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Influence that Fictional Characters in English Literature Can Have on an Individual Psyche

Fizza Peerbhoy Nambiar, B.Ed., M.A.

Abstract

This paper on the influence that fictional characters in English literature can have on an individual psyche is aimed at honoring fictional legends. Oscar Wilde rightly says in his quote: “It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it.” It is the truth behind these words that the paper has endeavored to illuminate. Reading educates us without us knowing or forecasting its full learning and impact. Having said this, it is only right to acknowledge the tools through which we so rightly become literate – Characters!

This paper is a tribute to all fictional characters in the mystical history of English literature who have touched our lives in their own unique and permanent way. The relevance of a paper on a topic like the one selected will cease to die out as long as there is a single person left who appreciates the art of reading. From the oratory, inspiring and heroic monologues of Mark
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Anthony to the heart wrenching please, cries and transformations of the innocent Edmond Dantes, literary characters have in the past and will continue in the future to teach us lessons. Lessons whose impact the readers may not feel immediately or consciously, but will learn from, use and carry with them for a lifetime. The relevance of a paper titled thus is simple: It celebrates literary characters and gives us a glimpse into what made them who they are.

On a deeper level, the relevance of this paper becomes more complex yet easier to understand. If reading the legendary story of Cinderella has influenced you in the slightest and smallest way – this paper is relevant. If you have ever felt like admonishing the goblins while reading ‘The Tales of Noddy’, this paper has demonstrated its relevance. If you have felt like fighting alongside Harry Potter to defeat Voldemort or putting out cookies and milk to welcome Santa Clause, then this paper has only begun to illuminate the depth of its relevance. As mentioned above, this paper on the influence of literary characters is aimed at honoring fictional legends and the silent impact they have had on the lives of readers from the beginning of time. Characters have been chosen keeping in mind their appeal and the special place they enjoy in the hearts of their readers: Through this paper and its characters like Albus Dumbledore, Cinderella and Sherlock Holmes, the author has attempted to make people conscious of the roles they play and the vast treasures of knowledge and experience we can learn from if we are consciously looking for and learning from what they endeavor to teach us. A sincere attempt has been made to reiterate and share their vast wisdom by quoting select inspirational quotes and dialogues.

Key Words:

1. Shroud – To cover, to blanket. Like a cloak
2. Magnanimity – Generosity of Spirit, fairness
3. Closure - Finality, Conclusion
4. Paradigm – Exemplar, Prototype
5. Disintegrate – Split Up, Fall Apart
6. Disposition – Temperament. Nature, character
7. Penance – Atonement, self-punishment
8. Repentance – Regret, apologies, feel sorrow

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9. Vanity – Narcissism, egotism, conceit, arrogance
10. Prerequisite – Precondition, requirement, qualification

Learning From the Characters in Literature

Literature is as old as man itself and in scientific cases; its records are older than human life. Hence it is apparent and imperative that we derive and seek lessons from it as much as we look to History or Science as life changing focal points. All fictional characters, whether villains or heroes, have touched us in ways we consciously may not fathom, but subconsciously we are grateful for. They have all taught us life lessons through their fictional experiences which we take to and have imbibed during our ever changing and ever colorful moods and phases. A few fictional characters and the invaluable lessons they have taught have been listed below. Care has been taken to specifically chose those literary characters which people of all ages, traditions, regions, genres and cultural backgrounds have read can identify with. Hence, it is safe to say that their influence and teachings surpasses all physical and emotional boundaries and partitions.

Just like how every individual is different and unique, the learning's we take away from each of them differs as well. So let us dwell together in how they have played a role in who we are and will help guide us to becoming who we want to be!

Characters on Focus in This Paper

<u>Sl. No</u>	<u>Characters</u>	<u>Orientation</u>	<u>Books/ Films</u>
1	Albus Dumbledore	Positive	Harry Potter Series
2	Cinderella	Positive	Grimms Fairy Tales
3	Sherlock Holmes	Positive	Sherlock Holmes Series
4	John Galt & Dagny Taggart	Positive	Atlas Shrugged
5	Mulan	Positive	Mulan
6	Edmond Dantes	Positive	Count of Monte Cristo
7	Emma Harte	Positive	A Woman of Substance

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8	Voldemort	Negative	Harry Potter Series
9	Carlisle Cullen	Positive	Twilight Series
10	Step Mother – Snow White	Negative	Snow White & the 7 Dwarfs
11	Severus Snape	Both	Harry Potter Series
12	Scrooge	Both	A Christmas Carol
13	Portia	Positive	Merchant of Venice

1. Albus Dumbledore

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore is a fictional character for whom I have immense respect. He is a man of enormous power, self control and righteousness. He is also tremendously secure in who he is. When I think of a fictional Role Model, his name comes first to mind. This being the case, Harry Potter and I have something in common, we are both Dumbledore’s men (in my case women) through and through.

There are a few quotes which would help throw light on why that is the case. However, these quotes are just a few among the many attributes that enshroud him. That make him who he is and by so doing, assist us in becoming who we, would one day, want to be.

- “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities”.

Book: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Page No: 285

Author: J. K Rowling

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Date of Publication: 1998

This saying by Albus Dumbledore throws light on a few ideas that would do us well to reflect on.

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- We are all born with talents and abilities – Precious gifts from God. But how many of us make the choices to use these abilities to fulfill our purpose in life?

People across the world and across ages have wasted away their abilities. So very many do not even know what their abilities are or where they lie! You have the most beautiful voice and have always wanted to become a singer, but have you fought for this dream? Have you done all in your power to make the choices that will enable to achieve this life purpose you think you were born for?

If you haven't made that choice, you haven't done justice to your ability. You haven't done justice to who you are. You have succumbed to all that you thought was compromise, but in reality, that which was nothing but fear!

And in this world which prides itself on creating an environment for the survival of the fittest, you have proved your incompetence. And this is your downfall!

So don't blame the circumstances, society, responsibilities, environment and God for your unhappiness. You are its creator and only you can be its destroyer!

- The flip side of the coin or the more extreme scenario, gives us some more food for thought and takes us on a different path of reflection and better understanding of ourselves. There are people who make the choices to utilize their abilities. By so doing, they reach a point where they are aware of the fact that they have created their own destiny. This realization is extremely powerful. Its like a drug. But drugs are harmful and they kill you from within.

Before we move further, it is imperative for us to understand that the feeling we receive from attaining power and from the consummation of drugs is not the same.

Because to let power rule our life is again, completely our choice. Do we have the ability to practice restraint? Do we have what it takes to let our conscience rule our power as opposed to the other way round?

Throughout the pages of history, we see innumerable examples of people who have let their power run away with them. They have made the choices to use their abilities to negatively change the course of History! – Adolf Hitler, George Bush Jr., Stalin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Osama Bin Laden and so many more!

Then again, there are those who have made the powerful choice to channelize their abilities for the greater good – Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Helen Keller, Abraham Lincoln, APJ Abdul Kalam, King Asoka, to name a few.

This brings us to the realization that using our abilities as tools of mass destruction or as Messiahs of positive change is our choice and ours alone!

- “It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that”.

Book: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone

Page No: 125

Author: J. K Rowling

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Date of Publication: 1998

Dreams are a very integral part of our lives. They provide the fuel to continue even in the darkest of times.

However, it is extremely important for us to realize that dreams and reality do not coexist in the same realm until such time that we convert our dreams into reality.

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Therefore, we must dream but also have a firm grasp on reality. It is the real world and the changes associated with it which will help us make the quick decisions to take our dreams forward.

Reality provides us with opportunities to realize our dreams. Unless we focus on the real world and what it entails, we will miss ceasing them.

So keep your eyes on the goal but do not lose sight of today because the present will never return. And if we do not live this and every moment, it will take longer for us to live our dream!

After all, it is not our real life experiences which provide the fodder for the dreams we hold so dear?

2. Cinderella

- “No matter how your heart is grieving, if you keep on believing, the dreams that you wish, will come true”. “Well, there is one thing. They can’t order me to stop dreaming”.

Film: Cinderella

Director: Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske and Wilfred Jackson

Production House: Walt Disney

Written By: Ken Anderson, Perce Pearce, Homer Brightman, Winston Hibler, Bill Peet,

Erdman Penner, Harry Reeves, Joe Rinaldi and Ted Sears

Date of Release: March 4th1950

It is deliberate that the last quote of Dumbledore mentioned above and the quotes by Cinderella have been placed together.

The reason for this is to give an example how dreams and reality can co-exist wonderfully.

Cinderella is a loved book and a film! People across the world have marveled at this fairy tale and what it teaches is: That importance of dreams, hope, perseverance, faith and belief!

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- Cinderella is a kind girl who has always held her dreams very close to her heart. In fact, it is her dreams that make her who she is. But all the while, Cinderella is never free from reality. At every step, she is faced with such harsh realities that her dreams help her surpass them.
- She has taught children and adults alike the world over that every choice you make is yours alone and the resulting consequences are ours to face. If we meet hatred with hate and evil with its equal, then the vicious cycle never ends.

Whether the circumstances are easy or difficult, our happiness is in our own hands. And happiness is a choice, just like sadness or depression. We can choose to be happy regardless of difficulties and with that attitude we find that even the most unpleasant of tasks become bearable and easy to complete.

It follows then that our choice to be happy does not result in consequences but in situations and environments which are so much easier to live in.

Cinderella's ethics, optimism and disposition coupled with her faith, hope and belief, shift the unpleasantness to the background, thereby making happiness her primary emotion.

- Cinderella lives in the moment. This is demonstrated wonderfully when she attends the royal ball. All her worries, unhappiness and difficulties are not at the forefront of her mind. She enjoys the moment, committing it to memory forever!
- In the story, we also look at how we have to take things in to our own hands if we want them to be accomplished. If we believe in what we want, we go to any extents to see it become a reality. This attribute was demonstrated by the Prince. The glass slipper was the only clue he had to go on in order to find what he was looking for all of his life – His true Love.

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Hence the story of Cinderella beautifully depicts the intricacies between dreams and reality!

3. Sherlock Holmes

- “There is nothing like first-hand evidence. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts”.
Book: A Study in Scarlet and A Scandal in Bohemia
Page No: 19 and 4
Author: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Publisher: Ward Lock and Co. and The Strand Magazine
Date of Publication: 1890 and 1891

This quote brings to mind another saying that I had heard a very long time ago... ‘Don’t believe everything you see because the eyes can be deceptive’.

As humans, it is in our nature to be gullible. We trust easily especially that which we have seen.

Therefore, it is very interesting to realize that this nature makes us jump to conclusions before we have strong evidence. Our conclusions are nothing but theories. And most theories do not have a factual basis.

How can we then justify newspaper articles which claim that Aishwarya Rai was married to a tree? That Katrina Kaif was married in a hushed ceremony early one morning? All these are theories which have no basis in fact.

Here the reality is that a fact has been twisted and turned so much to suit the theory of someone’s fancies, that after separating all that engulfs it, we can still hardly discern it!

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The term senseless used in the quote is very exacting in its usage. For surely, there cannot be a truly sensible reason for twisting facts!

A twisted fact clouds judgment. It diverts us from our path. It affects our reasoning and observation. It corrupts our thinking. Therefore, no matter how hard to hear or believe, we must stick to unaltered facts. After all, twisting facts to suit theories, has never helped solve a Sherlock Holmes Murder Mystery!

- “You see, but you do not observe. The distinction in clear”.

Book: A Scandal in Bohemia

Page No: 4

Author: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Publisher: The Strand Magazine

Date of Publication: 1891

Seeing and observing are two faculties of the mind which have nothing in common except for the fact that are distantly related synonyms.

Having said that, observation offers a joy, power and control over a situation like few other mental faculties do.

Observation helps clear the rubble. It’s like looking through a spying glass focused only on that which is needed.

If we were to observe our environment and work with the reverence that Sherlock Holmes exhibits, we will come to realize that nothing slips or seeps through our consciousness.

Observation makes us more alert. It sharpens our reflexes. It answers an un-asked and un-answered question. It makes us catch the nuances of a scenario. It makes our mind clearer to process all the things we observe and their consequences.

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Observation helps us concentrate thoroughly on one aspect of a challenge at a time.

In short when you simply see, it's like looking through a murky glass window.

When you observe, it's like looking out through a mirrored ocean in to the miraculous life hidden away in its depths!

4. Dagny Taggart and John Galt

- “You don't have to see through the eyes of others, hold onto yours, stand on your own judgment, you know that what is, is—say it aloud, like the holiest of prayers, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise.” – Dagny Taggart
- Jim: “Well, whose opinion did you take?”
Dagny: “I don't ask for opinions.”
Jim: “What do you go by?”
Dagny: “Judgment.”
Jim: “Well, whose judgment did you take?”
Dagny: “Mine”.

Book: Atlas Shrugged

Page No: 678

Author: Ayn Rand

Publisher: A Signet Book

Date of Publication: 1957

Edition: 50th Anniversary Edition

Book: Atlas Shrugged Please indicate the page in appropriate place above.

Page No: 17

Author: Ayn Rand

Publisher: A Signet Book

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Date of Publication: 1957

Edition: 50th Anniversary Edition

These words of Dagny Taggart – The Vice President of a Transcontinental Railroad throw light on a few extremely fundamental points.

Firstly, we do not need anyone to warrant our judgment or opinion. Our opinions are ours and they have been derived from our personal experiences. Hence, to discard them would be to discard our experiences. And to discard our experiences would mean to not place any value on our life!

We have a mind of our own which gives rise to our personal reasoning.

This reasoning stems from our rational judgment and our moral and ethical code.

Is it worth it to give up the standards and principals of our life?

Is it worth it to disintegrate from our morals and ethics just for someone else's stamp of approval? If it is worth it then what about my self respect? My self esteem? My standing? My individuality? Does it count for nothing?

I don't think so!

- "I swear -- by my life and my love of it -- that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." – John Galt

Book: Atlas Shrugged

Page No: 672

Author: Ayn Rand

Publisher: A Signet Book

Date of Publication: 1957

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Edition: 50th Anniversary Edition

If I respect myself, if I have ever valued myself, I will never ask someone else to live for me. If I do then I have never held a purpose... Never had a dream and never nurtured a passion. Asking someone else to live for me would be asking them to give up their life for my sake.

What kind of a sacrifice actually compels a man to give up himself? Is it not criminal to expect that of someone because it details killing a man without bloodshed or a funeral!

By asking them to give up their life for you, you are taking away from them everything they hold dear. And if they agree and are living without anything that constitutes a life worth living, then what is the point in life at all?

So I swear - by my life and my love of it - that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine.

5. Voldemort / Quirrel

- “There is no good and evil. There is only power, and those too weak to seek it.”
- “From this day forth, you put your faith... in me”.

Book: Harry Potter and Sorcerer’s Stone

Page No: 169

Author: J. K Rowling

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Date of Publication: 1998

Film: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2

Director: David Yates

Production House: Warner Bros.

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Written By: J.K Rowling (Author) and Steve Kloves (Screenplay)

Date of Release: 15th July 2011

No man is an island. No man stands alone.

For those who believe the contrary stand to delude themselves.

Voldemort, one of the most popular villains in recent literary history falls under the latter category.

Alone and an orphan, Voldemort always shunned close relationships. He loathed the society he wanted to rule and dictate. And where did that land him?

He was left without power, he was left weak and left with no faith – The very things he feared, fought and rebelled.

The biggest learning from Voldemort is that if you don't make true friends, rather keep friends because of your use for them or because they fear you or because you are popular... then there is no one to guide, advice and counsel you.

There is no one to tell you when and where you are going wrong. There will be no one to help you walk through your bad times.

Voldemort didn't look for friendships and well-wishers amongst humans. He treated them servants. Like tools and weapons. Humans to him were like pawns in a chess game, whose sole purpose is to be directed without asking questions and without using their minds to question right and wrong.

Voldemort seeked to dictate people and demanded their respect by instilling fear.

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Can respect be attained through fear? Through dictatorship? Can power be eternal when the subjects it is used over are a rebellion and a revolution waiting to happen?

Voldemort's truest friends were his greatest enemies – Power, Immortality, Over Confidence and his assumption that he knows everything.

These vices led him to overlook the most wonderful and important aspects in life – trust, faith, hope, friendship, family, goodness and love.

These vices cost him his life!

He went against nature. He defied its laws, only to live a life and meet an end which rendered him neither natural nor man made!

6. Carlisle Cullen

- "Like everything in life, I just had to decide what to do with what I was given."

Book: New Moon

Page No: 29

Author: Stephenie Meyer

Publisher: Little, Brown

Date of Publication: September 6th 2006

People say that life is not fair. So then, must we use this excuse for all our incompetence?

I use the word incompetence because our downfalls hardly ever stem from unconscious mistakes. Life is a learning process. All the days we spend living have been specifically designed to teach us something which will help us achieve our true purpose here. Hence, we cannot blame the unfairness of life for our inabilities. We cannot hold them as an excuse to not rise above our adversities.

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After all, just because I have been dealt certain hand in cards, does not mean I cannot change the rules and the game and by so doing, rise above my opponents to emerge victorious!

For a true leader, finds opportunity in every difficulty! Instead of ‘Why’, they ask of themselves... ‘Why Not’?

7. Edmond Dantes

- “Life is a storm, my young friend. You will bask in the sunlight one moment, be shattered on the rocks the next. What makes you a man is what you do when that storm comes.”

Film: The Count of Monte Cristo

Director: Kevin Reynolds

Produced By: Gary Barber, Jerry Bruckheimer, Roger Birnbaum and Jonathan Glickman

Written By: Alexandre Dumas (Author) and Jay Wolpert (Screenplay)

Date of Release: January 23rd 2002

When the going gets tough, the tough get going! We have heard and experienced that happiness and sadness, good times and bad ones are never permanent. In fact nothing is permanent except change!

So what so we do when we are faced with a storm? Do we rise above our expectations to stand true to our beliefs? Do we give in and take the easy way out?

Trying times genuinely and thoroughly try us in ways we cannot fathom. They bring to the fore front, abilities we never knew we possessed.

It is these storms that constitute our biggest learning’s. They alter us in ways which leave us stronger and more invincible than before.

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We discover reserves of courage and strength if only we make the effort to rise above the temporary misery which engulfs us and discern the bigger picture.

And truly, what makes you special is what you do when that storm comes!

After all, diamonds are found in muck! And they do have to undergo immense transformations before their brilliance stuns the world!

- Abbe Faria: God said, Vengeance is mine.
Edmond Dantes: I don't believe in God.

Abbe Faria: It doesn't matter. He believes in you. ”

Film: The Count of Monte Cristo

Director: Kevin Reynolds

Produced By: Gary Barber, Jerry Bruckheimer, Roger Birnbaum and Jonathan Glickman

Written By: Alexandre Dumas (Author) and Jay Wolpert (Screenplay)

Date of Release: January 23rd 2002

God will never let us fail! He gives us only as much pain as we can handle.

So do your best and you will be surprised by how graciously he does the rest!

You may think, God does not answer prayers. You may wonder how long you will have to wait for justice, but always remember that there is a bigger and better design which will unfold.

Nothing happens by chance or by the means of luck. Everything occurs to test the limits of the soul.

God see's the truth... but waits. And the reasons and consequences for his wait are apparent in their wonder once they begin to unfold!

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It is said that God's whip does not have a sound. But when it falls on someone, neither human nor angel will be able to protect the strongest and the most powerful.

So believe in him as he believes in you. Because we are after all, his most prized creations!

8. Mulan

- "Maybe I just wanted to look in the mirror and see someone worthwhile... Why is my reflection someone I don't know?" by Mulan

Film: Mulan

Director: Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook

Production House: Walt Disney Feature Animation

Story By: Robert D. San Souci

Date of Release: June 19th 1998

People speak about the power of self reflection. It is said that its importance parallels no other. Have we ever wondered why self reflection is given this status? Perhaps the saying that, 'A genius learns from the mistakes of others', could shed some light on this phenomenon. Self reflection assists us in learning from experiences – ours and those of others as well. Experience is the best teacher because it stems from real life lessons and the only way to learn from experiences is by self-reflection.

Sometimes we feel depressed. We feel we have let ourselves down in a way which is very intrinsic to who we are. We feel that we have murdered or ventured to murder that, which celebrated our uniqueness as an individual.

This pronouncement brings us to wonder, how many of us have had the courage to stand in front of a mirror and view the reflection objectively? Are we happy with what we see? Do we look at ourselves and feel proud of what our actions and this day's experiences have made us?

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If yes, we should congratulate ourselves because we have passed in the assessment of life. If not, we should thank ourselves for giving ourselves the chance to acknowledge that and make a renewed effort to work on our experiences from this moment forth.

After all, we can take the step towards change only once we have realized that change is in order!

Like Mulan, if you want to see someone worthwhile in the mirror... If you want to see someone you recognize, someone who truly lives and has the right and capability to exist, then nothing and no one can stop you. After all, who can stop your conscience from living and experiencing all that it was created to accomplish, save for you yourself?

- "Now I see, that if I were truly to be myself, I would break my family's heart" Mulan

Film: Mulan

Director: Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook

Production House: Walt Disney Feature Animation

Story By: Robert D. San Souci

Date of Release: June 19th 1998

Many a times we sacrifice the deepest and most precious desires of our hearts for those we love and cherish. We do so because we do not want to hurt them.

We are justified in thinking so simply because those we love have our best interests at heart. They love us and are our well wishers.

But let's just stop for a moment and think. If you were to live your life according to what others thought right how they want you to, then when will you have the time to live your life the way you want to?

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Yes, achieving what you want most is difficult. After all, if it was easy, we wouldn't want it. Yes it involves risks. Yes it involves delving in to the unknown. But will you ever be truly happy if you didn't make that journey?

Once you make that journey armed with nothing but your belief in yourself, you will be successful. And the ones who matter will welcome you with open arms because they prayed for the very same thing you prayed for. Everything will be great in the end. If it's not great, it's not the end!

9. Step Mother

- “Magic Mirror on the Wall... Who is the fairest of them all”?

Film: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Director: David Hand, William Cottrell, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, Perce Pearce and Ben Sharpsteen

Produced By: Walt Disney

Written By: Ted Sears, Richard Creedon, Otto Englander, Dick Rickard, Earl Hurd, Merrill De Maris, Dorothy Ann Blank and Webb Smith

Based On: Snow White by The Grimm Brothers

Date of Release: February 4th 1938

The wicked step mother in Snow White is an amazing example of how vanity and arrogance leads to insecurity and ultimately self destruction and death.

It makes us realize that can we put so much trust on a physical and materialistic attribute which never was nor ever will be eternal?

She thought her beauty and power will last forever. However, she forgot to consider the impact of the fact that forever is a very very long time.

All dictators in the history of the world have met a dismal ending.

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The more despotic they were, the more brutal their end.

This makes me wonder why would they want to subject themselves to the waves of hatred which emanate from the people they rule? Is the final price worth it?

Does this desire stem out of insecurity and jealousy? Don't they see that the people who advise them say exactly what they want them to say?

Are they blind to the fact that people only agree with them because they either want a favor or out of fear?

I think not. The step mother knew exactly what was going on and the reasons behind it. Nevertheless, she felt that the end justified the means.

And her end... is history!

10. Scrooge

- “Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them, for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms.

His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him”

Book: A Christmas Carol

Page No: 137

Author: Charles Dickens

Publisher: Chapman and Hall

Date of Publication: 19th December 1843

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This understanding of Mr. Scrooge has made me realize that it does not benefit at all for us to give importance to what people will think about us. Because in reality, what does it matter? It matters only what I think about myself!

So what if the world laughs at me? My heart is filled with joy and that is enough!

So what if the world thinks my dreams are not worth achieving? I have achieved them and fulfilled my purpose in life and that is enough!

The world may not know why they stop me. They may not know why they laugh at me. I know that it is because they are insecure. I know that it is because they want to have what fuels me. I know that it is because I have a dream and the conviction to see it through. And that is enough!

11. Severus Snape

- “I wish... I wish I were dead...”
Book: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
Page No: 544
Author: J. K Rowling
Publisher: Bloomsbury
Date of Publication: 21st July 2007

The character of Severus Snape, has taught me a lesson which I will carry with me.

The harsh lessons his character has to go through brings to light the fact that you always live with the consequences of what you have done.

Your past will never leave you. Time will heal the wounds but some scars are too deeply embedded to be erased into oblivion.

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The skeletons in your closet will always haunt you.

But it's never too late.

Make amends and repent for your actions even though the repentance may seem endless and long drawn.

This repentance is more for the soul than it is for the asking of forgiveness from the ones who were let down.

Because the character of Snape has lead me to believe that when you truly ask for forgiveness, the intent itself forgives you! It becomes he means and the end of forgiveness.

Very few in the Harry Potter Series have suffered more than Snape has. His suffering becomes his penance and solace. In it, he finds redemption and deliverance!

12. Emma Harte

- “Blackie: Tell me, did you discover anything special along the way that you would like to impart to your old friend?

Emma: Yes, Blackie, I did. I believe I learned the secret of life.”

Blackie: “And what is that, Mavourneen”?

Emma: “It is to endure!”

Book: A Woman of Substance

Page No: 905 and 906

Author: Barbara Taylor Bradford

Publisher: Doubleday

Date of Publication: 1979

Endurance! If you look up the word, there are various synonyms for it. The ones that appeal most are... ‘Carry On, Continue and Go On!’

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If you look at the pages of History, more often than not, the people who succeed are the ones who did not give up. They labored on simply because they believed in their dreams irrespective of the odds against them.

If it rained, they made their dreams remember its fragrance.

If they didn't have clothes to put on their back, they clothed themselves with their will power.

If they didn't have food to eat, they instead turned their focus and fuelled their imagination.

If they didn't have a roof over their heads, they lived amongst their dreams in a future they knew would be theirs.

In short, they continued... they carried on... they moved ahead.

If the blisters and tattered slippers made taking a simple step painful, they let their will power, faith, determination and endurance scale mountains!

Those who endure simply on the conviction of who they are, are heroes. And heroes are a breed apart. They defy the given. They challenge the equilibrium. They subvert the paradigm.

Giving up is an easy option. People should retire at 60? Amitabh Bachchan was voted the youth icon at 60! He is India's busiest superstar.

An individual can never make a difference they say? Mahatma Gandhi was one man. It was one man who stood against the British Empire. It was one man who was christened the father of the Independent Indian nation!

Success comes with experience they say? Sachin Tendulkar and rocked the cricket world with his bat when he was 16!

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To go places in the corporate world, first get an education they say? Bill Gates does not have a college degree. Dhirubhai Ambani has never attended college. He is 10th pass.

So, imagine what would happen if each one of us endured?

If you believe you can fly, you will. Yesterday you were poised for big things. Today, take flight!

13. Portia

- “The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes

The throned monarch better than his crown;

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,

The attribute to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

But mercy is above this sceptred sway;

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,

It is an attribute to God himself;

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And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there”.

Play: The Merchant of Venice

Act: Act IV, Scene 1

Playwright: William Shakespeare

Publisher: Wordsworth Editions

Written Between: 1596 and 1598

First Performance: 1605

I have experienced that when a person forgives, they truly let themselves heal.

The first prerequisite for forgiveness is mercy.

As said wonderfully by Portia, mercy is twice blessed. It blesses the one who seeks it and the one who delivers it.

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When I ask for forgiveness and mercy, it is a clear indication of the fact that I feel remorse. I want closure. I want to heal. The exact same thing applies for the one who delivers mercy as well.

When you choose revenge over mercy and forgiveness you become like the person you hate. Revenge never lets you move on and you are never peaceful even after you take revenge for it fills you with hatred and destroys you.

Hence for our own selfish reasons – peace of mind, we must be merciful.

We must let go for forgive leads to happiness.

The power and force of mercy is such that we see it in its deliverance. It erases the guilt, eradicates the pain, heals the wounds and reseals the heart.

Mercy is an attribute of God... The Almighty! It is to him we beseech.

So is it not fitting to reflect on the fact that maybe God grants mercy to people through us?

That he channels a part of his judgment, power and magnanimity through the acts of mercy that mortals demonstrate?

After all, we must realize that if we pray for mercy, then that same prayer teaches us all to render the deeds of mercy as well.

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