

# EVOLUTION OF LOVE: EXAMINING BELLE AND THE BEAST'S RELATIONSHIP IN "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

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**Abstract.** The tale of "Beauty and the Beast" has captivated audiences for generations, with its timeless message of love, acceptance, and the transformative power of inner beauty. This article, "Evolution of Love: Examining Belle and the Beast's Relationship in 'Beauty and the Beast,'" explores the development of the relationship between Belle, a compassionate young woman, and the Beast, a prince cursed due to his selfish nature. By analyzing key versions of the story, including those by De Beaumont and Villeneuve, and drawing from a range of scholarly perspectives, the study examines the characters' evolution, symbolic elements, and socio-cultural and psychological implications of their relationship. The literature review highlights various interpretations, focusing on the symbolic meanings of elements like the enchanted rose, and how they contribute to the narrative's themes of transformation and redemption. The article also discusses modern adaptations and their resonance with contemporary audiences, particularly in terms of psychological themes and societal expectations. The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of love in "Beauty and the Beast." Objectives include analyzing character development, exploring symbolic elements, assessing socio-cultural contexts, and evaluating psychological perspectives. The methodology involves a multifaceted approach, including a literature review, character analysis, symbolic analysis, socio-cultural analysis, and comparative analysis. The findings suggest that "Beauty and the Beast" offers a rich narrative that challenges traditional gender roles and societal norms while emphasizing the importance of empathy and compassion. By examining the relationship between Belle and the Beast through various theoretical lenses, the article provides deeper insights into the complexities and enduring appeal of this timeless tale.

**Keywords:** love; acceptance; inner beauty; transformation; empathy; compassion.

**JEL Classification:** A 20, I 20, Z 13

**Formulas:** 0; **fig.:** 0; **tabl.:** 0; **bibl.:** 11

**Introduction.** “*Beauty and the Beast*” is a captivating fairy tale that has captivated audiences for generations with its timeless message of love, acceptance, and the transformative power of inner beauty. The story revolves around Beauty, a kind-hearted and compassionate young woman, and the fearsome Beast, cursed by an enchantress due to his selfish and arrogant nature. Trapped in an enchanted castle, the Beast can only break the curse by finding true love before the last petal falls from a magical rose. Despite the Beast's intimidating exterior, Beauty sees beyond his appearance and discovers his gentle and kind-hearted nature. As they spend time together in the castle, their relationship blossoms, leading to a deep connection built on understanding, empathy, and acceptance. Through their journey, both *Beauty and the Beast* learn valuable lessons about the importance of looking beyond outward appearances and recognizing the beauty that lies within. *Beauty and the Beast* has been adapted into various forms of media, including books, movies, and stage productions, with Disney's animated film being one of the most beloved versions. The film beautifully portrays the enchanting castle, memorable characters like Lumière, Cogsworth, and Mrs. Potts, and features unforgettable songs like *Beauty and the Beast*. It continues to enchant audiences of all ages with its captivating story and timeless themes. At its core, *Beauty and the Beast* reminds us of the importance of empathy, compassion, and seeing the goodness in others. It encourages us to embrace our own imperfections and appreciate the beauty that resides within each of us. Whether through the original fairy tale, Disney's animated classic, or other adaptations, *Beauty and the Beast* continues to inspire and enchant audiences with its powerful message of love, acceptance, and the beauty of the human spirit.

**Literature review.** The timeless tale of “Beauty and the Beast” has been the subject of extensive literary analysis and interpretation. This review examines the evolution of love in the relationship between Belle and the Beast, drawing from a range of scholarly publications. The review encompasses analyses from different perspectives, including literary, psychoanalytic, sociocultural, and modern interpretations.

De Beaumont's (2022) “Beauty and the Beast” is a foundational text that provides the earliest structured narrative of the tale. De Beaumont's work is crucial in understanding the original themes of transformation and redemption through love. The 1740 version by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve is another seminal text that offers a more elaborate storyline, with greater emphasis on the Beast's backstory and the magical elements involved. These classic versions establish the primary narrative framework that later interpretations and adaptations build upon.

Griswold (2004), in “The meanings of ‘Beauty and the Beast’: a handbook,” explores the tale's various interpretations, focusing on its symbolic meanings. Griswold's analysis highlights the narrative's exploration of beauty, beastliness, and the transformative power of love. He delves into how these themes reflect societal norms and individual psychology.

Mintz (1969) examines the symbolic meaning of the rose in “The meaning of the rose in ‘Beauty and the Beast’”. The rose symbolizes beauty, time, and the fragility of

life and love, serving as a pivotal element in the narrative that drives the relationship between Belle and the Beast.

Hains (1989), in "Beauty and the Beast: 20th-century romance," situates the tale within the context of modern romance, emphasizing how the story's themes of love and transformation resonate with contemporary audiences. This analysis is crucial in understanding the enduring appeal of the tale.

Keles, Grealish, and Leamy (2024) provide a contemporary psychological perspective in "The beauty and the beast of social media." Their study examines the impact of social media on adolescents' mental health, drawing parallels with the story's themes of perception and identity. This modern take reflects how "Beauty and the Beast" can be reinterpreted to address current social issues.

Lorenza, Arsyad, and Kasmains (2024), in "An Analysis of Deixis in 'Beauty and The Beast' Movie Script," focus on the linguistic elements of the story. Their analysis of deixis—words and phrases that cannot be fully understood without additional contextual information—sheds light on how language shapes the narrative and characters' interactions.

Potabuga, Moge, and Sabudu (2021) discuss the romantic elements in "Romance Jeane Marie in Beauty and the Beast." They analyze how the romantic narrative structure contributes to the development of Belle and the Beast's relationship, emphasizing the tale's function as a romance that challenges and ultimately subverts traditional gender roles and expectations.

Haas (2006) in "Beauty and the Beast: The theory and practice of information integration" uses the tale as a metaphor for information integration in database theory. Although this approach is highly technical, it underscores the versatility of "Beauty and the Beast" as a narrative that can be adapted and applied across various fields.

Taussig (2012), in his book "Beauty and the Beast," offers a critical analysis that blends anthropology and literary critique. Taussig's work examines the socio-cultural implications of the tale, particularly how it reflects and critiques societal norms.

**Aims.** The aim of this article is to explore the evolution of love between Belle and the Beast in the story "Beauty and the Beast," examining how their relationship develops and transforms throughout the narrative. The study aims to understand the underlying themes and symbols that contribute to this transformation, as well as to analyze the socio-cultural and psychological implications of their relationship.

***The main objectives of the article are:***

- to analyze the character development of Belle and the Beast (examine how Belle and the Beast's characters evolve individually and as a pair; identify key moments in the narrative that signify shifts in their relationship);
- to explore the symbolic elements in the story (investigate the meaning and significance of key symbols such as the rose, the enchanted castle, and the curse; understand how these symbols contribute to the theme of love and transformation);
- to assess the socio-cultural context and implications (examine how different versions of the story reflect societal norms and values regarding love and relationships; analyze the tale's commentary on beauty, beastliness, and societal expectations);
- to evaluate psychological perspectives on the relationship (apply psychological

theories to understand the dynamics of Belle and the Beast's relationship; discuss how the story addresses themes of identity, perception, and personal growth).

**Methodology.** The methodology of the article includes:

- Literature review - conducting a comprehensive review of the existing literature on "Beauty and the Beast", including classic texts, scholarly articles, books and essays that offer different interpretations and views of the story;
- Character analysis - conducting a detailed analysis of the characters of Belle and the Beast, using textual evidence from different versions of the story;
- Symbolic analysis - analysis of key symbols in the story, based on literary theories and previous scientific interpretations;
- Sociocultural analysis - contextualization of the story against its historical and cultural background, examining how it reflects and criticizes social norms; comparing different adaptations of the story to understand how sociocultural attitudes towards love and relationships have evolved.

By applying this multifaceted methodology, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of love in Beauty and the Beast, offering insight into the enduring attraction and complexity of the relationship between Belle and the Beast.

**Results.** The classic fairytale of Beauty and the Beast has a rich history, with its origins dating back to 1740 when French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve first penned the tale. Her rendition, a lengthy narrative, laid the groundwork for what would become one of the most beloved stories in the canon of fairy tales. Over time, the story has undergone multiple adaptations with many local flavours added to it, captivating the hearts of people across cultures and generations. It was Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont who made the tale popular through her abridged version published in 1756, making it more accessible to a wider audience. Despite the many retellings and reimaginings, the story of Beauty and the Beast remains a beloved classic in literary history.

The story of Beauty and the Beast draws inspiration from various sources such as ancient Greek myths like "Cupid and Psyche" and Italian folktales like "The Pig King." These influences give the story timeless themes of love, redemption, and the transformative power of inner beauty. The story is about Belle, a compassionate and spirited young woman, and the Beast, a cursed prince trapped in a monstrous form. Initially, Belle is repelled by his appearance, but as she discovers his inner kindness and vulnerability, her perception of the Beast evolves. Through shared experiences and moments of connection, Belle comes to see past the Beast's exterior and appreciate the goodness within him.

Central to the narrative is the Beast's gradual transformation, both physically and emotionally. As Belle demonstrates unwavering compassion and belief in his inherent goodness, the Beast learns to let go of his past traumas and embrace the possibility of change. Their evolving relationship is characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and a deepening emotional connection. The climax of the story comes with the breaking of the curse, symbolized by the enchanting moment when the last petal falls from the enchanted rose. In this transformative scene, the Beast is liberated from his

monstrous form, revealing the prince hidden within. It is a testament to the power of love to overcome adversity and bring about profound transformation.

Throughout their journey, Belle and the Beast confront societal expectations and prejudices, highlighting broader themes of acceptance and the importance of looking beyond outward appearances. Belle's unwavering love and acceptance of the Beast serve as a powerful example of the transformative power of empathy and compassion. In conclusion, *Beauty and the Beast* remains a timeless tale that continues to resonate with audiences worldwide. Its enduring popularity is a testament to the universal themes it explores, reminding us of the profound impact of love, acceptance, and the beauty that lies within each of us.

**Discussion.** In discussions about Belle and Adam (the Beast) from the 1991 Disney version of *Beauty and the Beast*, the word "transformation" is often mentioned. While the Beast does magically transform near the end of the story, their relationship offers many examples of communication concepts. This fictional relationship serves as a depiction of how these concepts can work and be applied in the real world. Relationship theories can also be applied to understand the dynamics between Belle and the Beast and how their connection evolves throughout the story.

According to the Social Exchange Theory, personal relationships are established by evaluating the benefits obtained versus the costs incurred. People naturally seek rewards and attempt to avoid expenses. This theory implies that people are drawn to each other due to the benefits they can receive, which indicates our self-centered nature. Initially, Belle's interaction with the Beast can be analyzed through the lens of social exchange theory, where individuals weigh the costs and benefits of relationships. Belle initially fears the Beast, and their interactions are marked by apprehension and fear. However, as Belle spends more time with the Beast, she begins to observe his inner kindness and vulnerability, causing her to reevaluate the costs and benefits of their relationship. In the end, she values the emotional connection and companionship she shares with him, outweighing any initial doubts.

The theory of attachment emphasizes the importance of social and emotional connections in achieving effective emotional regulation, mental health, and psychosocial functioning. Belle and the Beast's relationship is a reflection of this theory, which suggests that individuals seek emotional bonds based on their early caregiving experiences. Belle's nurturing and compassionate nature can be attributed to her close relationship with her father, while the Beast's guardedness and harsh behavior may have stemmed from experiences of rejection and isolation. As the story progresses, Belle's ability to comfort and understand the Beast helps to build a secure attachment bond between them, facilitating both characters' emotional growth and healing.

Interdependence theory is a concept that explores how individuals rely on each other in relationships. It takes into account various factors such as mutual dependence and relationship satisfaction. An example of this theory is evident in the relationship between Belle and the Beast in "*Beauty and the Beast*." Both characters come to depend on each other for emotional support and companionship, despite their initial differences. They realize the value of their connection and actively work to support and

nurture it. As they continue to bond, they become more invested in each other's well-being, forming a deep and meaningful relationship that goes beyond physical appearances.

Social identity theory delves into the ways in which individuals classify themselves and others according to their group memberships and social categories. In the classic tale of "Beauty and the Beast," both Belle and the Beast confront social expectations and stereotypes linked to their unique identities. Belle faces scrutiny and condemnation from her peers due to her unconventional passions and outsider status, while the Beast grapples with his own internalized shame and self-image as a monster. Nevertheless, as they deepen their relationship, Belle and the Beast can transcend these societal obstacles and develop a true bond grounded in mutual empathy and acknowledgement.

**Conclusion.** This article closely examines the characters of Beauty, her sisters, and the Beast to determine whether they conform to typical patriarchal expectations or exhibit more contemporary, innovative behaviors. De Beaumont's tale is groundbreaking in addressing gendered expectations and marriage relationships in progressive ways. She adopted her story from De Villeneuve's much longer text and created empowered female characters who make their own decisions, providing an alternative to traditional female fairy tale characters. Beauty's character is particularly noteworthy for her ability to free the Beast from his imprisonment in a beastly body, showcasing female empowerment. While De Beaumont's tale does not aggressively challenge gender roles, it offers new perspectives and pushes the boundaries of masculine and feminine behaviors. Thus, "Beauty and the Beast" is a fascinating tale that delves into relationship dynamics and themes, encouraging us to contemplate the intricacies of love, acceptance, and personal transformation. By viewing Belle and the Beast's evolving relationship through various relationship theories, we can gain a deeper understanding of the profound impact it has on their lives.

**Author contributions.** The authors contributed equally.

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