth with life and reality. A lot of lessons and life values can be learned, engaging them in a way that a regular story wouldn't. Hansel and Gretel is a great example of a fairy tale.

Throughout the story it shows how both become mature enough to take responsibility into their own hands and become heroes themselves.

Work Cited

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