

# Mirror, mirror, who's the most liberated of all?

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Once upon a time, Disney fairy-tale heroines had it easy. They didn't have to worry about conforming to some future generation's ideal of young womanhood. It was enough if Snow White or Sleeping Beauty looked cute, got along with woodland animals and could carry a tune.

But life in the '90s is no picnic in the enchanted forest. And today's parents — who have a hard enough time coping with explicit MTV videos or Doogie Howser losing his virginity in prime time — turn again and again to Disney classic cartoons to not only entertain their kids, but perhaps to enlighten.

For those looking to teach their children well, here's a politically correct guide to the five Disney fairy-tale heroines. But lest ye judge them too harshly, remember — they all did manage to live happily ever after.

## BELLE

(*'Beauty and the Beast'*/1991)

- ▶ **Age:** A very bright, savvy 18.
- ▶ **Looks:** A brunette who's the most beautiful girl around, but doesn't flaunt it. Notice how that endearingly stubborn lock of hair is always in her face.
- ▶ **Background:** She comes from a creative, eccentric environment. Her single-parent father is an inventor.
- ▶ **Goals:** She yearns to shake off the confines of her small-town upbringing (she's considered an oddball), but for now lives through books. And she sets her romantic sights higher than the local hunk, an oaf named Gaston.
- ▶ **Burdens:** After her dad is trapped in the Beast's castle, she trades places with him and ends up a prisoner.
- ▶ **Man of her dreams:** The Beast, a hot-tempered animal who needs taming. But underneath that matted mound of fur beats the heart of a prince. And he's not such a bad guy — after all, he's smart enough to tempt Belle with his well-stocked library.
- ▶ **Personality pluses:** A heroine who takes action; a voracious reader; curious, not afraid to explore the un-



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**NOT SHEEPISH:** Independent Belle is opposite of her wool-covered friends.

known; sacrifices her freedom to save her father; a fine judge of character who can see the beauty in the Beast.

- ▶ **Personality minuses:** A tad too impulsive, which nearly turns her into a snack for a pack of wolves.
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** Saves the day; wins a handsome prince in the bargain.

- ▶ **Job potential in today's market:** Supreme Court justice.
- ▶ **Predictions for the couple's ever-after:** A terrific outlook, considering they've already gone through hell and back. Things can only get better. And they're perfect dining partners.
- ▶ **Role model grade:** A+

## PRINCESS AURORA (*'Sleeping Beauty'*/1959)

- ▶ **Age:** Nearly 16, on the brink of womanhood.
- ▶ **Looks:** Hair of sunshine gold, lips as red as the rose.



**SPELLBOUND:** Princess Aurora, cursed by the evil Maleficent.

- ▶ **Background:** An adored princess who must bear the curse of the evil Maleficent: On her 16th birthday, she will prick her finger on a spindle and die. The good fairy Merryweather amends it: She will only fall into a deep sleep. Aurora is forced to live in seclusion under the pseudonym Briar Rose with three godmotherly fairies.
- ▶ **Goals:** To awaken and meet the man of her dreams.
- ▶ **Burdens:** She is under a spell that can be broken only by true love's kiss. And she lives under a false identity.
- ▶ **Man of her dreams:** Prince Phillip, her intended since birth, is

a real catch — virtuous, brave and a fox. And they fall in love before knowing each other's identity.

- ▶ **Personality pluses:** Handles the trauma of meeting her real parents well; sings like a nightingale; playful and fun; rather wed the man she loves than be a princess.

- ▶ **Personality minuses:** Sheltered; little control over her destiny; falls for the first guy she meets; lives in her dreams; stumbles into trouble too easily.
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** Wakes up.
- ▶ **Job potential in today's market:** A pampered suburban princess who can do odd jobs. But not a seamstress — too many needles.
- ▶ **Predictions for the couple's ever-after:** A devoted twosome who has survived a few trials.
- ▶ **Role model grade:** C

## ARIEL (*'The Little Mermaid'*/1989)

- ▶ **Age:** A very immature 16.



**A BIT OF A DRIP:** Ariel would trade her voice for a man.

- ▶ **Looks:** Twitches like Ann-Margret gone guppy. Her wild red hair underlines her headstrong ways.
- ▶ **Background:** She lives in a deep-sea kingdom with her loving but imposing father, King Triton, and older sisters.
- ▶ **Goals:** To live in the human world.

- ▶ **Burdens:** To get her land legs, she must give up her singing voice (akin to selling her soul) and force Prince Eric to kiss her before three days go by.
- ▶ **Man of her dreams:** Prince Eric, sweet but dense, who almost is duped into marrying evil Ursula just because she has Ariel's voice.
- ▶ **Personality pluses:** A typical teen with a will of her own, she is still courageous enough to rescue

Prince Eric during a storm; sings wonderfully; desires knowledge of other cultures (she collects human artifacts); adventurous.

- ▶ **Personality minuses:** Too quick to deny her watery heritage; too eager to give up her special gift (her voice) for a man; selfish and self-centered, she endangers the lives of her friends and father.
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** Saves Eric; wins her voice back and her man, thanks to her sea pals and her father's magic.
- ▶ **Job potential in today's market:** A lounge singer at a Red Lobster restaurant or an aquarium director.
- ▶ **Predictions for the couple's ever-after:** Neither one is a rocket scientist — they should be OK.
- ▶ **Role model grade:** D+



**MAID TO ORDER:** Snow White helps the Seven Dwarfs clean up their acts.

## SNOW WHITE (*'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'*/1937)

- ▶ **Age:** About 12 or 13.
- ▶ **Looks:** She's the fairest of them all, with black pageboy and cherry lips. The bloom of childhood is still on her cheeks.
- ▶ **Background:** A princess made to wear rags and work as a maid by her wicked stepmother, the Queen.
- ▶ **Goals:** To wait until someday when her prince comes.
- ▶ **Burdens:** She has to deal with a stepmother who rivals Lady Macbeth. Then, after escaping to the forest, she has to cater to the whims of seven short, old men, a couple of them Grumpy and Dopey. After eating a poisoned apple, she almost dies.

- ▶ **Man of her dreams:** The prince, handsome yet bland.
- ▶ **Personality pluses:** Cheerful and pleasant; sweetly innocent (to a fault); extremely maternal — she practically "adopts" the dwarfs; knows how to use a mop and broom.
- ▶ **Personality minuses:** Too trusting with the old crone who offers her the apple; easily panicked; obsessive about cleanliness (she even rolls a cobweb into a tidy ball); overly passive — others must save her.
- ▶ **Accomplishments:** Finds her prince; spiffs up the dwarfs' cottage.
- ▶ **Job potential in today's market:** Running a maid service or a home-decorating company.
- ▶ **Predictions for the couple's ever-after:** Not great. She seems to be marrying far too young.
- ▶ **Role model grade:** C-

## CINDERELLA (*'Cinderella'*/1950)

- ▶ **Age:** Late teens.
- ▶ **Looks:** A blonde who's pretty in her work rags but a knockout in a ball gown. Born to wear a tiara.
- ▶ **Background:** A daughter of a rich widower who's left to be raised by an abusive stepmother.
- ▶ **Goals:** To go to the royal ball and escape her dreary life.
- ▶ **Burdens:** She's forced to be a servant in her own home, doing all the chores. And she's tortured by her ugly stepisters.

- ▶ **Man of her dreams:** The dashing but faceless Prince Charming, who has a bit of a shoe fetish.
- ▶ **Personality pluses:** Cheerful in the face of hardships; a dreamer who goes after her dreams — she fights for her right to attend the ball; sees the good in the bad; resourceful, knows enough to hang onto the slipper she didn't lose at the ball; a darned good singer and dancer.

- ▶ **Personality minuses:** Relies on the man of her dreams, not to mention her Fairy Godmother and the mice, to save her; doesn't take responsibility for her destiny; hangs out with mice too much; careless, loses track of time and her slipper (although that turns into a plus); falls in love during the first dance (although she doesn't know, or care, he's the prince).

- ▶ **Accomplishments:** A sewer of tiny outfits — could sew some great Barbie clothes today; works from dusk to dawn; gets to the ball, weds her prince.
- ▶ **Job potential in today's market:** Princess Di's successor.
- ▶ **Predictions for the couple's ever-after:** Much like Charles and Di. There will be a chill after she's borne a couple of heirs.
- ▶ **Role model grade:** B+



**TRANSFORMED:** A rags to riches Cinderella