

1908502 Louise Ridley

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Introduction

My proposed three key words for my dissertation are topics and interests of mine that are relatable to my practice. From a young age, I have always been inspired by Walt Disney. Based on his influence, I curated many stories and characters and dreamed of one day working in the animation industry. I have always been fascinated with his work and intrigued by how he develops the ideas and stories for his characters. I will be researching and contextualising the words Storytelling, Disney and Feminism. These three key words are applicable to the research needed to form my outcome question. I will investigate, explore and construct using various artists and images to support my analysis. This will relate to Disney Artists, Disney Storytelling, and the history of feminism. From the support of my research, my aim is to develop an outcome question that relates to my three key words in attempts to gain the knowledge to answer in my independent research dissertation.

Story telling

“Story telling involves a deep understanding of the human emotions, motivations, and psychology in order to truly move an audience”. (Peters, 2008)

As children grow up, roleplaying and using their imagination is a way of amusement and entertainment that should come naturally as part of development and maturing.

Story telling is an artform where words and actions interactively reveal the visual elements of a story. It ignites your imagination to creatively picture the characters, scenery and the mood and verbally expresses it to the listener by inventing fictional narratives as entertainment. It is naturally embedded in us to tell stories and express our life events to others. Story telling whether it be fictional or factual, is a native human characteristic.

The way we connect with others has evolved drastically over time. Storytelling first evolved with visual stories as far back as cave drawings, and then transition to verbal traditions, stories have been passed down from generation to generation visually and verbally. There are many ways to tell a story such as, through narrative, sketched, written and printed.

There are many successful storyteller artists in all fields of narrative including, William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Roald Dahl, Beatrix Potter, Steven Spielberg and Walt Disney just to name a few. All the artists above use story telling in their own distinctive narrative, from poetry to books to films.



Steven Spielberg Credit: Getty – Contributor (Kavanagh, 2018) available at:<http://thesun.co.uk/tvshowbiz/5847185/steven-spielberg> (Accessed:10 May 2021).

Steven Spielberg born 18 December 1946, is best known for his diverse films such as E.T, Indiana Jones, Jurassic Park, Jaws and many more.

“When Steven Spielberg tells a story, he wants to make much more of a story. Not more than a story: that is his weakness. But more of a story: that is his strength”. (Andrews, 2019)

He is one of the great story tellers and film directors of recent times. Spielberg is known to be one of the co-founders of DreamWorks Studios.



DreamWorks. n.d. *DreamWorks*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.dreamworks.com/>> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

Story telling plays a vital part in the animation industry. It is key to the success of films and cartoons that come from some of the best animation studios such as Disney and Pixar.

The Art of storytelling has played an essential part in human history. Stories portraying shared experiences and lessons, Dreams and fictions that have become navigating narratives entwined into our cultural and social fabric. Since its arrival in the twentieth century, cinema has become the main medium for telling stories. (Disney Spain - The Art of Storytelling - The Walt Disney Company Europe, Middle East & Africa, 2018)

The art of good story telling is to keep the audience captivated and interested. Both Disney and Pixar have mastered these techniques. But how do they do it? How do they keep creating such interesting

stories for their films that keep the viewers engrossed and wanting to repeatedly watch them over and over.

Story Artists translate ideas into visual sequences to convey the essence of storyline, scene structure, character emotion, action, and humour in alignment with the overall direction of the film. With quick and gestural sketches, a mastery of human and animal anatomy, an understanding of cinematography and narrative staging, story artists produce character driven story sequences with strong character appeal and acting. (Story, 2021)

Many Disney animations are based on familiar myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales. In modifying these classics into animations, Walt Disney and his successive creative teams have synthesised versions of stories from all times, modernising them to make them more accessible and adapting them to today's audiences.(Disney Spain- The Art of Storytelling - The Walt Disney Company Europe, Middle East & Africa, 2018)

In summary I have developed some knowledge within the Story telling practices and the artists that have become successful through the art of storytelling.

What is it that makes a good story and keeps the audience entertained and wanting more?

What have these artists done to keep up with momentum?

Why are their stories so special?

These are questions that will help my process to develop my final outcome which leads me to my Second key word.

Keyword: Disney



(Watts, 1995) Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2081916> (Accessed:08 May 2021).

“If you can dream it, you can do it. Always remember that this whole thing was started with a dream and a mouse.” – Walt Disney (Elf, 2018)

Walter Elias Disney was born on December 5, 1901. He was a successful entrepreneur, inspiring leader and excellent communicator. He inspired others to follow their hearts and be bold in pursuing their ideas. (Elf, 2018)

Since a young age Walt Disney enjoyed sketching and doodling and would gift his drawings to his friends and neighbours. He took classes at McKinley High School in Chicago and took part in cartoons for the school paper. He was consistently hard working and attended night classes at the Chicago Art Institute. He did apply for the Army but was refused due to his age being too young. He started working as an ambulance driver in France but then returned home in 1919 to pursue a career in the newspaper industry as an artist. (Elf, 2018).

Walt Disney's passion for drawing and storytelling was never lost and despite his change of career path his passion and dreams always took him back to what he loved to do best. His determination and drive made him the success he is known for today.

“Walt Disney has been, arguably, the most influential American of the twentieth century”. (Watts, 1995)

Disney has had a significant impact on the world. He took the entertainment industry to a new level with his animated Films, lovable characters and creative storytelling skills, producing pre-eminent animated movies which are popular worldwide and have been for many generations. Disney accomplished various multiple entertainment assets. Short cartoons, Comic books, Feature length animations, theme parks, television shows, records, nature documentaries.

“Disney creations and his Disney merchandise had flooded much of the globe”. (Watts, 1995).

Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck was recognisable by people all around the world, people who have never heard of Franklin D. Roosevelt or William Faulkner or Martin Luther King, Jr., could identify Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck in an instant. (Watts, 1995)

It was not always easy for Walt Disney to become so successful. At 22 years old he had already had two failed businesses and experienced bankruptcy leaving him close to nothing. He never gave up on his dream although he was not having much success, he still believed in himself.

With this determined mindset he packed his suitcase to pursue his passion in Hollywood where his new life and dreams became reality. (Medeiros, 2018)

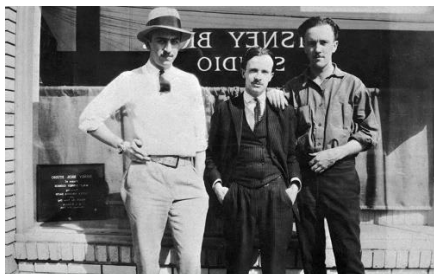
Below is a timeline from The Walt Disney company (The Walt Disney Company, 2010)

1923 – Walt Disney and his brother Roy Disney open the Disney Brothers studio where they animated short films called The Alice Comedies.

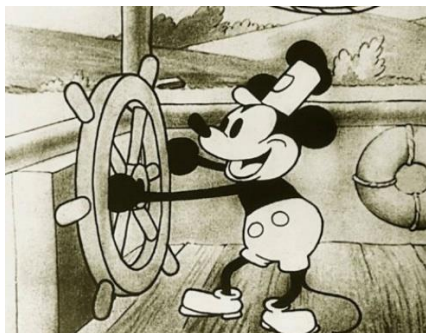
1928 –Steamboat Willie debuts was Disney’s first animated film with sound effects. This is where Mickey Mouse was introduced.

1929 – The Disney Brothers studio becomes Walt Disney Productions.

1937 – Snow White and the seven dwarfs, Disney’s first full – length animated film was released



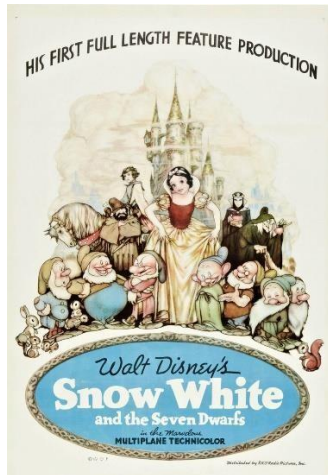
(Disney History 101, 2019). Available at <http://www.disneyhistory.com> (accessed: 11.05.2021).



(The Walt Disney Company, 2010) Available at: <http://cdn.media.ir.thewaltdisneycompany.com> (accessed:08 May 2021).

“Although Walt Disney released a huge number of films since he first opened his studio in 1923. His first successful animated film ‘Snow White and the seven dwarfs’ aired in 1937” (Elf, 2018) and is still to this day as popular as it was back then. Snow White is a timeless classic and although the story is still very much loved, society has changed, social roles have changed and feminism has evolved. The characters within the animation are very much dated. Snow White’s character is well known and is a

much-loved movie that is a favourite with children of all ages? Snow White's character is very different to the characters we see today, where Snow White has no empowerment and is a stereotypical woman of the 19th century.



(The Walt Disney Company, 2010) Available at: <http://cdn.media.ir.thewaltdisneycompany.com>
(Accessed: 08 May 2021).

The evolution of Walt Disney's characters, especially the princesses have diversified massively throughout the years. The characters that we see in newer animations have evolved from the typical damsels in distress, into strong and powerful characters that promote feminism and independence, such as Elsa in Frozen.

Today's stories have adapted to our modern society and have embraced women's social equality. The princesses are now far more diverse and empowered characters. Disney has kept with the times with their story telling techniques to keep the world entertained and relatable to the characters.

In summary, after looking into the history and background of Walt Disney and his success.

What techniques did Walt Disney use to keep his characters interesting?

Where did his initial ideas come from?

How did Walt Disney introduce feminism into his stories and characters?

Which brings me to my third key word Feminism.

Feminism



(Drucker, 2018) Available at: <http://www.ohiohumanities.org> (Accessed: 08 May 2021).

Feminist histories have three wave stages, divided by the first wave which occurred in the 19th and early 20th century, this first stage of feminism embraced women's rights to vote. The second stage of feminism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s relating to equal rights and women's liberation movement for equal legal and social rights. The third wave which began in the 1990s, relates to the continuance and response of the second wave of feminism. (Drucker, 2018).

Feminism is about the equality of men and women; it is the debate that women do not get the same rights as men so there is difference in equality. This is because men and women have different physical capabilities. The first wave of feminism (The rise of the suffrage) relates to the right to women's vote in elections, political equality, women pushed to change voting laws to allow them to vote. In the United States during world war I, representatives from the national women's party (NWP) held a protest outside the White house displaying pugnacious banners causing uproar by accusing the government of undemocratic ignorance. (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006)



Alice Paul (1885-1977) (Michals, 2015) Available at: <http://www.womenshistory.org> (Accessed: 09 May 2021).

The demonstrators knew what they were doing: dressed in their Sunday best, they offered no resistance to the police and thus both appalled and appealed to the public, they personified white, middle class femininity, while engaging in very unfeminine and less than bourgeois practices. The action was inspired by radical agitator Alice Paul. (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006)

The second wave of feminism “The personal is political” focused on issues regarding equality and discrimination. Betty Friedan a leader in the second wave feminism had mentioned in her book, published in 1963 *The Feminine Mystique* she criticized the concept that women could find fulfilment only through childbearing and home making. (Drucker, 2018)

Women’s earnings as a proportion to men’s earnings were 54.8% - but because they often needed a signature from their father or husband to gain credit or buy any bigger items. The economic debate sharpened suddenly in 1968, when women at the Ford plant in Dagenham went on strike for equal pay. Half of Britain’s working women were earning less than five shillings an hour.

Before the stages of feminism women's rights was not heard of. The contraceptive pill arrived in the UK in 1961 but was only prescribed to married women, it only became freely available in 1974, abortion was illegal but that changed in 1967 with the passing of the abortion act. (Cochrane, 2013)

The third wave of feminism "Grrl feminism" this phase refers to the privileges and outcomes from the first and second wave that feminists had fought for. The third wave feminists have more opportunities and less sexism. Young feminists now reclaim the word "girl" in a bid to attract a different generation. G.r.r.l.s which is cyber lingo for Great-Girls are feminists who are more self – assertive, more playful, aggressive and are a less pompous kind of feminism. (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006)

Conclusion

In conclusion, my three key words that I have chosen to visit for evidence have given me the Knowledge to develop my outcome question which narrows down to how the evolution of characters and stories have developed over time. Disney has kept the audience captivated with their storytelling abilities and have been very successful in the transition of adapting their films to the times of today. Through my research in storytelling, I was aiming to find out, how the development of storytelling can be so successful and what techniques are required to become as successful as Disney. Disney are undoubtedly masters in story and character development and it is interesting how they have been consistent throughout the years even during times of change.

Disney have cleverly transitioned their characters and story lines in recent times. It has been a smooth and undistruptive journey that has embraced the rise of feminism in the world. What has particularly stood out for me is how different the princesses are from the very first princess to the ones we see today and how different their morals are. Within the last forty to fifty years the portrayal of women has changed considerably, and the three waves of feminism have been incorporated into Disney's films throughout the process. Other successful artists cannot be compared to Disney. This is because there are no other films or characters that span over such a vast timeline like the Disney princesses. Which leads me to my question for my third year dissertation:

Have feminism had an impact on how female characters are portrayed in animated films. And what will we expect in the future?

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The waves of feminism incorporated into Disney films.