



# EXPERIENCES OF LITERATURE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WITH TRADITIONAL FAIRY TALES AND THEIR MODERN MOVIE ADAPTATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This study, implemented in June 2026, examined how junior high school literature teachers and students interpreted and constructed meanings from traditional fairy tales and their film versions of *Snow White*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. It explored how print and film differed in their interpretations of themes, characters, and moral lessons, and how media exposure, cultural background, and social context influenced them. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry design and employing a detailed data analysis approach, focus group interviews were conducted, and the data were analyzed using the Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space (TDNIS). The results indicated that exposure to various forms of literary texts influenced students' interpretative perspectives and critical responses. Hence, integrating traditional and modern adaptations improved literary understanding and critical engagement. It is recommended that teachers incorporate film adaptations alongside traditional texts and employ a wide array of responsive and reflective strategies to enhance students' critical thinking and cultural awareness.

**Keywords:** *Critical Thinking, Cultural awareness, fairy tales, film adaptations, literature, Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space*

## INTRODUCTION

Fairy-tale expressions like "Once upon a time" and "A long time ago" frequently introduce discussions in both informal conversations and academic analyses. Storytellers originally transmitted fairy tales orally. Several scholars categorize this genre as narrative texts featuring literary features such as fantastical settings, distinctive characters, and magical

elements that significantly influence the plots and themes (Erlidawati, 2022). Modern film versions of classic fairy tales, such as *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), and *The Little Mermaid* (2023), enable comparison with their classical literary counterparts, especially in terms of narrative transformation and intertextual development. The themes of vanity, envy, beauty ideals, and gender roles are explored in these adaptations. Hence, this study addressed three interpretive approaches: (1) intertextual literacy via text and film adaptation comparison, (2) socio-political discourse via themes of gender, identity, and power, and (3) contextualization through the impact of contemporary media upon meaning-making.

Aligned with DepEd's Grade 10 English Curriculum (MELCs), this study underscores literary appreciation, reading comprehension, and the critical discourse and analysis of fairy tales. It emphasized intertextuality, socio-cultural theory, and reader-response theory, which further reinforce these learning competencies, especially since these theories prompt students to expand these learning constructs, particularly those related to personal meaning and socio-cultural implications, such as gender issues and power struggles.

Although previous research has examined the adaptations of fairy tales and their alterations across media, there has been less emphasis on how literature teachers and students interpret traditional fairy tales and modern film adaptations in the classroom. Thus, this study responds to the intersection of socio-political discourse, intertextual literacy, and contextualization in understanding interpretations of fairy tales in classroom-based practices of literary appreciation.

## Research Questions

1. What interpretations do Junior High School students and teachers form, given the analysis of traditional fairy tales and their modern adaptations in terms of literary evolution, thematic shifts, and sociocultural influences?
2. How do Junior High literature teachers gauge students' literary appreciation of fairy tales on socio-cultural and political insights?
3. To what extent do the perspectives of Junior High students and teachers contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the broader cultural implications of revising traditional fairy tales into modern films?

## METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative design, drawing on a narrative inquiry approach. Narrative inquiry was undertaken in various ways, including interviews, biographies, historical texts, and narratives (Ford, 2020). In addition, the approach systematizes the records into a chronological order that summarizes the participants' lived experiences (Lima, 2023).

The sample size used was six (6), comprising three (3) Grade 10 students and three (3) literature teachers from one of the junior high schools in Greater Manila. These participants were chosen for specific qualities, such as qualifications, exposure to the material, and level of engagement, ensuring they could contribute meaningful, experience-based insights.

A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect data. Before data collection, a validation process was done to ensure the interview guide was reliable and valid. At least three validators, including Master Teachers, Professors, and Principals with relevant expertise in literature and education, were involved.

Three (3) fairy tale stories were the subject of the study:

1. *Snow White*
2. *Beauty and the Beast*
3. *The Little Mermaid*

Moreover, it used thematic analysis to frame and understand the participants' lived experiences and their experiences of meaning-making. Narrative inquiry was also used to identify, analyze, and examine the participants' specific lived experiences as revealed in their stories (Lane, 2024).

The study used the Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space framework for narrative inquiry developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

## RESULTS

The results are divided into three sections: (1) students' and (2) teachers' responses, and (3) Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space (TDNIS) Analysis

### 1. Students' Interpretation of Literary Evolution in Fairy Tales

#### *Maturing Perception and Layered Understanding of Fairy Tales*

One participant articulated, *"When I was a child, my perception of fairy tales was very stereotypical. I thought they were simply about heroes fighting mythical... But as I grew older and matured, I began to see different layers in these stories."*-(S1).

#### *Expansion of Character Complexity and World-Building*

Across traditional and modern versions, this emphasizes that contemporary storytelling develops literary depth through character construction and world-building within genre conventions among participants.

The learner expressed, *"It's set 15 years later, so you can really see how much the characters have grown and changed."*

### *Shifts in Moral and Philosophical Focus*

A student stated that, *“One noticeable change is Ariel’s motivation to go on land... In the original story, it wasn’t just curiosity... There’s a theme about having an immortal soul as a human versus a mortal soul as a mermaid.”*-(S1), this observation demonstrates a critical interpretation of the philosophical shift in the modern retellings of fairy tales.

### *Reinvention through Generational and Intertextual Adaptations*

Statements such as, *“There’s a series called Ever After High... It takes traditional fairy tale stories and focuses on the children of the main characters.”*, and *“It doesn’t just follow Little Red Riding Hood’s daughter and the wolf’s child... If it’s found out that these two characters didn’t follow their destinies, something like an impending doom could happen.”*-(S3).

### *Realism and Narrative Intensity in Modern Adaptations*

The nuances of this experience are best described through the following accounts: *“Her sisters warned her that if she didn’t kill the prince, she would die next... She pulled her hand back and threw the knife into the sea, and blood droplets fell.”*-(S3) and *“In the original text, when Snow White was resting in the glass casket... the servants accidentally dropped it, and that’s when Snow White coughed up the piece of poisoned apple.”*-(S1).

### *Developing Analytical Appreciation of Narrative Structure*

#### *Questioning Morality and Justice*

Boundaries were established based on the students’ references, *“There’s the running joke about Stockholm Syndrome in Beauty and the Beast. And in Snow White, it seems sweet that the prince gave her a ‘true love’s kiss,’ but then you start to question why a prince would kiss a girl presumed to be dead.”*-(S3). The narrative reframes moral and ethical expectations.

### *Transformation of Target Audiences and Values*

Vividly captured by a student’s account during the interview, *“The originals were actually made for adults, but today’s adaptations, animated or live action, are clearly created for a younger audience. For me, all of those movies teach values that children can grow with.”*-(S1). It provides evidence that students gain enhanced awareness of target audiences, shifting from cautionary tales with a didactic intent to a more engaging storyline for an adult audience.

## ***Students' Interpretation of Socio-cultural Influences in Fairy Tales***

### ***Evolving Gender Roles and Empowerment***

As expressed by one student, *"Even in Snow White, the adaptation shows that no one really saved her except the prince with a kiss, but who saved the city or the kingdom they lived in? Some modern adaptations give more empowerment to women."*-(S3), this reflects on how characterized figures differ from original fairy tales to the modern-day film adaptations. The findings illustrate a broader pattern in the group's data that suggests a significant socio-cultural transformation in gender construction.

### ***Family Structures and Parental Influence***

One student repeatedly quoted, *"Even if a character is just supporting, their role is so important to the main character. You can see this in Beauty and the Beast: the father isn't a good man, and the mother is dying, which affected how the prince grew up."*, *"In The Little Mermaid, Ariel's father constantly restricted her from seeing humans because her mother died at the hands of a human. Because of his controlling personality and desire to keep her underwater, Ariel grew more curious."*, and *"There has to be something related to how you grew up, how your parents are. For me, parents shape your personality."*-(S3), these narratives signal that characters' behavior is influenced by family structure.

### ***Historical and Cultural Adaptation***

Complementing this view are the accounts coming from the participating students during the interview, one student mentioned, *"History. You can see in the past how people lived. For example, during the Anglo-Saxon period, they used different types of English in older texts."*, and *"I feel it was more male-dominated. But now it's quite different because of feminism."*-(S2), which proves that in interpreting fairy tales, there is integration of multiple disciplines across the narratives, which enhances critical awareness among the involved students.

### ***Social Perceptions and Biases***

A learner described the experience as, *"For me, I want to focus on Beauty and the Beast, both the original text and the movie adaptation. A social issue I see is how quickly people antagonize the Beast simply because of his appearance."*-(S1), which illustrates how the student identifies bias and discrimination as two of the most consistent motifs in fairy tales.

## **Students' Literary Appreciation of Fairy Tales in Political Insights**

### *Power, Authority, and Corruption*

Across the narratives, participants' accounts consistently referred to this theme, *"I now appreciate them on a deeper level because of concepts such as politics, changing gender roles, or the switching of gender stereotypes. I slowly came to understand these elements, and they helped me grow as a person."*-(S1), *"I related the Evil Queen...to corrupt politicians. I feel like the magic mirror symbolizes how they only care about themselves and not about the people they rule."*-(S2) *"You can see how badly she cheated her people in the movie...all they really care about is their pride."*-(S2) and *"The way he manipulated everyone into thinking that Maurice...was crazy...one lie turned everything around."*-(S3).

### *Justice, Responsibility, and Political Morality*

The salience of this theme is evident through these notable remarks, *"Yes. Themes can include issues like gender, justice, and family roles. What stands out to me is justice, which can definitely be a theme in fantasy. There's often an evil queen or a powerful person controlling others, which shows injustice. The important part is when somebody steps up for the right thing and for the truth, even when no one else will. That's what justice is about."*-(S1).

### *Political Awareness Through Adaptation*

When students think of fairy tales in such terms, they begin to develop a more sophisticated understanding of politics, moral agency, and the consequences inherent in social governance institutions. *"Through the characters, yes. That issue becomes more visible, and it makes me appreciate the original text more because I can see the improvements and the writers' desire to make the story resonate with their generation. Each writer, from the original to the most recent adaptation, tries to center the story on their own time so the lessons become clearer and the plot deepens with every adaptation."*-(S1).

## **Students' Literary Appreciation of Fairy Tales in Socio-cultural Insights**

### *Race, Cultural Diversity, and Inclusion*

One of the participants said, *"Yes, race. But if you check the movie adaptation, by the way, the actress who played Ariel is very beautiful, you'll notice she may not match the race shown in the classic animation."*, and *"Each sister represents one of the seven seas, so there are many cultures and skin tones. It's actually more realistic than imagining everyone with the same skin color."*-(S3),

### **Generational Relevance and Contextualization**

The sentiments: *“For me, the positive difference I see from adaptation to adaptation is that every version tries to explore something new... it always explores a new idea or an issue relevant to the generation in which it’s released.”*, *“Through the characters, yes. That issue becomes more visible... Each writer, from the original to the most recent adaptation, tries to center the story on their own time so the lessons become clearer and the plot deepens with every adaptation.”*, and *“If the adaptation stays close to the original, it carries the same impact, but at the same time, it reflects the generation in which it was released. I think the timing fit my own interests perfectly, especially when I was younger.”*-(S1).

### **Character Identification, Personal Connection, and Critical Self-Reflection**

The nuances are captured across participants’ reflections. The following accounts during the interview provide evidence to this: *“Personally, I relate to Belle a lot... That’s why I’m drawn to her character, her love for fantasy, and her personal yearning for something beyond the ordinary.”*-(S3), *“Heroism means doing the right thing even when no one stands with you. It’s about helping and saving those in need, even if they don’t ask for help. That’s a very important value for contemporary viewers.”*-(S1).

### **Societal Norms, Beauty Standards, and Prejudice**

Through literature, students recognize the potency of cultural literacy in their ability to embrace complex social systems and the value of representation. This experience is not isolated; it is a shared theme echoed by two participants. *“Yes, race... the actress who played Ariel... may not match the race shown in the classic animation... Each sister represents one of the seven seas, so there are many cultures and skin tones.”*-(S3), and *“Humans from the land see the mermaids as violent... That’s racism: fear and prejudice between different groups. But in the end, it’s a happy ending where they finally coexist.”*-(S1).

### **Students’ Literary Perspectives of Broader Socio-cultural Implications**

#### **Personal Growth and Moral Lessons**

Based on the statements, *“As I mentioned earlier, when I was a kid, I was often conflicted with my emotions. When my teachers told me these stories, they gave me a sense of comfort and taught me moral lessons. Those lessons helped shape who I am today.”*, and *“My experience with those stories was beautiful. They taught me a lot of lessons that helped shape who I am today.”*-(S2).

#### **Relatability and Empathy through Characters**

Students can identify with and empathize with people facing struggles and injustices, which supports their understanding of human behavior and socio-cultural experiences.

One student mentioned, *“Personally, I relate to Belle a lot... I also share her constant desire for more... I’m drawn to her character, her love for fantasy, and her personal yearning for something beyond the ordinary.”*-(S3), Another student emphasizes this point of view through these statements, *“A very relatable character for me... the Huntsman... I see myself as someone with strong ethics and morals... I relate to that... I understand.”* - (S1).

### *Generational and Cultural Relevance*

Several accounts support the expansion of the recurrent pattern, which demonstrates how fairy tales intensify their generational and cultural relevance. Statements like, *“Each of these adaptations is released for its own generation. They contain values and lessons specifically tailored to that generation... careful study... before deciding what values to emphasize.”*-(S1), *“Adaptations can also create new perspectives... Changing some lessons or adding new elements can bring fresh morals or values that audiences can absorb.”*-(S2), and *“There were many mermaids, all of different ethnicities. Each sister represents one of the seven seas, so there are many cultures and skin tones. It’s actually more realistic than imagining everyone with the same skin color.”*-(S3).

### *Heroism, Ethical Action, and Social Responsibility*

Students' view that fairy tales also serve as a mechanism that encourages the audience to deepen their understanding of heroism, ethical action, and social responsibility.

*“For me, the main message or lesson is heroism... doing the right thing even when no one stands with you...”*, and *“...decision-making is influenced by heroic characters... even when things are difficult, you can still choose what’s right... empowers you to be better and to inspire others.”*-(S1), these remarks prove that the characters usually model bravery, advocacy, and the importance of doing right regardless of any consequences.

Similarly, another participant observed that, *“...Many stories show a main character who becomes a leader and guides their people... inspires me... I get to do more and help other students and my team members.”*-(S2), affirms that students' view of heroism is more than an exceptional experience; it's a conceptualized socio-cultural construct, which involves ethical responsibility.

## **2. Teachers' Literary Interpretation of Literary Evolution**

### *Transformation of Character Portrayals*

Clustering the interpretations of one teacher participant said, *“In that version, I can say the dwarves were the helpful people, and Snow White was somehow a damsel in distress. But in the film Snow White and the Huntsman, Snow White appeared to be more, what do you call this, more like an Amazon, somehow a stronger woman.”*, *“In the film, Belle is someone who yearns to be free and discover the world... Unlike in the original story, Belle*

*is more of a dutiful daughter.”, and “Then, in the story of The Little Mermaid, as we observed earlier, the one in the movie is less determined. In the original story, surprisingly, the Little Mermaid was really persistent, to the point of being obsessed with the prince.”-(T3), this collection of accounts reveals that the evolution of character is observed by*

### *Narrative Simplification and Modernization in Adaptations*

Multiple responses of the educators during the interview demonstrate this critical engagement: *“It is different because in the original story, the ending is darker. In the movie adaptations of fairy tales now, they almost always end with a happy ending.” - (T1), “If you really compare the book and the film, there are many changes. For me, it really affected my understanding because I can easily understand when I watch the movie rather than just read it, because of the words used.”-(T2), “Critical deconstruction is more advanced; they need to really understand how to view media from a literary perspective. So this type of activity doesn’t happen very often.”-(T3).*

### *Expanding Imagination and Creativity*

A participant consistently reviews the interpretation of fairy tales. *“Students become more imaginative and creative because they can see how a story can be changed, how the plot can be twisted, or characters added.”, “For me, in a positive way, because I easily get bored when I read things over and over again... I like to explore different genres. So for me, it’s a good thing because it gives you a different perspective, additional spice, right? for understanding.”, and “Of course, there’s a big difference between a media adaptation and the primary text.”-(T3).*

### *Mirrors of Cultural and Historical Contexts*

Teacher participants conveyed that adaptations reflect culture, a societal mirror, by continuously developing social values, history, and a collectively held belief structure *“Fairy tales don’t just entertain. They reflect cultural context, societal issues, and gender roles. They mirror many things in the real world.” -(T2) “Before, when we talked about princes and princesses, it was mostly white people who played them. It’s different now. The movies are more inclusive. So that reflects today’s society.”-(T1), and “Although the setting of Snow White has two different interpretations. The original one, if you imagine it, feels more countryside... But in this newer version, they already have their castle and their warriors, probably more civilized than the original version.”-(T3).*

### **Teachers' Literary Interpretation of Thematic Changes**

#### *Evolving Portrayals of Gender and Empowerment*

The responses echo, *“Yes, that’s gender roles. And then Belle showed a kind of revolution, a change for women.”, and “In very old stories like Beowulf, it was always the male who was the lead or main character. But in the newer versions, we now have*

*opportunities for female characters to lead the stories.”-(T2).* These statements illustrate character development and literary exploration across classic and traditional fairy tales.

Another response demonstrates this idea, *“In The Little Mermaid, like what I said earlier, children now have the chance to voice out their opinions or what they want to do. Before, you really had to obey your parents.”*, and *“In that version... Snow White appeared to be more, what do you call this, more like an Amazon, somehow a stronger woman.”-(T3)*, who reveals the correlation from the statements above regarding empowerment and women’s changing roles and perceptions in society.

### *Shifts in Moral and Familial Values*

Two lasting statements from one participant shared, *“Of course, there is filial love, the love of parents for their children... In this generation, we insist on gentle parenting. We try to accommodate whatever the child’s request is.”*, and *“For example, in The Little Mermaid, like what I said earlier, children now have the chance to voice out their opinions or what they want to do. Before, you really had to obey your parents.”-(T3).* As situated from another narrative, *“Another theme from The Little Mermaid, both in the text and the movie, is someone who really wants to fit into society.”-(T2).*

### *Continuity and Transformation of Core Themes*

Multiple accounts during the interview: *“But if we look at the plot and the ending, the themes are actually the same. It’s just that the main characters were given a different portrayal. And again, the era probably had an impact on those character developments.”*, *“It’s not bad because it gives you a different perspective on the possible attributes you can give a character. It’s like having a multiverse of the character somehow.”*, and *“Either way, showing both formats helps students better grasp the real issues, context, themes, and even the characters.”-(T3).* A similar pattern was identified in another response, *“Fairy tales don’t just entertain. They reflect cultural context, societal issues, and gender roles. They mirror many things in the real world.”-(T2)*, justifying fairy tale significance and relevance in literature and culture.

### *Language and Style as Indicators of Temporal Change*

Multiple participating teachers foreground the idea that language and writing style are significant markers of literary change. Teachers point out, saying, *“I would want to highlight, among the differences, the use of language, and specifically the terminology... you will notice that, for example, in Snow White and the Huntsman, there were terminologies, probably used online, that are not used anymore in the present time.”-(T3)*, *“It’s also helpful that you can really see the differences in the style of writing because those three stories were written in different years, in different eras.”-(T2)*, and *“And I want them to also see the importance of the proper usage of language in presenting stories, for the reader to relate to the story more.”-(T1).* It shows that the educators are aware of the language change, including shifts in vocabulary, tone, and dialogue. This theme

expands the idea that the period in which the stories were written is a significant factor in audience engagement and comprehension.

### *Pedagogical Engagement through Comparative Analysis*

Teachers' responses, such as: *"Since we highlight the similarities and differences, we have to use instructional material that would aid in teaching these factors..."*-(T3), *"We would like the students to discover on their own what the things are that have changed from the original to the modern adaptation..."*-(T3), *"For me, when it comes to the navigation of the similarities and differences of the two texts, I also want, as a teacher, to ask it from the student... they will be the ones to navigate similarities and differences..."*-(T1), and *"It's something that could be used to develop a skill in observing, and it somehow creates this idea of being more interested..."*-(T3) reflect that thematic shifts found in fairy tales are important key concepts in effective storytelling.

### **Teachers' Literary Interpretation of Socio-cultural Influences**

#### *Pedagogical Mediation of Socio-Cultural Awareness*

Drawing from experience and interpretations, several participants mentioned, *"I believe that to help students critically engage with ideas of gender, politics, and societal issues through fairy tales, you need to encourage them to ask and respond to open-ended questions, or write reflective essays, just as (T1) mentioned. As a Grade 10 teacher, I also use reading lenses..."*-(T2), *"For me, when situations like this come up, we hold a whole-class discussion... everyone will have different opinions about the issue..."*-(T3), and *"Yes. When a student raises that kind of question, a teacher shouldn't answer right away... This stimulates critical thinking..."*-(T2). This underscores the pivotal role of these teachers in helping their students achieve dynamic interpretations grounded in the socio-cultural meanings of fairy tales.

#### *From Personal Enjoyment to Social Responsibility*

This is supported by the clustered sentiments: *"As a teacher now, my interpretation of fairy tales and their themes has changed because I have to consider what my students should learn from them..."*-(T1). *Now I always think about my students and how they will learn from it if I teach it to them..."*-(T2). Collectively, this reveals the transition in experiences and reflections within this sample, showing how these tales increase social awareness beyond recreational purposes. Another educator mentioned, *"Before, I wasn't aware of literary theories or criticism... I can now view the films and stories through different lenses and perspectives..."*-(T3).

#### *Gender Representation and Empowerment*

One teacher noted in multiple accounts, *"In Beauty and the Beast, you can really see the patriarchal society..."*, *"Yes, that's gender roles. And then Belle showed a kind of revolution, a change for women..."*, and *"But in the newer versions, we now have opportunities for*

*female characters to lead the stories. And that symbolizes women's empowerment.”-(T2). Additionally, two participants also shared the same perspectives, “Yes, women's empowerment. That's how that certain character depiction affected my understanding of the original message.”-(T1), and “In Beauty and the Beast, for example, it reflects a patriarchal era where men were considered stronger in all aspects. The father figure always had the upper hand.”-(T3).*

### ***Family and Generational Dynamics as Cultural Reflection***

Participants reflected on this theme in multiple accounts: *“Of course, there is filial love, the love of parents for their children... If the movie had been released ten years ago, it would probably have been the parents' decision that was followed. In this generation, we insist on gentle parenting.”*, *“In the original Little Mermaid, Ariel was really hard-headed... But in the present adaptation, Ariel was eventually allowed to do what she wanted if it would bring her happiness.”-(T3).* .

### ***Class, Oppression, and Social Inequality***

This has been expanded through the expressions of two participants: *“Aside from that, you can see themes of oppression. In Snow White, especially in that part where the queen was taking a bath in a tub full of milk... people outside were going crazy just trying to drink that milk.”-(T1)* *“It can actually portray today's social context, like the government.”-(T3).* Teachers correlate visual and symbolic components in adaptations with the themes of structural inequality and exploitation.

### ***Conformity, Identity, and the Desire for Acceptance***

Participants stated, *“Another theme from The Little Mermaid, both in the text and the movie, is someone who really wants to fit into society.”-(T1), and “Even up to this day, many youth and many students are like that. They really always want to fit into society, to the point that they want to change themselves, to pretend.”-(T2).* This highlights the teachers' interpretation of the continuing importance of characters combining the world with a sense of belonging as an example of the identity issues faced by youth today.

### ***Teachers' Literary Appreciation of Political Insights***

#### ***Awareness of Power Structures in Modern Retellings***

As expressed by the participants during the formal conversation, *“It can actually portray today's social context, like the government,”* and *“The government, right? Those in higher positions benefit firsthand from the funds we have, while those who are under them enjoy only the crumbs.”-(T3).* They recognize that many of the students are critically engaging with contemporary adaptations at the socio-political level. Through these films/versions, the students are thinking about how authority and inequality are presented, mirroring the political hierarchies in the real world as they understand them.

### *Developing Socio-Political Consciousness*

This theme became evident when one of the participants noted that, *“Positively, students are well aware of political issues that we have right now, and that’s a good thing because it tells us the future generation is aware of what’s happening around them. Although they are privileged students because they come from a private school, it’s good that they are aware of this.”-(T3).*

### *Recognition of Gender and Social Hierarchies*

The responses, such as *“Yes, women’s empowerment. That’s how that certain character depiction affected my understanding of the original message.”-(T1)*, and *“Aside from that story, in Beauty and the Beast, you can really see the patriarchal society.”-(T2)*, are concrete examples of how teachers view gender and social structures depicted in the fairy tale adaptations.

### *Teachers' Literary Appreciation of Socio-cultural Insights*

#### *Teaching Strategies Enable Critical and Cultural Understanding*

One participant foregrounded the theme through personal statements: *“For me, the use of differentiated instruction really helps students critically engage with those ideas. To reflect on gender, politics, and society, we have to contextualize lessons at their level of language.”* and *“There’s a barrier between teachers’ language and students’ language, and if they can’t process the ideas in their own way, they won’t be able to think critically in the first place. Traditionally, verbal or oral discussions make things more interesting, but today’s generation tends to find them boring.”-(T3).*

#### *Multi-modal Integration for Cultural Comprehension*

Referenced from *“The outcome is that they gain a deeper understanding of the story. Reading the text helps expand their vocabulary, while watching the movie makes comprehension easier.”*, and *“Yes, it’s more familiar to them, so it’s easier for them to grasp.”-(T2)*, which expands on the experiences of the teachers and deepens the study’s analytical contribution. Combining written and visual modes in teaching promotes students’ interest and socio-cultural learning.

#### *Dialogic Classrooms and Socio-emotional learning for Cultural Differences*

Multiple responses shared a collective understanding, which appears in the following sentiments: *“For me, sir, one of the best things I observe during discussions like this is when a student shares an opinion and others start agreeing... they can relate to the topic and feel that their voices matter.”-(T1)*, *“When students contribute answers or share their knowledge about the changes in a story, the discussion becomes more interactive...”-(T2)*, and *“When students contribute, it shows that their ideas add to the topic... It also boosts their confidence; they feel proud when they can add something valuable to the conversation.”-(T3).*

### *Literature as a Mirror of Power, Gender, and Morality*

Participants are keen to explain how they recognize fairy tales as a medium that transmits socio-political ideologies such as power, gender roles, and morality: *"From the movie adaptation- because in the original text, the stepmother was given a consequence... showing that good people win over bad people."*-(T1), *"You would see that people, especially men, viewed women as having lesser value... as if women should not learn more."*-(T2).

### *Civic Consciousness through Literary Reflection*

The statements, such as *"And of course, if you want to encourage this behavior of being an aware citizen at an early age, then with privilege comes the responsibility of being a productive citizen in the future."*-(T3), *"I assess students' understanding of social and political themes... I ask them to give examples they are experiencing or observing in their surroundings."*-(T1), and *"For me, that is very effective because some of my students... are already reflecting: 'So this is actually the situation in our country.'"*-(T1), the participants underscore that teachers recognize the importance of fairy tales and their adaptations as tools for civic education.

### **Teachers' Literary Perspectives of Broader Socio-cultural Implications**

#### *Mirrors of Contemporary Realities*

A participant narrated, *"People often think fairy tales are only for children. But if you analyze them, they reflect political issues, societal issues, gender roles, and even darker or sensitive topics that are very relevant today."*, and *"They reflect cultural context, societal issues, and gender roles. They mirror many things in the real world."*-(T2), which proves that the fairy tale genre holds a political context that influences how the participants' readers or students view the modern concerns within social-political dynamics. Another teacher conveys the following statements: *"It can actually portray today's social context, like the government,"* and *"The government, right? Those in higher positions benefit firsthand from the funds we have, while those who are under them enjoy only the crumbs."*-(T3).

#### *Reinforcement and Reinterpretation of Cultural and Gender Norms*

Sentiments such as, *"Yes, women's empowerment. That's how that certain character depiction affected my understanding of the original message."*-(T1), *"Aside from that story, in Beauty and the Beast, you can really see the patriarchal society."*-(T2), *"You would see that people, especially men, viewed women as having lesser value. Like, there was a part where they treated women as trophies..."*-(T2), and *"Why do women expect men to save them?... can't a woman save herself?"*-(T3), illustrate that the educators reported that modern versions frequently prompt and contest traditional gender roles previously created by fairy tales.

### *Bridge Between Classic Morality and Modern Awareness*

Teacher participants shared, *"In my case, whenever I teach a literary piece, I try to provide both the text and a movie adaptation so they can see the difference between the two."*-(T2), and *"It affects their understanding by making them think critically about why the adaptation differs from the primary text."*-(T1), these accounts reveal that classic stories are still tied with the newer versions, and the use of both modalities for students builds literary and broader contexts.

Another participant justifies this collective thought. Based on the following statements: *"Through intertextuality, they can connect one text to another, or one movie to another, and integrate their existing knowledge with what they're watching."*-(T3).

### *Critical Engagement with Cultural Diversity and Contextual Understanding*

These critical acts are evident within the following statements: *"Students discover differences in their home practices or even school traditions... They learn from each other's cultures without feeling judged."*-(T3), *"Positively, students are well aware of political issues that we have right now... it tells us the future generation is aware of what's happening around them."*-(T3), and *"It's part of our Grade 10 course outline. By discussing different literary lenses, students learn to scrutinize societal and political issues and many other concerns."*-(T2).

### *Pedagogical Mediation of Evolving Cultural Narratives*

Across the inputs of the participants, notably the following accounts reveal that fairy tales as a literary genre pose critical engagements, statements like, *"For me, one key practice is asking reflective questions. This helps students think critically..."*-(T1), *"By discussing different literary lenses, students learn to scrutinize societal and political issues..."*-(T2), *"When they can relate or make references from one text to another, the reading or viewing experience becomes more memorable."*-(T3), fundamentally condition their students to critique the stories and find their relevance despite the changing of forms.

## **3. Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space (TDNIS) Analysis**

### ***Temporal Dimension of Student Participants***

#### *Family and School Influence*

This pertains to the family and school environment as the primary source of the material. The clustering of statements such as *"Growing up, my parents were very realistic in how they taught me, so fantasy movies or books weren't that popular in our home."*-(S1) *"For me, I was first introduced to fairy tales when I was in kindergarten."*-(S2), and *"...books my older brother owns. I saw that set of books and asked him about the story."*-(S1), reveal how students acquired knowledge about this narrative genre.

### *Media Exposure and Imagination*

Both print and movie adaptations serve as students' reference in their early engagement with fairy tales. A student's thoughts converged multiple times in this area, for example, *"But as a child, I was very drawn to visual effects."*, *"...I was more exposed to movies."*, and *"I saw that set of books and asked him about the story... He told me there's a movie version and said I could watch it if I wanted."*-(S1).

### *Evolving Gender Roles and Empowerment in Fairy Tales*

This captures the idea that these narratives are structured materials for learning values. One student noted, *"I've always been a hopeless romantic. Ever since I was little, I wanted to experience the kind of love described in fairy tales."* and *"As I mentioned earlier, I was always interested in romance, so I used to take the stories at face value."* -(S3), which reveal the stereotypical notions provided by fairy tales because of their light-hearted features, as used for entertainment. Other students emphasize this through these statements: *"When I was a child, my perception of fairy tales was very stereotypical. I thought they were simply about heroes fighting mythical creatures and saving a princess who was trapped."* -(S1) and *"I have the same answer. I used to think Disney princess stories were only about a 'damsel in distress.'"*-(S2).

### *Mature Understanding and Critical Reflection*

Participation shifted significantly from imaginative and moral lessons valued in childhood to the use of narratives as a representation of a more established practice for learners.

Multiple responses indicate these critical reflections. One student quoted, *"But as I grew older and matured, I began to see different layers in these stories."*, *"I now appreciate them on a deeper level because of concepts such as politics, changing gender roles, or the switching of gender stereotypes."*-(S1). Others also showed strong views on this, *"I used to think every story had a happy ending, where the princess always found her 'happily ever after.' But now, after learning about the original versions, for example, The Little Mermaid, I realized some didn't end happily at all."*, *"Modern versions feel like they're made mainly for kids, but the original tales have deeper and sometimes darker interpretations that really surprised me."*-(S2) and *"But now, I realize there are darker sides."*-(S3)

### *Evolving Gender Roles and Empowerment in Fairy Tales*

Participants recognize that access to adapted fairy tales demonstrates intergenerational values and subverts societal expectations related to roles and stereotypes. The learners reflected, *"So the change from then to now is that I appreciate fairy tales more, especially through the many adaptations. I see how the movies are shaped by the generation in which they're released."* -(S1), and *"But after seeing these movies, you can see that a lot has changed. Now you can see that the girls can stand on their own and fight for their self-esteem."*-(S2).

## **Sociality Dimension of Student Participants**

### *Comfort and Moral Lessons*

The learners' views of fairy tales reveal profound emotional experiences that offer comfort and guidance. *"When my teachers told me these stories, they gave me a sense of comfort and taught me moral lessons."*, *"Ever since I was a kid, I often cried... but these stories comforted me."*, *"Those stories helped me become a better person."*, and *"Like I said earlier, the originals gave me comfort."*-(S2), reveal that these stories become a moral compass in his emotional and ethical journey as a learner.

### *Self-Reflection through Characters*

Similarly, based on the previous theme, another recurring pattern through character analysis demonstrates how the participants identify the moral lessons, emotional growth, and self-discernment represented in these stories. *"I relate to Belle... I also share her constant desire for more."*-(S3), *"The worst version of myself is like the Beast... the best version of myself... is like Prince Eric."*-(S2) and *"I connect with the Huntsman because I see myself as someone with strong ethics and morals."*-(S1).

### *Medium for Social Awareness and Moral Reflection*

At the deeper level, statements from the interview, for example, *"When there were societal issues in a story,...we would mirror those issues in real life to better understand the moral of the story."*-(S1), *"If there weren't any clear social issues, the teachers would sometimes connect the story to history, ...similar issues might have occurred in the past."*-(S1), and *"History. You can see in the past how people lived... helps me reflect on what happened then."*-(S2), reveals that educators act as facilitators, guiding the students to explore the historical and moral dimensions of the narratives.

### *Race and Inclusivity*

Illustrating this perspective are the following statements: *"For example, racism in The Little Mermaid... it reflects the issues we face today."*-(S1), *"Ariel can be played by anyone; her skin color isn't essential to the character."*-(S3), *"You might think, 'Oh, it's a Black Ariel,'... There were many mermaids, all of different ethnicities."*-(S3), and *"Each sister represents one of the seven seas... It's actually more realistic than imagining everyone with the same skin color."*-(S3).

### *Gender and Feminism*

The participants observe that fairy tales entail strong gender ideologies. Following these narratives, *"By creating adaptations that empower women, showing them as strong leaders with courage, we teach young girls that they can be that way too."*-(S3), *"Some modern adaptations give more empowerment to women."*-(S3), *"You can see that the girls*

*can stand on their own and fight for their self-esteem.”-(S2), and “With feminism and women’s empowerment, the modern movie adaptations show the progress of human perspectives from before to now. - (S1), the cluster of statements demonstrates participants’ realizations to claim that there are character developments and transformations of passive female representations to a strong heroine figure in the modern-day retellings.*

### *Justice and Politics Allegory*

By reading between the lines of these narratives: *“I related the Evil Queen... to corrupt politicians. ... they only care about themselves.”-(S2), “These antagonists actually have righteous goals, but they go about it the wrong way.... Themes can include issues like gender, justice, and family roles. What stands out to me is justice.” -(S1), the association of villains with corrupt officials and heroes as moral enforcers and reformers is internalized by students through varied lenses, showcasing political awareness and conscious engagement of literary messages.*

### **Spatial Dimension of Student Participants**

#### *Transmission of Cultural Values*

This perspective appears in the following statements: *“Yes, because these movies will be watched by future generations, by our children, and they will also be studied by future researchers.”, “These movies are created for the generation they’re released in, and you can see how love influences viewers, especially children, as they grow up.” and “For example, (S3) mentioned that Beauty and the Beast influenced her love for (S3). These fantasy stories give children an idea of the kind of love they might wish for.”-(S1).*

#### *Teachers’ Mediation of Moral Interpretation and Social Issues*

This conveys a broader pattern of answers from the participants. One student justifies, *“In my literature classes, especially in high school, my teachers always wanted us to relate to the characters or the plot.”, “I noticed that when there were societal issues in a story, they would reveal them or guide us to think about them.” and “Then we would mirror those issues in real life to better understand the moral of the story or the emotions of the characters in those situations.”-(S1). These interventions allow students to think critically and cultivate moral reasoning. The interpretative process of mediation also brings awareness to social concerns and helps learners resolve similar conflicts in their own lived experiences.*

#### *Symbolism, Fundamentals, Historical Context, and Literary Discourse*

The nuances of this theme are best exemplified from the following accounts: *“...‘Why are the curtains blue, class?’ and then goes on a long explanation about symbolism.”, “For me,... as a writer, I also like to hide symbolism in colors or metaphors.”-(S3). and “...the*

*lessons that really stuck were... the fundamentals of a story, the plot, the climax, the supporting characters, and their roles.”-(S1).*

#### ***Expanding Worldviews and Cultural Awareness***

Characterizing literary experience and the depth of media engagement of the genre. This student reflected thoughtfully and proved this perspective from the statements, *“Although the adaptations follow the same basic plot, the small changes broaden my perspective of different worldviews.”*, *“Adaptations can improve aspects that didn’t work in the original or make them more suitable for today’s audiences. So, it can go either way; it depends on how it’s done.”*, and *“I appreciate all of them more. Even though they share the same core story, each version carries different lessons and its own unique approach.”-(S2).*

#### ***Temporal Dimension of Teacher Participants***

##### ***Early Sources of Enjoyment and Imagination***

Delightful moments with media sparked imagination and wonder. Educators often reflect on their initial experiences as light-hearted engagement rather than extensive analysis.

Looking back, teachers view fairy tales as a source of entertainment, which proves that their interpretations have evolved. Many of their responses correspond to this theme, for instance, *“Previously, I was only watching fairy tales to be entertained.”-(T1)*, *“As a reader or viewer of fairy tales, I used to see them mainly as entertainment; there are good characters and evil characters, a good side and a bad side.”-(T2)*, *“For me, when I was a student, in college, or younger, I watched fairy tales for entertainment, to relive childhood.”-(T3)*, and *“Before, if I understood the story in a certain way, that was the end of it.”-(T1).*

##### ***Emerging Awareness of Literary to Teaching***

Illustrating this perspective, statements from the interview such as, *“Before, it was purely personal, but now it wasn’t just for myself anymore. As a teacher, I have to understand the story in a way that students will also gain something from it.”-(T1)*, *“Before, I wasn’t aware of literary theories or criticism.”-(T3)* and *“Before, when I taught the elements of the story, students just read the text.”-(T1)*, given that educators are paving their way in their professional identities and gradually accepting responsibility to shape students’ understanding and interpretation.

##### ***Teaching Approach and Strategies***

Multiple responses from participants reveal that teachers think of fairy tales less as a source of personal enjoyment and more as teaching tools that can be adapted to further students’ critical engagement with them. Accounts like, *For me, as a teacher now, my interpretation of fairy tales and their themes has changed because I have to consider what my students should learn from them.”-(T1)*, *“Now I always think about my students and how they will learn from it if I teach it to them.”-(T2)*, and *“But now, I interpret it for the*

*benefit of my students.”-(T1), reveals how educators became intentional in their use of these narratives in classroom environments.*

### *Social Change through Modern Retellings*

The modern retellings showcase evolving social values that highlight inclusivity, freedom, and authenticity. The following narratives demonstrate this point: *“It’s different now. The movies are more inclusive. So that reflects today’s society.”-(T1), “But in the present adaptation, Ariel was eventually allowed to do what she wanted if it would bring her happiness. So it’s more observable in today’s culture.”-(T3) and “Even up to this day, many youth and many students are like that. They really always want to fit into society, to the point that they want to change themselves, to pretend.”-(T2).*

### **Sociality Dimension of Teacher Participants**

#### *Change from Personal Beliefs to Professional Responsibility*

It is worth noting that frequent ideas for professional application emerge from the data. One participant articulated, *“Before, it was purely personal, but now it wasn’t just for myself anymore. As a teacher, I have to understand the story in a way that students will also gain something from it.”-(T1),* which provides evidence of the teacher’s consciousness of fairy tale use in the classroom setup.

Another participant emphasized through the following statements, *“Now, as an English teacher, those concepts guide me. My interpretation has evolved; it’s more detailed and formal because of the principles I’ve learned.”-(T3).*

#### *Educational and Classroom Mediation*

Fairy tales serve as an anchor for re-evaluating the significant role of educators as mediators in guiding students in their meaning-making and critical analysis of literature.

Across multiple responses from the participants, such as *“Now, as a teacher, I think about what strategies I should use when I teach this type of literature to my students.”-(T2), “Now, I look at the elements of the story so I can teach them more effectively.”-(T1), and “Traditionally, verbal or oral discussions make things more interesting, but today’s generation tends to find them boring.”-(T3),* indicates that the educational background of the teachers significantly contributes to teachers’ pedagogical approach in teaching fairy tales in classrooms. .

#### *Political and Social Awareness*

The theme of political and social awareness manifests from the standpoints of the participants, like *“People often think fairy tales are only for children. But if you analyze them, they reflect political issues, societal issues, gender roles, and even darker or sensitive topics that are very relevant today.”-(T2) and “It can actually portray today’s social context, like the government.”-(T3).* This notable point from the participants’

responses supports the argument that literary engagement with fairy tales illustrates hierarchical family dynamics and the upholding of conservative household values, such as obedience and respect for authority.

### ***Spatial Dimension Teacher Participants***

#### ***Cultural Mirror and Platform for Critical Awareness***

While individual experiences varied, many participants shared similar perspectives, indicating a shared point of view. The implications are expressed through these statements: *"People often think fairy tales are only for children. But if you analyze them, they reflect political issues, societal issues, gender roles, and even darker or sensitive topics that are very relevant today."*-(T2), *"It's different now. The movies are more inclusive. So that reflects today's society."*-(T1) and *"It can actually portray today's social context, like the government."*-(T3), which reveal that the stories were also intended to prompt kids to consider belonging.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings demonstrate the literary intricacies of Junior High School students' and educators' experience with modern retellings of fairy tales. The transformation of literature, shifts in themes, and insights into socio-cultural and political context and cultural implications illustrate that these retellings are recognized by the participants as more than entertainment; within the scope sample of this study, they were experienced as cultural artifacts, bridging the disconnect between historical ritual and the contemporary, and aiding the involved Junior High School students' moral, social, and academic development. This bridging is supported by the "universal educational tool" theory, which posits that tales enable students not just to gain knowledge, but with meaningful experience, providing a unique means for aesthetic value, economic benefit, and tolerance-based education (Sodiqova, 2021).

Contrary to previous research that highlighted fairy tales as cultural narratives influenced by oral traditions and changing audience tastes. The literary meanings of these tales were not static; in fact, over time, they were constantly reimagined and evolved. This suggests that while contemporary adaptations may appear to be innovative and original, they are, in fact, part of a longstanding tradition of narrative transformation rather than entirely new literary creations. Furthermore, Widaningsih (2020) demonstrated that modern retellings serve as "re-visions" of historical context, deliberately altering obsolete social norms and gender roles that cast female self-sacrifice and passivity as narratives that emphasize ambition and agency among women.

The results of this study corroborate this perspective by illustrating how contemporary students actively reinterpret these narratives within current socio-cultural frameworks. This active reinterpretation is further justified as a form of "sociological mapping," in which students use the "buried treasures" of fairy tale allegory to process their understandings

of complex historical grievances and contemporary anxieties about systemic inequality and political power (Saxby, 2022; Talairach, 2024).

### **Junior High School students' and teachers' Interpretations of traditional fairy tales and their modern adaptations in terms of literary evolution, thematic shifts, and sociocultural influences**

Tracing the literary experiences of both the selected teachers and students foregrounds the literary evolution, thematic shifts, and socio-cultural influences within the recontextualization of fairy tales from traditional to modern modality. Both these educational participants recognize fairy tales as an extension of the ongoing development of narratives, alongside the changing socio-cultural, political, and moral contexts. This localized perception of fairy tales as a "living" document is justified by the theory of "pedagogical mediation," which posits that narratives are intentionally "domesticated" or ideologically adapted, such as removing religious elements or changing character names, to align with the specific national and political projects of the era (Tratnik, 2024).

Several literary scholars observed that traditional iterations of fairy tales were considerably more sinister and morally stringent than contemporary adaptations recognized by modern audiences (Roller, 2021). This feature holds that modern retellings deviate from genre tropes to better align with current audiences and values. The participants' accounts prove that these reinterpretations may not diminish the moral lessons of the stories; instead, they may enable students to engage more critically with themes of justice, morality, and social responsibility. This implies that film adaptations served as platforms for critical reflection, enabling students to critique rather than internalize moral lessons.

This observation is grounded in the study of Allen's (2022), which emphasized that the fairy tale narratives still uphold traditional concepts such as magical themes, many still embedded with rigid moral guidelines, tragic endings, timelines, and harsh consequences for characters that mirror the cultural motives and norms of the time they were published. In contrast, contemporary adaptations of fairy tales emphasize empowerment and inclusivity for all, marking a significant social implication and recontextualization of these cultural narratives.

This transition is justified by the concept of "cultural repertoires," where stories act as sociological prisms; as society moves toward inclusivity, the "present bleeds into the speaker's vision of the past," forcing the narrative to evolve (Talairach, 2024; Wong, 2024). By using film and digital media, fairy tales are reintroduced as intertextual narratives that link historical narratives with contemporary socio-cultural contexts, highlighting their relevance to contemporary society.

Adaptations enter the conversation as societies evolve, reflecting moment-to-moment changes. This result is justified by the history of the genre as "resistance literature"; by identifying the "tyranny" of a fictional villain, the selected students build the analytical muscles to distinguish between what is "legal" and what is "just" in their own political

reality (Smith, 2024; Talairach, 2024; Tratnik, 2024). The evolution supports Intertextuality, in which films and texts act as living, politically implicated entities. Meaning is not consistent; rather, texts engage across historically and culturally situated contexts to suit contemporary issues.

Evolution supports the concept of **Intertextuality**, where films act as living texts. The themes of awareness of power structures in modern retellings support intertextuality in teachers' engagements. By making links between stories as they exist in the present and the dynamics of socio-politics, teachers demonstrated that texts engage with one another across historically and culturally situated contexts. The educators' response suggested that meaning is not consistent across texts, and that texts with political implications can acquire new meanings as they are reinterpreted to address contemporary issues.

The student and teacher interpretations together show that for these groups, fairy tales are dynamic, not fixed, cultural literature shaped by literary, thematic, and sociocultural evolution. Literary change is seen in the growing narrative complexity; thematic change is a reframing of moral and ethical perspectives; and sociocultural influence positions fairy tales as context-sensitive, inclusive narratives.

### **Literature teachers' ways to gauge students' literary appreciation of fairy tales on socio-cultural and political insights.**

Students engage with these adaptations and derive moral, socio-cultural, and political understandings from them, revealing that they utilize critical thinking, empathy, and ethical reasoning. Students recognize that adaptations render ethical and political ideas accessible. This is justified by the "Wonder vs. Moral" framework, which posits that while "wonder tales" inspire imagination, "moral tales" serve as essential behavioral anchors that ground students in ethical structures and societal rules (Thomas, 2023).

This suggests that literary appreciation is more than merely pleasurable and moves into the realm of moral considerations, where students understand narratives as moral frameworks that guide decisions about right and wrong in both literary and social contexts. This finding contradicts previous characterizations of fairy tales as simplistic didactic narratives primarily designed to amuse or impart clear moral lessons to juvenile audiences. Although the conventional interpretations characterize fairy tale narratives as simplistic, the participants examined intricate themes such as social inequality, gender biases, and governance. This shift from "traditional norms" to "modern awareness" is evidence of the evolution of this genre to ensure the inclusion of diverse characters, messages, and themes, thus allowing these tales to act as "society mirrors" for 21st-century civic integrity (Thomas, 2023). However, according to participants' responses, these two dimensions are not isolated but intertwined, with imagination facilitating ethical engagement.

This method in pedagogy is supported by the "Socio-emotional Learning (SEL) Scaffolding" theory, in which teachers maximize "characters' socio-emotional qualities", such as inner beauty in the story of *Beauty and the Beast*, which helps build relational

intelligence and empathy in social relationships (Sultana, 2023). The data suggest that students' appreciation of literature is influenced by their social and emotional engagement with the text, supporting the use of literature to promote the development of socio-cultural understanding.

Through the recontextualization of characters, plots, and social frameworks, adaptations of fairy tales spark critical conversations about justice, government, equity, and heroism in these classrooms. Specifically, observations suggest that modern alterations emphasize moral dilemmas, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility when students are challenged to reflect on the issues broached in the text. Several of the reflective prompts created to provoke student thinking were based on authentic, real-world dilemmas that addressed accountability in equity and inclusion. This can be evidenced using "fractured fairy tales," which are recognized for their pedagogical value, allowing students to engage critically with "gender-ignorant" or "outdated" themes within a narrative context (Saxby, 2022).

Some academic theories propose that cinematic adaptations of fairy tales can, at times, diminish the complexity of literature to appeal to a broader audience. However, despite these reservations, the results of this study clearly indicate the value of cinematic adaptations of fairy tales as literary devices for encouraging students to think critically about social and political issues in the context of class discussions.

Moreover, students drew on socio-cultural understandings in their inquiries into gender roles, diversity, and inclusion. Current adaptations continue to resist stereotypes; female protagonists are both active and empowered, and portrayed as morally autonomous decision-makers, where stories progress in a multicultural world that also confronts bias in their historical contributions to society. The research corroborates the concept of "Intertextual Literacy," in which classic texts need to be "re-visioned" because this process helps students understand how historical figures faced "villainization," which preserved social hierarchies, and how current authors use this knowledge to transform these roles into empowerment (Widaningsih, 2020).

This shift prompts students to reflect on changing social norms and to critically examine norms surrounding gender equality, justice, and cultural representation. With characters like Belle, Ariel, and Mulan, students can relate to family and non-fiction to help them make sense of dilemmas within narratives and, consequently, reflect on heroism, justice, social responsibility, and decision-making.

The teacher plays an integral role in leading students through the process of recognizing power relations, social injustices, and structural hierarchies, and in encouraging students to explore normative assumptions in both fictional and real-world contexts. This concept of "Pedagogical Mediation" is critical, as the mediator, or teacher, adapts the narrative to encourage its use as a "living tool" to bridge the gap between historical "folk logic" and modern-day digital reality (Sodiqova, 2021; Tratnik, 2024).

Educators argue that such involvement encourages students to reflect on the privileged narratives/texts included in the readings, to connect with the world beyond the classroom, and to facilitate genuine discussions about ethics and civic education. This indicates that literary appreciation can be more than the enjoyment of literature's aesthetic and can develop a form of political consciousness or serve as a social critique.

The theme Recognition of Gender and Social Hierarchies demonstrate the ideals behind Reception Theory. The selected educators responded to stories differently based on their personal beliefs, professional experiences, and the extent to which they had engaged with social issues. Educator perspectives that drew on gender roles and systemic inequalities demonstrated that meaning is not contained within a text; instead, it is collectively created by the reader. The response exhibited a range of interpretations, indicating that readers' stances and ways of engaging with the political implications varied, underscoring the importance of the reader's perspective in revealing the subtleties of politics in the texts.

This is supported by the "Interpretive Flexibility" of universal symbols, in which characters act as "flawed yet lovable" mirrors that allow students to process contemporary anxieties and foster self-acceptance through an intertextual lens (Widaningsih, 2020). Understanding occurs through an interactive engagement where students place literature in relation to their civic realities. This reinforces "Global Citizenship Scaffolding," where the universal motifs of the genre serve as a safe vehicle for students to enter and decode unfamiliar cultural and political contexts (Sotiropoulou & Kasapi, 2022).

Educators promoted the use of literature to develop informed and socially aware students. This perspective reinforces the idea that understanding occurs through interactive engagement with cultural forms on the part of both students and educators. Educators noted that when students engage with depictions of power, injustice, and moral dilemmas in adapted texts, they place literature in relation to their civic realities, showing that learning is occurring about the social context. Thus, this means that students' and teachers' appreciation of literary adaptations offer ways to develop socio-political awareness as they explore notions of governance, authority, and social responsibility embedded in contemporary adaptations of fairy tales. The teachers report that this kind of engagement encourages students to critique dominant narratives/texts, to contemplate social justice, and to complicate their conceptualization of morality. The recurring themes of developing students' socio-political awareness embody the main tenets of Socio-Cultural Theory. These points of view reinforce the idea that literary understanding occurs through interactive engagement with film adaptations of fairy tales, where learning is deeply rooted in the social context and civic realities of the students.

Moreover, the recognition of gender and social hierarchies, corruptions, and power dynamics within social structures demonstrates linkages to the Reception Theory, because meaning is collectively created by the readers, who are active in expanding a variety of interpretations coming from both the students and teacher participants, especially in highlighting the importance of the audience's unique lens in revealing subtle political implications. In short, the relationship between narrative enjoyment and reflective

analysis suggests that modern fairy-tale adaptations could serve as a bridge for the enjoyment of literature to be coupled with the conceptualization of socio-cultural and political awareness.

### **Students and teachers' perspectives that contribute to the understanding of the broader cultural implications of revised traditional fairytales into modern film adaptations**

This involved students' and teachers' views of adaptations of traditional fairy tales as tools for understanding broader cultural implications. This not only limits within generational and social contexts but also extends the notion that adaptations do more than preserve literary history; they are also changing, evolving texts that occur simultaneously with social, political, and cultural influences that remain salient. It extends the notion that adaptations are evolving texts that reflect social, political, and cultural influences, highlighting the cultural and political contexts of interpretations of fairy tale classics and contemporary forms.

Such justification is similar to the theory of "Sociological Mapping," in which the "present bleeds into the vision of the past," allowing historical narratives to be repurposed to address contemporary anxieties and to dismiss modern justifications for inequality (Talairach, 2024). The student participants indicate that contemporary adaptations of fairy tale narratives broaden their deep understanding of their social roles and the dynamics of the society they live in, fostering empathy for others, moral reasoning, and critical self-reflection. In addition, this analysis of the data considers the impact of these modern films on a broad generational audience, as interpreted by the participants. Learners emphasized that these film adaptations foster "personal growth and moral lessons" and provide "generational and cultural relevance" through character depiction that offers "relatability and empathy" to both students and teachers.

Nevertheless, historical studies of original fairy tales reveal that such tales often reflected the moral codes and social stratifications of societies that produced them (Roller, 2021). Such findings highlight the distinction between the common use of fairy tales as cultural educators and the contemporary reinterpretations noted by the sample group, which encourage critical thinking and self-empowerment among contemporary audiences. The views expressed through this study reveal that the students view fairy tales not only as moral guides but also as means of social and cultural reflection. This shift is justified by the concept of "Re-vision," where educators and authors intentionally modify traditional "hypograms" to replace 19th-century domestic passivity with modern female ambition and active social participation (Widaningsih, 2020).

As the teachers viewed these implications as "mirrors of contemporary realities" and a "bridge between classic morality and modern awareness," the analysis poses a larger implication of these films for a generational scale of audiences within this context. They also identify generational and contextual relevance, and the authors of these adaptations are purposeful as they create this work for contemporary audiences with various cultural differences that inform our values as a society, especially in terms of ethical thinking. The

"bridging" concept is supported by the "Universal Educational Tool" theory, which posits that fairy tales provide a fundamental moral baseline while remaining flexible enough to adapt and transform features to suit the 21st-century audience and social awareness (Sodiqova, 2021; Wong, 2024).

Engaging with fairy tale and fantasy adaptations allows the selected students to further understand and develop ethical reasoning about the social and political impacts of these texts, value cultural complexities, and reflect on their own experiences of character development as "heroes", while remaining critical of social and political conditions. Thus, these adaptations effectively bridge literature and morphed socio-cultural awareness and moral education while continuing to make timeless stories applicable and meaningful to learners of today. These perspectives help to create a form of "contextual understanding" via "pedagogical mediation." This mediation can be a form of "political project" to domesticate or secure these narratives, guaranteeing the proper cultural "nutrition" for the values and identity of the new generation (Tratnik, 2024). By working with these narratives, students can develop their ethical thinking skills and understand cultural complexities. This can be done through the "Inter-cultural Vehicle," allowing students to "safely navigate and decode" cultural complexities using universal themes to foster global citizenship (Sotiropoulou & Kasapi, 2022).

Teachers find that even with adaptations of traditional fairy tales, adaptations contain the most significant symbolic and moral essence of the traditional fairy tale while considering the current social, ethical, and political context. For example, adaptations of traditional fairy tales foster cultural literacy, allowing students to thoughtfully consider shifting societal values, appreciate differences, and engage with themes concerning the evolving understanding of "hero," ethical reasoning, and public duty.

Similarly, studies of early literary versions show that the characters in Hans Christian Andersen's works often faced tragic or morally complex endings (Allen, 2024). The retelling of these stories in modern movies is not only a change in how they are told, but also a shift in their moral framing so they make sense to today's audiences. This evolution is justified by the "Wonder vs. Moral" dichotomy, which allows teachers to use the "wonder" of film to capture imagination while delivering updated "moral" lessons relevant to contemporary social justice (Thomas, 2023).

Using film as an educational context assists with this entry; film provides multiple entry points for learners to understand the meaning and message, and to critique the original narrative. Teachers observe that literary students expand their awareness of cultural and historical contexts surrounding literary genres; hence, literature serves as a vehicle for cultural understanding, civic identity, moral values, and social consciousness, which also persists among subsequent generations of audiences.

This process involves a "critical engagement with cultural diversity," which is essential for deconstructing Eurocentric biases and increasing cultural equity within the classroom. It also involves the "reinforcement and reinterpretation of cultural and gender norms" ensuring that timeless stories remain salient in the contemporary world. Taken as a

whole, these observations show that adaptations are transformative tools. The transformation is anchored in the genre's history as "resistance literature," where the "buried treasures" of narrative are unearthed by educators to empower students to imagine a more inclusive and just "happily ever after" (Saxby, 2022; Talairach, 2024).

In addition to the expected findings, there were many unexpected yet important insights into the influence of fairy tale adaptations on students and teachers. One unexpected insight was the level of socio-political awareness among the Junior High School students who were framing the classic stories examined in more recent film adaptations. It was expected that students would be primarily interested in the narrative entertainment and enjoyment, yet many navigated the exercises through a lens that enabled them to identify themes of inequality, authority, and gender bias in the film adaptations. This points to the notion that modern adaptations in media are more complex than historical simplifications of tales for current youth, with many possibilities for these adaptations to foster critical awareness and provide accessible routes to real-world issues such as social norms, social roles, and gender stereotypes and roles.

Another interesting observation was the evolving stance of film as a mode of instruction. Initially, it was presumed that teachers would view movies as supplementary or leisure material. Conversely, the results indicate educators are recognizing modern adaptations as legitimate literary texts that convey complex ideas through different narrative modes. Their willingness to treat film adaptations as foundational instructional materials indicates a shift in pedagogy to recognize the role of audiovisual media in enhancing young learners' understanding, interest, and enjoyment.

The results indicated a generational shift in the relative nature of fairy tales. Traditional versions of these fairy tales often feature strict moral lessons, scripted values, and idealized behaviors that seem distant and stagnant. However, modern adaptations of movies enhanced character authenticity and emotional relevance, enabling students to relate more closely to traditional narratives and connect with their own experiences and identity development. This shift indicates adaptation is not simply a collaboration of creativity but a significant evolution to sustain cultural relevance.

One of these findings is noteworthy: gender representation. Both literary teachers and students have noted a change in how female characters are represented in modern films. They move away from being passive characters and turn cliché defenses into strong motivations. Showing these non-stereotypical representations is evidence of a stronger commitment to gender equity, recognizing that current visual culture contributes to spectacle that advances progressive social values. All these are part of multidimensional concepts in films and have become an agency of gender transformation.

Finally, the findings suggested that fairy tale narratives and movie adaptations were means of cultural connections across time and among generations. Teachers noted that these films contributed to moral lessons from times past and made them relatable to the more contemporary learner, and students noted that they identified with more meaningful understandings through guided discussions, critical discourse, and comparative

analyses; in this regard, the adaptations became common cultural touchstones that transposed the known narratives with new approaches.

## Conclusions

1. Junior High School students and teachers interpret traditional fairy tales and their modern adaptations as evolving cultural texts. Students move from simplistic readings of “good versus evil” toward layered understandings that highlight complex character development, shifting moral values, and socio-cultural influences such as gender roles, justice, and family structures. Teachers likewise recognize that modern adaptations expand opportunities for critical engagement, encouraging learners to question stereotypes, analyze narrative structures, and connect stories to contemporary realities. Together, these interpretations demonstrate that literary evolution is not static but continually reshaped by generational perspectives and cultural contexts.
2. Literature teachers gauge students’ appreciation of fairy tales by observing how learners critically respond to socio-cultural and political insights embedded in both traditional texts and modern films. They note that students increasingly interrogate themes of gender equality, justice, and cultural representation, while also applying analytical skills to narrative elements such as plot, symbolism, and historical context. Teachers conclude that pairing film adaptations with classical texts enhances students’ reflective engagement, deepens their cultural awareness, and strengthens their ability to connect literature with broader social issues, thereby fulfilling curriculum goals of critical discourse and literary appreciation.
3. The perspectives of Junior High students and teachers collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the cultural implications of revising traditional fairy tales into modern films. Their insights reveal that adaptations are not mere retellings but reinterpretations shaped by contemporary values such as inclusivity, empowerment, and justice. By recognizing shifts in target audiences, evolving gender roles, and socio-political contexts, both groups affirm that modern adaptations serve as cultural mirrors that reflect and reshape societal norms. This shared engagement underscores the role of literature and film in fostering critical literacy and cultural awareness within educational practice.

## Recommendations

1. **For the Teachers:** Teachers are encouraged to integrate both traditional texts and modern film adaptations in classroom practice to foster layered interpretations among students. Activities should be designed to highlight narrative evolution, character complexity, and shifting moral and philosophical themes. Responsive and reflective strategies, such as guided discussions, thematic mapping, and critical questioning, are recommended to help students interrogate issues of gender, justice, and cultural representation. By scaffolding

these interpretive skills, teachers can enhance students' critical literacy and socio-cultural awareness.

2. **For school leaders, administrators, and curriculum developers:** Curriculum planners and educational agencies, such as DepEd, should formally embed the use of film adaptations alongside classical texts in the English curriculum. This integration will ensure that competencies in intertextual literacy, socio-cultural critique, and reader-response analysis are systematically developed. Policy makers are advised to support professional development programs that train teachers in employing reflective strategies and contextual analysis, thereby aligning classroom practices with broader educational goals of critical discourse and cultural awareness
3. **For future researchers.** Further research is recommended to explore how adaptations reshape cultural narratives and influence students' interpretive growth. Scholars should investigate the pedagogical impact of intertextual approaches and socio-cultural critique in diverse classroom contexts. Comparative studies across cultures and generations may provide deeper insights into how fairy tales evolve as cultural mirrors, reflecting inclusivity, empowerment, and justice. Such research will advance literature and education by situating adaptations within broader frameworks of cultural transformation and critical literacy.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

Several ethical factors were considered to guarantee the protection and welfare of all participants. The researcher ensured that certain participants received complete information regarding the study's nature, purpose, and ethical boundaries.

This research was evaluated and approved by the Ethical Review Committee and Board institutions from the participant's school and the researcher's graduate institution. The participants were told their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time without penalty. A formal communication was provided outlining the detailed procedure for student involvement, including the main research agenda, data collection schemes, schedule, duration, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time. Once parental consent was granted, students were given a child assent form, written in a student-friendly language that explains the details of the study, to be signed and submitted to the researcher. Participants could skip questions they found disturbing to answer. Interview sessions were conducted in a safe, private, and non-threatening environment. This was also monitored by a responsible adult, such as the head of the school's research office, in addition to the researcher. Participants were informed that responses would remain confidential. The researcher did not disclose information about those participants to anyone outside the organization to preserve their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Data was treated with utmost respect, and participants' confidentiality was maintained during the data analysis phase. Furthermore, in the initial reports, data transcriptions were

protected with pseudonyms, and the discussion of final report information was kept private. The researcher stores raw data in a password-protected file or a Google Drive; only the primary researcher has access to it. Moreover, in the preparation of this article. An AI tool, such as Grammarly, was utilized to enhance the grammar, clarity, and readability of the text. These tools were employed strictly for language refinement and did not generate, replace, or alter the original ideas, arguments, or interpretations presented in the study. All conceptual frameworks, analyses, and conclusions are the sole work of the author/researcher. The use of AI tools was limited to improving expression and ensuring accuracy in written communication, while the intellectual content remains entirely researcher-driven.

## Acknowledgments

The researcher expresses his gratitude and appreciation to the great people and organizations that provided me with support and the necessary skills in the accomplishment of this research project: Firstly, to his Research Adviser, Dr. Arnold C. Gatus; to the Board of Panelists: Dr. Linda Cangayao, Dr. Wilma Balon, and Prof. Jennifer Fabros, research instrument validators, outside data analysis validators, and grammarians; and to Sir Ton, Ma'am Verly, Ma'am Fiona, Sir Teddy, and Ma'am Edilhynie. To his institution, The National Teachers College, Tanglaw. To his present school, the University of Santo Tomas, specifically Sir JC and the Veritas/MIL Learning area. His friends, Amer, Jamica, Ryan, Khim, Benet, Vic, Pao, and Notre Dame friends. To his sister, Cheene. To the Almighty who gave him the strength and a clear mind to complete this study.

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**APA Citation:**

Rivera, F. B. T., & Gatus, A. C. (2026). EXPERIENCES OF LITERATURE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WITH TRADITIONAL FAIRY TALES AND THEIR MODERN MOVIE ADAPTATIONS. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(6), 2149–2180.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21011136>

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