I chose to write on mirrors as a connecting point for the tales “The Bloody Chamber,” “The Lady of Shalott,” and “Little Snow-White” because the idea of female agency and self-awareness has always been important to me. Growing up with a single mom and four sisters, I have always been hyperaware of the pressures women face to be beautiful by society’s standards. However, it was not until I gave up makeup for thirty days that I discovered how sickeningly dependent the modern woman (myself very much included) has become on appearing beautiful to those around her in order to feel a sense of self-confidence. Last November, I refrained from wearing makeup as an experiment of self-acceptance, and through this, I discovered for the first time how hard it was for me to look into the mirror or walk into a room full of people without the protective covering of makeup caked all over my face. Soon, my experiment proved to be successful however. I could look into the mirror with confidence in my reflection. While this rang true for me, how did this compare to the world of fairytales, where beauty is valued above all?

Besides this, mirrors have also invaded the territory of the supernatural, from the old slumber party game of “Bloody Mary” to a whole slew of horror films (*Oculus*, I’m looking at you, though trying not to). Clearly, there is an otherworldly fear associated with mirrors. An opposite person who is just like me in every way except totally different exists within the world of the mirror, and that is frightening on multiple levels. We can never see ourselves the way others see us, and the closest we can come to seeing our physical self is in a cold flat surface that shows us the exact opposite of who we are.

My experience of thirty days without makeup along with my awareness of mirrors in media sparked my interest in the mirror as a tool of female objectification. Why do women spend countless hours of their lives getting ready in front of a mirror while our male counterparts (at least the ones in my life) can roll out of bed, throw on clothes, do some basic grooming, and go on about their day all in less than twenty minutes? (Note: I do believe men have physical expectations placed upon them by society, but when it comes to daily routines, theirs are typically less demanding). This idea that women should always be put together is rooted deeply in our society today (perhaps it always has been?), so I sought to examine gender discrepancies that exist both in our society today and in the fairytale realm.

I wanted to fuse together two ideas: the supernatural fear of the otherworldly mirror and the objectification of women through that same mirror. How can this be an every day tool when it carries such heavy weight as an object of fear in movies and children’s games? I found that these two seemingly opposite ideas, fear and beauty, often go hand in hand in fairytales.

I used images to enrich the readers’ experience, giving them a visual accompaniment to the text. My favorite image is Claire Borwell’s “The Bloody Chamber,” which depicts a red gem reflecting back from the protagonist and many elements of the plot. This is powerful because it emphasizes the crucial role of mirrors in the tale.

I also hyperlinked all of my sources and images, so that my readers can easily access them for further detailed research. In addition, I used colors to distinguish between the tales. The color red represents “The Bloody Chamber” and sources related to it, green for “The Lady of Shalott,” and purple for “Little Snow-White.” My hope is that this creates a greater sense of continuity in my paper, so that readers can find more information on whichever tale they would like to know more about by finding the corresponding text. I have also hyperlinked my References by using this same design.

I put in a lot of hard work into this essay and its digital elements over the past few months, and I hope that it translates well as an online post. My writing process consisted of constant small grammar and flow revisions, as well as some larger ones. I took one of my final drafts to the Writing Center for feedback, and the proofreader helping me told me that I did not have a thesis and that I should scrap my entire paper. At this point, I thought I was near the end of the revision process, so this was disheartening to say the least. I looked back at Dr. Kate’s comments on my thesis, which suggested to me that my thesis did in fact exist, so this gave me hope. I revised it in an attempt to make it more concise and focused. I also omitted any doubtful phrasing that seemed to pull away from my argument.

I believe my essay aligns with the goals of this class in that it discusses some of the warnings that we all face on our journey toward self-awareness. Are we who society says we are? Why does how we look even matter? These are questions I sought to address in my paper, and questions that all of us likely consider to some degree. Both fairytales and reality can make perfect sense and then be ambiguous, and I am pleased to have added to this confusion.