Reflection

My creative process is not very exciting, but I wanted Belle to be exciting, and that was how this story happened. I was torn between this idea and one where Belle was a lieutenant in the army and Beast her superior officer, but I chose this idea because I wanted to keep the magical elements of the Witch and the castle intact.

But friendship is the most important relationship in this story. Friendship is where everything starts. The choice to become friends, as opposed to the concept of arranged marriages or unions, seems immensely more appealing to me, in regards to the idea of Belle being obligated to the Beast. My main goal was to give Belle agency, and give her some all-around awesome qualities. She’s assertive. Belle takes her fate and the fate of her father into her own hands. She’s the kind of woman that I want to be.

As far as tools learned from class, I did utilize Propp’s functions. There is the absentation of the father, Belle’s beginning counteraction as she goes to find her father, the difficult task is Belle’s learning the different skills, the Witch is revealed to be the villain, and Belle and the Beast are “wed” in a very metaphorical sense of the word. They are bound together, first by fate and eventually by choice. Comparatively, my version of Beauty and the Beast isn’t nearly lateral enough for Joseph Campbell’s “hero’s journey”.

“Beauty and the Beast” is classified as 425C by the Aarne-Thompson Scale, which remains true. The Beast is a supernatural relative of sorts.

I revised this with the help of Rachel Banka, a fellow student at Ole Miss, who reviewed my story in-class. She advised that I watch out for modern clichés, as well as rushing. Her advice was very helpful for the rewrite of my story.

On Dr. Kate’s advice, I looked over the original draft and rewrote this story. I darkened the tone. I cut straight to the middle of the story and added three specific scenes, so that the reader can better know and understand Belle and Bram as characters. The story lost most of its humor, but gained emotion and intensity. The original story was very detached and distant, thanks to being written like an oral tale. This version is much closer to the heart. I also made Belle less angry and more approachable, making her easier to sympathize with.

Most of these ideas came around after discussing the story in-depth with Casey Baumgartner, who is a fellow English/Creative Writing major. I was able to gain a better understanding of what I wanted to do with this story, and was able to overcome the road blocks of the original version. I decided upon the idea of leaving the Beast untransformed, so that he and Belle would have something to work towards. That way, the ending is more of a beginning of a better friendship and an honest love.

I tried to pick artwork that would lend itself towards the flow of the story. I went with artwork from the 19th and 20th centuries, to give the story an old-time feel. While the concept of adding digital elements to research papers and stories is a 21st century medium, I thought it would be appropriate to use that medium for antique art. The aged paintings add to the mysterious and somber tone of the story, particularly at the end.

The portrait of *Emma Hart* by George Romney is how I pictured Belle. *The Horse and the Lion* by George Stubbs is a representation of the scene where the Beast reacquaints himself with his horses; his horses see a predator and I chose that piece to represent that. *The Abbey in the Oakwood* by Caspar David Friedrich was honestly chosen because I liked it so much. I was browsing art while writing the story, and was inspired to write the cemetery scene because I wanted to fit Friedrich’s work in somehow. *Flowers* by Ernest Quost was included in homage to the rose in the original tale. *Morgan Le Fay* by John Spencer Stanhope was chosen because I wanted to throw a well-known sorceress in there, to add to the Witch’s sinister air. I included no images of the Beast himself, in order to leave his fantastical appearance to the imagination. I also enjoyed being able to draw focus on women in art.

All of this happened because I feel very strongly about women with agency. Fairy tales and myths that we focus on nowadays were written about stereotypical women. Belle is “feminine”. She is beautiful, loyal to her family, and compassionate. But in my story, she is impatient and impulsive; she is proactive and fierce. I wanted to pay homage to women like Madame D’Aulnoy. It was also important to me to prove Jack Zipes right that female protagonists written by women tend to be cleverer than their male counterparts. Anatomy is not destiny and I wanted Belle, the Beast, and the Witch to be examples of that. Belle establishes assertiveness and compassion. She takes her story into her own hands. This story is one which celebrates Belle and the humanity within her and the Beast.

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