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A twist on happily ever after : Fractured fairy tales for young adults

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Abstract

Fractured fairy tales are growing in popularity for young adults. Teacher librarians may need a more complete understanding of themes and characters found in fractured fairy tales in order to provide readers' advisory in this genre. The purpose of this research paper is to describe the themes and moral lessons of positively reviewed fractured fairy tales for young adults. Novels from 2006 - 2015 were analyzed using constant comparison for the themes and lessons described in them. Nine positively reviewed core collection novels were chosen, read and analyzed by the researcher. Themes explored through the research include: danger of ignorance, family as a blessing or a curse, quest for discovery, and love and sacrifice. This research supports teacher librarians with information on themes and lessons in young adult novels.

A TWIST ON HAPPILY EVER AFTER:

FRACTURED FAIRY TALES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite parts of the day as a teacher librarian is when I have the opportunity for reader's advisory. It is a feeling of accomplishment to match a student with a book they will truly enjoy. I recall one such instance when a sixth grade student who could not find a book to read for her language arts project asked for assistance. We discussed the types of books she typically reads, and she mentioned that last year she read and enjoyed *Rump: The true story of Rumpelstiltskin,* (2014) a fractured fairy tale by Lisa Shurtliff. I suggested that she read *The School for Good and Evil,* (2014) another fractured fairy tale, by Soman Chainai. I was thrilled when she returned a few days later asking about book two in the series because she enjoyed the suggested book so much that she was ready for another one. It was clear that fractured fairytales really resonated with her.

As well as being a genre growing in popularity among students, the themes found in fractured fairy tales, parodies and retellings are educationally important because they promote divergent perspectives. This research study will help teachers and librarians better understand this subgenre of fantasy fiction through the themes and lessons in the texts. It will also reinforce how fractured fairy tales can be a part of a teacher librarian's reader's advisory practice. Research by Dale et al. (2016) investigated stereotypes and messages in princess picture books which inspired this researcher to consider the messages of fractured fairy tales in young adult books.

Justification

Teachers and teacher librarians are dedicated to promoting reading and encouraging student success through reading. According to Zipes (2000) the genre of fairy tales engages the reader's curiosity and is popular with all ages, "Almost every reader of fairy tales, young and old, is curious about their magic" (p. xv). Moss and Young (2010) state that elementary students have interests in a variety of genres, including fantasy, "Books in fantasy, historical fiction and realistic fiction genres are perennially popular with students" (p. 52). One genre closely related to fantasy is fairy tales and a sub genre of fairy tales is fractured fairy tales. The classic fairy tales as written by The Grimms are the established model for fairy tales and have long been the basic criteria for creative works and experimentation (Zipes, 2001, p. 100).

In contrast to a fairy tale, a fractured fairy tale departs from convention and is instead a revised story that changes major characters or events with an emphasis on changing the moral message presented. Bottigheimer defines them stating:

> Fractured fairy tales are closely related to fairy-tale parodies, but the two serve different purposes: parodies mock individual tales and the genre as a whole; fractured fairy tales, with a reforming intent, seek to impart updated social and moral messages. (Zipes, 2000, p. 172)

This research will explore the depth of the fractured fairy tale subgenre including parodies and retellings to describe the divergent perspectives and lessons they contain.and it will suggest ways librarians may gain further understanding of the subgenre. This understanding will enable them to make informed recommendations to all readers, readers who may appreciate fractured fairy tales for the themes and perspectives they portray.

Differences Between Parodies, Retellings, and Fractured Fairy Tales

Due to the popularity of fractured fairy tales, we can assume most teachers and teacher librarians are aware of fairy tales as well as fairy tale retellings and parodies. Retellings or matching stories with minor changes, are very popular and are often the focus of essay assignments in which students are asked to compare and contrast them. Merriam Webster (2015) defines retell as, "to tell again or in another form." One example of a retelling is the way many different cultures have versions of the story of Cinderella. A few examples include *Mufrao's Beautiful Daughter* by John Steptoe (2008), *The Rough Faced Girl* by Rafe Martin (1998), and *Yeh Shen* by Ai Ling Louie (1996).

Parodies, on the other hand, are stories that mock a tale. Some writers use fractured tale and parody interchangeably. Cummins (1997) describes a fractured fairy tale as a comedy or spoof that serves to "poke fun at the original tale" (p. 51). Parody is a better word because it is the imitation of the style of something in an amusing way. Some examples of fairy tale parodies include: *Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs* by Mo Willems (2012), *The Three Ninja Pigs* by Corey Schwartz (2012) and *The Boy who Cried Bigfoot* by Scott Magoon (2013).

In contrast to retellings and parodies, the storylines of fractured fairy tales are more complex than the others and are written to change the original story. A retelling is the same storyline with minor changes, whereas the fractured fairy tale tells a new story. Unlike a parody, the fractured fairy tale is not simply trying to be comedic, but uses the characters or concepts of a fairy tale to tell a new story with an updated message (Bottigheimer, 2000).

The Middle and Junior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson, 2015), which serves as a model collection representative of a middle school library, includes fairy tales and some fractured tales. Students enjoy reading these types of stories and it is important that teachers and teacher librarians understand the differences between parodies and retellings and the fractured fairy tale genre to better attend to students' unique interests through the provision of reader's advisory.

Divergent Perspectives and Moral Lessons

The *Standards for 21st Century Learner* state that "reading is a foundational skill for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment" (AASL, 2007, p. 2). As students read a variety of books to learn and grow they will also need to evaluate and draw conclusions as listed in AASL Standard Two. Using divergent and convergent thinking is a disposition of the standards that can be achieved by reading fractured fairy tales and analyzing the different perspectives presented in them over time. Students can understand the progression and social exchange that has led to this sub genre of stories that take a new look at the classic tales.

Fractured Fairy Tales and Readers Advisory

Teacher librarians have a key role in the school as providers of unrestricted access to a high quality collection. Equally important is their role as reader's advisor and their ability to offer items of interest to students. The position of the American Association of School Librarians (2009) is that, "A leading school librarian stays abreast of both national trends of popular reading material and student interests within the individual school community" (p. 18).

Sadly the increase in technology use in schools sometimes isolates students from personal book discussions which are so vital to book selection (Wright & Bass, 2010, p. 10). Even if they do not realize it, students need the personal atmosphere and individual support that reader's advisory gives them. Though many students enjoy fiction, and there is a multitude of choices for doing so, the Common Core State Standards (NGA, 2009) encourage the reading of multiple genres. They also emphasize increasing the proportion of reading of informational texts as students get older.

At all reading levels, but especially with young adult readers, engagement is key. Donalyn Miller (2009) in *The Book Whisperer* investigates the importance of student engagement in books and the impact of book selection. She is right on target in her book when she states, "I believe all students should be empowered to make as many book choices as possible" (p. 74). This opportunity for making book choices is well supported by readers' advisory and enthusiastic book recommendations. The engagement or interest in a book can often be traced at all ages to a good recommendation. School librarians are perfectly poised to provide book recommendations to students and teachers throughout the school. The American Library Association (ALA, 2015) considers teacher librarians a vital part of reading. They are in a "unique position to partner with other educators to elevate the reading development of our nation's youth" (para. 1).

Problem Statement

Teachers and teacher librarians need a more complete understanding of themes and characters found in fractured fairy tales for young adults in order to provide readers' advisory in this genre.

Purpose

The purpose of this research paper is to describe the themes and moral lessons of positively reviewed fractured fairy tales for young adults.

Research Questions

1. What themes are present in young adult fractured fairy tales?

2. What moral lessons are taught by the themes found in fractured fairy tales?

Assumptions & Limitations

This research assumes that teachers and teacher librarians seek to better understand the subgenre of fractured fairy tales and its themes. This research paper is limited by the young adult texts available within the specific sub genre for review and textual analysis. The research will be limited to positively reviewed fractured fairy tales in book format published since 2000.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to describe the themes and moral lessons of positively

reviewed fractured fairy tales for young adults. There are several categories to investigate

related to the topic of fractured fairy tales. There are unique perspectives and moral

lessons found in fractured fairy tales that impact student interest in reading. This topic

also relates to the provision of reader's advisory which is needed at all ages. The better

teacher librarians understand students' book selection techniques the more they will be

able to support students in finding quality texts to read.

Unique Perspectives in Literature

Fractured fairy tales tell a known story from a new and unique perspective. This

allows their readers to consider and understand a different viewpoint that may change

one's understanding of social constructs. The two studies analyze how portrayals of a

group can affect a reader's perspective on that group.

Moeller & Irwin (2012) completed textual analysis of the portrayals of disability

in graphic novels. Each researcher read each selection in their sample of 29 books from

The New York Times Graphic Books Best Seller List of March 2009 three times taking

notes about text, visual presentation and the book as a whole. In this analysis they also

identified characters with disabilities. Moeller & Irwin found that out of the 29 books

analyzed, 18 included one or more characters with a disability. Further analysis of the 44

identified characters with disability revealed that most of the characters were complex

and not defined largely by their disability. However the majority of characters were male

(72 %), and only four of the books present positive representations of people with

disabilities. The authors' of the books, purposefully or not, are promoting negative portrayals and stereotypes of people with disabilities. This is an important consideration when analyzing texts in that the character's portrayal will likely impact how the reader feels about people with disabilities.

Bourke (2008) implemented action research regarding a new approach to using fairy tale texts with first grade students. He analyzed the way in which reading fairy tales could be a critical and investigative process. The participants were the 21 first graders in Bourke's class, and he used a critical thinking approach to encourage students to engage in dialogue about the author's purpose. Bourke acted as a facilitator to elicit deeper thinking about characters and their behaviors. He states that the students grew in their analytical skills, and made a change in their perspective as readers. Bourke describes this change as moving "from readers who accepted text as it was to readers who questioned text on a regular basis" (p. 306). The students were challenged to consider the validity of these concepts found in fairy tales: Why does darkness represent evil? Why are all protagonist behaviors considered good? What stereotypes about gender are present? Students questioned the authority of the author, considered dissimilar perspectives, and examined the viewpoint of all characters. Bourke's action research demonstrated that irrespective of students' ages, they were capable of engaging in critical literacy.

Moral Lessons Found in Literature

Narvaez (1999) in a psychological study used a discourse method to uncover how people process moral events. He conducted extensive research with both children and adults on the moral lessons derived from text. In this discourse processing research he examined the effects on the subject both during and after reading. In the study of third

grade students, fifth grade students, and university students the participants read four moral stories. They were asked questions to identify each story's moral theme. The younger students correctly identified the moral theme 11% of the time, whereas the older students were correct 45% of the time. The adults were able to correctly identify theme consistently with a 91% success. Students were also tested for overall comprehension based on true false questions of the text. They scored well on comprehension leading to the conclusion that deficiencies in identifying the moral theme were not due to reading or comprehension ability. Narvaez states that although "we know that comprehenders take away different messages away from stories, we do not understand the cause" (p. 385). Moral lessons found in literature do not guarantee that the reader will receive the intended message.

Narvaez focused on the comprehension of moral themes, while Newgard (2011) focused on identifying themes in dystopian literature. Newgard read and studied 12 dystopian novels published from 2001-2010 to identify themes. Her literary analysis of teen literature found five key themes which included: resilience of the protagonist, survival, government control, social conformity, and love between the protagonist and another young adult. Newgard also considered that in the genre of dystopian fiction there are common overarching lessons. She found five common messages or lessons which were: individuality, keeping hope, technology gone too far, protecting our environment, and positive value of altruism.

These two studies both demonstrate the presence and importance of moral lessons found in multiple types of literature. This research uses a similar model to investigate the themes and lessons found in fractured fairy tales.

The Role of Reader's Advisory

Due to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) there is an increased focus on providing students with informational texts. The CCSS (National Governors Association, 2010) asserts that 50% of texts students read or encounter in grades kindergarten through fifth grade should be informational texts. In contrast to the CCSS preference for nonfiction, research by Ross (2000) acknowledged that although students may self select nonfiction books the focus should be on how readers select books for enjoyment and the key role of reading for pleasure.

Ross (2000) and her graduate student team conducted interviews with 194 readers asking them about their reading, book selection and the value they found in reading. They intentionally studied avid readers, a group defined as those who are committed to reading and read one book or more per week. The gender and age of participants was 65% female and 35% male, all between 16 and 80 years old. The larger number of female participants was consistent with other studies in the United States and Canada in which avid readers were more likely to be female. Ross described avid readers as people for whom "reading was interwoven into the texture of their lives, not separate from it" (p. 74). The study found that readers use text to create a story about themselves. This connection to the text played a critical part in helping readers make sense of their lives. More than 60% of those interviewed felt books they read had made a difference in their lives or provided them help. The ways in which readers select books varies immensely, but Ross found that there was a key common preference for books that "tell a story that readers can relate to their own lives" (p. 75). Ross also argued that the basic plot of a book is not as important as its themes, and the feelings that readers connect with

the story. Ross concluded that understanding these themes is essential for librarians to connect people with books.

While Ross (2000) looked to avid readers to discover why the readers connected with stories, Kragler (2000) instead focused on how different types of readers selected their books. Her work in *Choosing Books for Reading: An Analysis of Three Types of Readers* investigated the common issue of below and above level students struggling to find books that are a good fit for them. Kragler studied nine randomly selected fourth grade students. These participants, all Caucasian males, included three below-average readers, three average readers and three above average readers. Book selection time consisted of three to five minutes after which students read for 25 - 30 minutes and then responded to their reading in journals for an additional 15 minutes. During reading instruction the teacher completed reading conferences with students and interviewed them on their selection choices. The teacher also tracked the amount students read and their reading comprehension progress.

Kragler (2000) showed that although above average readers finished the same number or more books than their below average counterparts, all students used similar selection criteria. Kragler concluded that students "chose books for similar reasons and used similar strategies to determine if the book was a good fit" (p. 136). The top reasons for selecting a particular book included the following: peer recommendation, physical characteristics, and previously liking the author or series. It is interesting to note that above average and average readers heavily relied on peer recommendations and used them, 46% and 59% of the time respectively. The below average readers selected books based on physical characteristics 30% of the time, and only used peer recommendations

13% of the time. Kragler found that the fourth grade students studied were not successful in choosing books at their level regardless of the method they used to select books.

May (2001) investigated the availability of reader's advisory for adults in the public library. Her research, *Reader's advisory service: Explorations of the Transaction,* was based on the work of Shearer. The researchers May and graduate students Olesh, Lackner and Miltenberg visited the 54 libraries in Nassau County New York. Each researcher followed a specific script to receive reader's advisory service using the book *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1999) by Arthur Golden as a benchmark for type of book the researcher enjoyed. The first notable result of the study was the overall lack of service received. In only one case was the researcher approached by a library staff member offering assistance; all others needed to locate a staff member for recommendations. In four libraries the staff on duty did not offer any suggestion or assistance with the request. Though refusal to assist was rare, May found that a majority of librarians based their advisory on personal reading instead of attempting to learn the reader's interests. Overall the study concluded that there has been little progress or improvement in readers' advisory, and it is still necessary that libraries put into action quality advisory services for readers. There is not much indication that the situation has improved since May's research in 2001. The 2011 OCLC library survey found that the top three priorities of public library directors are: "ensuring adequate internet access, demonstrating library value to funders and licensed e-collections/e-books" (p. 3). Reader's advisory education and services are not even included in the top ten priorities.

Summary

The studies reviewed above provide a context for the current study. First, research into how students read fairy tales shows that reading fairy tales provides opportunities for first graders to think more deeply and to question texts (Bourke, 2008) and; likewise a study of portrayals of disability examines the changes in reader's perspectives (Moeller & Irwin, 2012). Another group of studies demonstrate that students are able to identify and interpret moral themes in literature (Navarez, 2008), and a study of young adult dystopian novels found that moral themes and overarching lessons of altruism, keeping hope, and others are consistently present in texts (Newgard, 2011). Furthermore, studies show that though adults and students have many different ways to select books, their methods are not always successful (Kragler, 2000). There is also the issue that current reader's advisory offerings are not sufficient and need to provide greater attention to readers' interests (May, 2001; Ross, 2000). Taken together, these studies help establish the ways in which fractured fairy tales may serve as valuable recommendations for young adults to order to assist them in taking diverse perspectives and discovering moral themes However, many young adults are unlikely to discover the genre of fractured fairy tales on their own. Therefore, the librarian knowing the perspectives found in fractured fairy tales can better serve the interests of young adults. This study seeks to inform teacher librarians of themes of interest to young adults in order to provide reader's advisory to connect these readers with this genre.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to describe the themes and moral lessons of positively reviewed fractured fairy tales for young adults. The practice of providing reader's advisory has room for improvement and a better understanding of this genre's themes may help librarians in enacting such. A common technique of reader's advisory is to connect readers to books that have themes in common with books they previously enjoyed. Thus, the librarian may ask what book the person previously read and enjoyed. However with a less common genre such as fractured fairy tales, it may be difficult for librarians to determine what books are actually similar in theme. It would be easy to suggest *Mirror Mirror* by Gregory Maguire (2004), to a student who enjoyed *Cinder* by Marissa Meyer (2013). However the only thing the books have in common is that they are fractured fairy tales, Snow White and Cinderella, being retold. *Cinder* is much faster paced, includes science fiction elements, and has a dangers of ignorance theme. *Mirror Mirror* with its realistic style, and loss of innocence theme maybe prove incredibly disappointing to a *Cinder* reader. However *Fathomless* by Jackson Pearce (2012), which retells The Little Mermaid, would be an excellent choice for a student who enjoyed *Cinder*. *Fathomless* shares the theme of dangers of ignorance, and also includes fast paced excitement and danger. This study will analyze the themes of fractured fairy tales to provide further information and a resource for teachers and teacher librarians.

Research Design

This research utilizes qualitative content analysis to determine themes within fractured fairy tales. Qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to understand

social issues and their underlying meanings. As stated in Wildemuth (2009) this method focuses on a combined view of texts and "goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns" (p. 308).

Book Selection

Books were selected by searching for *fractured fairy tales* in the *H. W. Wilson's Middle & Junior High Core Collection* and *H.W. Wilson's Children's Core Collection.* The initial list generated 39 books, which was reduced to 22 after limiting the search to fiction books published in 2010 or after. This list, shown in Appendix A, was further narrowed to only novels, removing picture books and short story collections. The narrowed list of books were all included in the *H. W. Wilson's Middle & Junior High Core Collection.* In the case that the core collection book was part of a series, the first book in the series was selected to replace the core book. The result of this adjustment was four of the selected novels were replaced with the first book in the series. The four replacement novels were either designated core collection or classified as most highly recommended. The nine books on the list were then checked for reviews in *School Library Journal, Horn Book, VOYA, and Kirkus Reviews,* and each book included in the sample had two or more positive reviews. The final list, shown in Appendix B, has the nine books that fit the inclusion criteria and were chosen to ensure that recent and popular titles are the focus of this research.

Book Analysis

The researcher read each selected novel twice. During the first reading she identified preliminary themes and considered additional themes. The preliminary themes

were ones anticipated by the researchers and additional themes were ones identified

during the first reading. During the second reading the researcher documented the reading

using the note taking protocol in Appendix C. The themes were based on a list of

common themes compiled by the editors of *Literary Devices*, a teacher resource website

("Theme," 2013). The themes are shown in the lists below.

Preliminary Themes

- Danger of Ignorance
- Destruction of Beauty
- Heroism
- Quest for Power
- Vanity as a downfall

Additional Themes

- Betrayal
- Empowerment
- Family as a blessing or curse
- Identity Crisis
- Kindness as a virtue
- Love and Sacrifice
- Quest for Discovery

Limitations

This research is limited to the books within the selection criteria. Older books that

fit the category were not included. It is also limited to chapter books and does not include

picture books.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The researcher read nine positively reviewed fractured fairy tale novels from the H.W. *Wilson's Middle & Junior High Core Collection* to analyze themes and study lessons from the novels. During the reading of them the researcher looked for the 12 preliminary and additional themes described in Chapter 3. In Table 1 the number of times a theme was present is tallied. This quantitative measure of tallying was used to narrow the theme to the most frequently occurring themes that could then, by their prevalence, be considered significant to the genre.

Table 1

Themes present in novels tally

Theme	Number of novels theme present
Love and Sacrifice	8
Family as a Blessing or Curse	7
Danger of Ignorance	6
Quest for Discovery	6
Vanity as a downfall	5
Betrayal	5
Quest for Power	5
Heroism	4
Identity Crisis	4
Kindness as a virtue	3
Empowerment	2
Destruction of Beauty	1

It was determined that for a theme to be considered significant it must appear in six or more of the books. Six books represent ⅔ of the sample, and this degree of prevalence shows the theme to be meaningful to the genre. A theme that only appears in one or two books would not indicate a theme that is essential to the genre. This criteria limited the number of themes for further analysis to four including: Danger of ignorance, Family as a blessing or a curse, Love & sacrifice, and Quest for discovery. Table 2 shows the final themes and the novels in which each of the themes was present.

Table 2

Themes present in novels book list

Theme	Novels where theme present
Love and Sacrifice	*Frogged, Cinder, Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin, Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel, A Tale Dark and Grimm, Into the Woods Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom, Sleeper in the Spindle*
Family as a Blessing or Curse	*Frogged, Dust City, Cinder, Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin, Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel, A Tale Dark and Grimm, Into the Woods*
Danger of Ignorance	*Frogged, Dust City, Cinder, Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin, Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel, Into the Woods*
Quest for Discovery	*Dust City, Cinder, Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin, Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel, A Tale Dark and Grimm, Into the Woods*

Love and Sacrifice

The theme of love and sacrifice is present in all the novels except *Dust City*. It is clear that though fractured fairy tales utilize different perspectives and storylines many share a commonality with traditional tales in that love leads to happiness.

The theme is most strongly represented in *Rump: The true story of Rumpelstiltskin.* Throughout the story several events show that Rump and other key characters are willing to sacrifice themselves for love. First, his grandmother sacrifices her health to ensure Rump has enough to eat when they are poor and short on food. Next, Rump sacrifices his safety and sleep to help the Miller's daughter, Opal. The Miller had lied to the king telling him that Opal was the one spinning straw to gold. Opal was then taken to the castle and Rump spun straw to gold for her so she would not be punished by the king. Later in the story when Rump finds his aunts and happiness with family he sacrifices again and leaves to keep them safe. Finally he discovers that his mother hid her spinning talent and struggled to give him security. Rump's mother, Anna, could spin wool to velvet, grass to silk and straw to gold. Anna was nearly enslaved by a greedy merchant who wanted her to spin gold for him. She ran away to the mountains and started a new life without spinning in order to protect Rump.

Similarly to *Rump* the theme of love and sacrifice is also present in *Frogged* and *Sleeper in the Spindle*. Here again the main character is willing to sacrifice herself for the well being of others. In *Frogged* the princess Imogene becomes a frog by kissing a boy who was cursed to be a frog by a witch in the woods. She has the chance to save herself by kissing someone else and passing the curse on, but instead chooses to sacrifice herself until she can find a cure to the curse. The witch states, "The only way for you to return to your own self is if someone kisses you and becomes a frog in your place," (Velde, 58). Imogene refuses because she couldn't force someone else into the awful situation she has faced. In *The Sleeper in the Spindle* there is a similar sacrifice of self for others when Snow White comes to the rescue of Sleeping Beauty. There is a sleeping curse spreading

throughout the kingdoms and Snow White and the dwarves discuss that if Snow White attempts to help she may fall under the spell as well. Nonetheless, Snow White insists that she must try to be of help.

In a few of the novels examined the storyline combines several fairy tales or fairy tale characters into a new story. One example is in *The Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom,* which illustrates the theme of sacrifice and love on the part of several major and minor characters. This book has a humorous tone and follows the adventures of four 'prince charmings' after their happily ever after does not turn out as expected. The witch Zaubera is upset that she is not famous from all her schemes and so she kidnaps the storytelling bards and Ella. The four princes band together to rescue Ella and save the kingdoms. Frederic, Cinderella's prince; Duncan, Snow White's prince; Liam, Briar Rose's prince; and Gustav, Rapunzel's prince; each sacrifice their own safety and security for the mission of saving Ella. Liam is the only traditional hero among the group, but in a comedic twist each character uses his strengths to stop Zaubera.

Family as a Blessing or Curse

Family can play many roles within a story. In the case of the fractured fairy tale family is not an indifferent aspect, but instead a strong presence in a positive or negative way. The concept of family as a blessing occurs in *Frogged, Rump: The true story of Rumpelstiltskin, Into the Woods,* and *Grounded: The adventures of Rapunzel.* Throughout each story family provides comfort, historical information and leads the main characters to improve themselves.

Into the Woods follows three orphaned sisters, Storm, Aurora and Anything, as they are pursued by the evil Dr. De Wilde who is intent on stealing Storm's pipe. The

three sisters are all each other has and have an incredibly close bond. Though their family is small they are determined and care deeply for each other. Each twist is met with compassion and determination. Anything does not speak for a large portion of the book, and when she begins to, her sister is caring and supportive. "Aurora shrugged and gave a little smite. 'Why should I be surprised? I already have one exceptional sister, so it comes as no surprise to discover that I have two.'" (Gardner, 2006, p. 103). Together that sisters are blessed by each other. Their mother's death and father's disappearance were devastating, but the sisters are never shy of a chance to help each other.

Family appears as a curse in *A Tale Dark and Grimm, Dust City,* and *Cinder.* Though not stereotypically evil, Cinder's family is not a help or positive part of her life. In *Dust City* Hank has a complicated relationship with his father who is in prison for murdering Little Red Riding Hood. The archetypical example of family as a curse is present in *A Tale Dark and Grimm.* This story incorporates several tales from the Grimm brothers into one story about Hansel and Gretel who travel through each story. Hansel and Gretel are repeatedly betrayed by those around them and are nearly killed by their father, rescued only by magic. "He stood, beckoned Hansel and Gretel to his side, drew a sword from his place on the wall, and cut off their heads," (Gidwitz, 2010, p. 25). After they survive Hansel and Gretel leave home and try to find a new place to settle, but are shadowed by the curse of their family and cannot find peace or happiness.

Danger of Ignorance

The theme of danger of ignorance occurred in six of the selected novels. In several of these the main characters are unaware of their personal histories and make decisions based on false or lacking information. This is most apparent in *Grounded: The*

Adventures of Rapunzel where Rapunzel tries to rescue Witch who kidnapped her and because of her upbringing has an unusual view of the world. Rapunzel lives her whole life in the tower full of ignorance and innocence. This naturally leads to her failure to understand concepts like money, family, and geography.

Rapunzel spends the majority of the book believing that Witch is her loving caretaker and people on the ground are evil and want to kill her. Rapunzel does not have even a basic understanding of the world because of her isolation. This ignorance leads Rapunzel to more than one dangerous situation as she tries to get food without money, accidently insults royalty, and thinks it is acceptable to wander around town in her nightgown and slippers. She also suffers from anxiety and is fearful of people, animals and weather. "You've never seen rain?' he asked. Rapunzel remained close to the tree trunk. 'I've seen it' she said 'but it stays outside Witch doesn't want it to hurt me" (Morrison, 2015, p. 112).

In *Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin* the danger of innocence is evident throughout the story as Rump learns to spin straw to gold without any knowledge of his mother and aunts who could also spin with magic. He spent his whole life of twelve years believing that he had a terrible fate because he did not know his name. He thinks to himself, "Your name is full of meaning and power. Your name is your destiny. My destiny really stinks. I stopped growing when I was eight…you can't grow all the way if you don't have a whole name," (Shurtliff, 2013, p. 8). Rump gets himself into trouble when he becomes trapped by his own magic and is forced to spin straw to gold night after night. Rump was not aware of the balance of magic and used too much magic to make gold; he was then trapped by the magic. This magic forced him to accept any offered

price for his gold and if someone gave him straw he could not refuse to spin it into more gold. Had he been aware of the balance of magic, Rump would have had the opportunity to control his magic and be prosperous.

In *Cinder* all of the living characters are unaware that Cinder is a Lunar, born on the moon, and niece to the Queen. She spends over five years after an accident that took her memory thinking she is worthless and unloved. In fact, she is the long lost hope of many in the Commonwealth who wish she will take her rightful place as queen of Lunar. Cinder is in danger several times because of her ignorance. She infects her step sister with a virus, which gets her kicked out of her home and taken for medical experimentation. She falls in love with the prince and breaks his heart when he learns the truth about her. Finally she defies the Queen and nearly starts a war between the Earth and the Moon. "The Queen laughed sharply, 'Ignorance is your defenses? How trite you must see the truth, the fact that you *should* be dead. It would be so much better for everyone if you were'" (Meyer, 2012, p. 357). Cinder's ignorance about her past puts on her a crash course with the Queen who is one of the most powerful and dangerous people in the world.

Quest for Discovery

The character's quest for discovery is found in six of the examined novels. The characters participate in a challenging and sometimes dangerous search for understanding of either themselves or the world around them. In the novels that were analyzed, the search often involved a journey to find someone or something that could provide information to the character. It is tied closely to the theme of danger of ignorance overlapping in five of the novels. The quest for discovery, however, is not limited to the

area of ignorance of the character. This theme leads the protagonist to investigate and learn more about the world and themselves.

In *Dust City* the main character is trying to find and understand the source of magic in the city. Hank is the son of the Big Bad Wolf and is convinced by his father that the fairies of the past are still alive and endeavors to find them. "Dad? The fairies are gone. You know that, right?' He shakes his head vigorously. 'Not true,' he says. 'The nixies have them'" (Weston, 2010, p. 97). This meeting with his dad for the first time in years leads Hank and his friends on a dangerous adventure through the city. They discover the genocide of the fairies by the nixies and stop the conspiracy to turn all animals back to their primitive ancestors.

In *Rump: The true story of Rumpelstiltskin* and *Grounded: The adventures of Rapunzel* the characters both search for their destiny by finding long lost family. Rump does so because he hopes to learn to control his magic and Rapunzel because she thought her family abandoned her as a child. Both learn the truth about their mothers who did everything possible to protect and save their children. Similarly Cinder tries to learn about her real family and find a cure for a deadly virus that killed her step-sister -- two goals she discovers are intertwined.

Summary

Fractured fairy tale novels share many themes. The most prominent themes in the books examined here include family as a blessing or a curse, the quest for discovery, love and sacrifice, and the danger of ignorance. The most common of these themes is love and sacrifice as exhibited in eight of the nine novels. The remaining three themes of family as

blessing or a curse, the quest for discovery, and the danger of ignorance are also

important to the storyline and development of the genre.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

As fractured fairy tales grow in popularity among young adults, teacher librarians may need a wider understanding of the themes they contain in order to provide quality reader's advisory. The purpose of this research is to describe the themes and moral lessons of positively reviewed fractured fairy tales for young adults in order to inform librarians' recommendations of them.

Conclusions

Love and sacrifice was the theme found in eight of the nine novels. Danger of ignorance, and the quest for discovery also occurred frequently which was expected. Some of the other themes present in the tales were, however, unanticipated by the researcher. Family as a blessing or a curse was surprising. The influence and importance of family was not predictable since many young adult novels have missing parents. Conversely, heroism which is a common theme in fairy tales and was expected to be seen in fractured tales, though perhaps with someone other than a classic prince charming, was present in only four of the novels. The themes and lessons reveal that the popularity of fractured fairy tales may stem from the fact that they twist readers' expectations and help young adults feel less alone in the chaos of life. As teacher librarians provide readers' advisory, an awareness and understanding of these themes may help to connect students with books they will enjoy.

In addition to the themes discussed fractured fairy tales provide lessons to be learned. The lessons are a style of conversation between the author and the reader where the reader interprets the author's intended message. The researcher found several lessons

in the analyzed texts, but there were three that were overarching and common to the majority of the texts. The lessons found in nine of the novels are shown in Table 3. Each lesson created by the author gives readers more to think about after they finish reading.

Table 3

Lessons present in novels book list

Lesson	Novels where lesson is present
Independence	*Frogged, Cinder, Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin, A Tale Dark and Grimm, Into the Woods Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom*
Persistence	*Frogged, Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel, Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom, Sleeper in the Spindle, Dust City*
Morality	*Frogged, Cinder, Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin, Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel, Sleeper in the Spindle, Dust City*

The overarching lesson of independence is portrayed in several novels. The characters break away from traditional roles of characters in the original fairy tales who typically wait to be rescued. For example in *Frogged* the princess does not sit and wait for help, but rather tracks down the witch to reverse the spell. The characters in *Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom* each endure great danger on the adventure, and through these challenges they learn to be independent and to solve problems. Ella escapes from the witch's clutches well before any prince can arrive. The pampered Frederic and clumsy Dalton manage to fight trolls and stop the evil witch. In *Cinder* the prince goes alone to have his robot fixed and Cinder does not wait for a magical fairy but instead builds her own car and drives herself to the ball. Of course she only attends the ball to tell the prince about Levana's plot to murder him.

The lesson of persistence is key to the success of several characters. In *Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel* multiple people try to rescue her for years after the witch steals her away to hide her in the tower. Jack is incredibly persistent in the story when he saves a fairy, helps Rapunzel, bargains to save his sister, and at every turn is ready for the next challenge. The lesson of persistence is also found in *Sleeper in the Spindle* where Snow White will not give up on finding the source of the sleeping curse. Another great example is in *Dust City* where Hank keeps trying to find fairies and what happened to them even though he is repeatedly injured, being chased by a water nixie, and police want to arrest him.

The lesson of morality is one that is found in many fairy tales, but this researcher found that it is also in many fractured fairy tales. The fractured tale is told from a different perspective or tells a new story based on traditional tales, but the lesson of morality is still present. Imogene in *Frogged* refused to pass on the curse because it was wrong. Snow White in *Sleeper in the Spindle* killed the witch to save the enslaved townspeople. Dr. Erland in *Cinder* worked tirelessly to cure the world of a deadly virus that could not infect him. Hank in *Dust City* refused to use drug dust because he did not want to lose control and hurt someone. Rapunzel in *Grounded: The Adventures of Rapunzel* refused to kill Witch because despite everything she did not deserve to be doomed as a giant of white city. Again and again the characters were true, honest, decent and caring of others promoting the lesson of morality. Teacher librarians can use this understanding of characters and themes to provide improved reader's advisory.

Summary

The teacher librarian can use these themes and lessons to better connect students with texts they will enjoy. Fantasy, historical fiction and realistic fiction are popular genres (Moss & Young, 2010) and because of this fractured fairy tales as a subgenre of fantasy resonate with students. Young adults are seeking to understand the world around them to make sense of their lives and so have a unique interest in books that involve finding identity and meaning in problems they recognize. (Ross, 2000).

As teacher librarians seek to improve their reader's advisory skills they can consider ways to promote fractured fairy tales and help students locate books. Whether in a large group or one-on-one a librarian could give short theme talks and then introduce or suggest books that fit that theme.

Future Research

As fractured fairy tales in picture books, novels, and novel series are continuously written and released, continued evaluation of this subgenre is needed. Due to the nature of series books, research could explore themes within the series or determine if themes and lessons are consistent throughout a series. Research could utilize picture books to determine if similar themes are also found in shorter texts. In the case of this research, all selected texts were fracturing different original tales, or using multiple tales. This leads to an opportunity to research multiple novels that fracture the same original tale to compare themes. Finally similar theme and lesson research could be conducted to help librarians with readers' advisory in other genres such as: steampunk, biopunk, or paranormal romance.

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APPENDIX A

INITIAL BOOK LIST

1. Anderson, Jean *I am so Handsome.* Gecko Press. 2012

2. Daly, Niki. *The Hop.* Disney Hyperion Books. 2012.

3. French, Vivian. *The flight of dragons: the fourth tales from the five kingdoms* Candlewick. 2010.

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6. Gidwitz, Adam. *In a Glass Grimmly.* Dutton Juvenile. 2012.

7. Healy, Christopher *The Hero's Guide to Storming the Castle* Harper Collins. 2013

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9. Krause, Ute. *Oscar and the Very Hungry Dragon.* NorthSouth Books. 2010.

10. Mahurin, Matt *Grumbles from the Forest* Word Song. 2013

11. Mattson, James. *The Magic Mistake.* Disney Hyperion Books. 2014.

12. Meyer, Marissa. *Scarlet* Feiwel and Friends. 2013

13. Morrison, Megan *Grounded: The Tale of Rapunzel.* Scholastic Inc. 2015.

14. Picoult, Jodi. *Between the Lines.* Simon Pulse. 2012.

15. Santat, Dan. *Ninja Red Riding Hood.* Putnam's Sons. 2014

16. Santat, Dan. *The Three Ninja Pigs*. Putnam's Sons. 2012.

17. Sierra, Judy. *Tell the Truth B.B. Wolf.* Alfred A. Knopf. 2010

18. Shurtliff, Liesl *Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin* Alfred A. Knopf 2013.

19. Vande Velde, Vivian *Cloaked in Red* Marshall Cavendish Children. 2010.

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21. Weston, Robert. *Dust City* Razorbill. 2010.

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APPENDIX B

FINAL BOOK SELECTION LIST

Healy, Christopher *The Hero's Guide to Saving your Kingdom*. 2012.

Gaiman, Neil. *The Sleeper in the Spindle.* 2015.

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Shurtliff, Liesl *Rump: The True Story of Rumplestiltskin* 2013.

Velde, Vivian. *Frogged.* 2013.

Weston, Robert. *Dust City.* 2010.

APPENDIX C

NOTE TAKING PROTOCOL

Title:

Original Tale:

Protagonist:

Themes Present

Betrayal	
Danger of Ignorance	
Destruction of Beauty	
Empowerment	
Family as a blessing or curse	
Heroism	
Identity Crisis	
Kindness as a virtue	
Love and Sacrifice	
Quest for Discovery	
Quest for Power	
Vanity as a downfall	

Key Events:

Lesson: