

## The Girl Power of Disney Princesses in *Brave* and *Moana*

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, I want to analyze two films called *Moana* and *Brave* by Disney Animation. In this film there is a difference in characteristics of a princess who is usually in the field of others, just quiet and waiting for others to help them. That is the reason why I wanted to focus on the main characters named Moana and Merida who have the other side of a princess usually. This thesis talks about the issue of how the characters of Moana and Merida reflect the characteristics of girl power. The thesis aims to show that Moana and Merida can reflect the characteristics of Girl power through their decisiveness, smartness and boldness. In this study, I used girl power theory that Rebecca Walker as pioneer of the third-wave pioneer. As a result, I have found that Moana and Merida reflected the characteristics of Girl power that made them show a new side of the characteristics of a princess that is usually displayed by Disney.

**Keywords:** Disney, Girl Power, decisiveness, smartness, boldness

### INTRODUCTION

Film with animation also referred to as a cartoon. To depict movement, drawings or other graphical images are put in a series of photographs-like sequence. Before the advent of computer graphics, the most basic sort of animated film was created by hand drawing. (Barsam, 2007: p.493). Animated films are interesting to discuss because there are hundreds of them released today by many studios, such as Pixar, Walt Disney, dreamworks, and Ghibli. Through animation, generation after generation is allowed to have a free imagination where everything can come true. Furthermore, most animated movies also have the secondary aim of perpetuating family values, friendship, and daily life values to be spread to children, teenagers, and even adults.

One of the most popular animated film companies is Walt Disney. Disney animated films first appeared within the late 1920s following Disney Animated Studio by Walt Disney. The first animated characters that Disney created were Mickey Mouse and his friends. Disney Studio Entertainment creates and acquires live-action and animated films, as well as direct-to-video entertainment, musical recordings, and live stage productions (Wasko, 2020). One of the most popular animated film companies is Walt Disney. Disney animated films first appeared within the late 1920s following Disney Animated Studio by Walt Disney. The first animated characters that Disney created were Mickey Mouse and his friends. Disney Studio Entertainment creates and acquires live-action and animated films, as well as direct-to-video entertainment, musical recordings, and live stage productions (Wasko, 2020).

According to Sara Mcniel (2020), Disney princesses are divided into three generations. The first-generation is called the Damsels in Distress Era. The characters of this era are *Snow White* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). The Damsel in Distress trope is particularly prevalent during the classic Disney princess era, which established the Disney princess movie phenomenon, as previously stated. These princesses are characteristically helpless, passive, and submissive. The second generation is called the Rebel Child Era. This became known as the Renaissance era lasting from 1989 to 1999 and included *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), and *Mulan* (1998). The characteristics of the second generation revolve around rebelling against their parents' expectations, sacrificing what they have, and experiencing an adventurous journey. The third generation is called the Independent Woman Era. In the 2000s, a new era of Disney

princesses began, ushering in a new era of independent women. These princesses were less reliant on men, could save themselves, and had enthralling personalities.

In this new era, I chose Merida and Moana to represent the new princesses. Merida and Moana's characteristics portray the idea of girl power. Girl power is the movement of girl that can be confident, brave, and smart to choose what they want. Therefore, every action that they do implies the characteristics of girl power. They are seen as powerless, but they were able to develop and become powerful, unlike many of their predecessors. Merida and Moana show their capabilities as bold people that can make their own decisions. Furthermore, they are shown as women with many plans on how to solve their problem. Every action or decision that they want to take, they will consider carefully. Therefore, I will show how Merida and Moana can reflect the characteristics of girl power. The purpose of the analysis is to show that through their actions and thoughts, Merida and Moana can reflect the three characteristics of girl power such as decisiveness, smartness, and boldness.

The significance of the analysis is that, through *Brave* and *Moana*, Disney would like to reflect the characteristics of girl power. Moana, the character in the film *Moana* and Merida, the character in the film *Brave*, show different characteristics from other princesses of the past era by using girl power. For example, their decisiveness is because of their independence, smartness is the manifestation of intelligence, and boldness is almost the same as bravery. These changes of characteristics are adapted from the ideal woman in this era. These characteristics show that Merida and Moana can reflect the characteristics in girl power for the ideal woman in era.

### ANALYSIS

To know how Merida and Moana can reflect the characteristics of girl power. I will Merida and Moana in accordance with girl power characteristics. There are three-character traits based on the characteristics of girl power. They are divided into decisiveness, smartness, and boldness. It can be shown by their action and think.

#### Merida and Moana's Decisiveness

The decisiveness that Merida and Moana can be shown by their way of making decision. They can create decision and trust with the decision that they make. In Merida and Moana's character, she decides to save her island and takes responsibility for the consequences of it. It can be show when Moana decides to find Maui to save the island and restore the heart that the god gave when she child. She decides to go far way even though her father disagree with the decision that Moana choose. In Merida's case it can be show when she takes the responsibility of her mistake. She admits that what she decides is not good way for everyone. She responsibility of it and try to fix it.

Another decisiveness that they are shown it by their independence to choose their fate. Even the situation is hard, they prove that they are able to choose their fate. Such as, Moana choose to go find Maui and remember about what her grandma said to her before passed away. Actually, Moana is in the dilemma situation between obey the order of her parents or save the island. However, she chooses to save the island, because for her save the island is important. Island and her parents are the number one for her, that is the reason of the decision that she has to choose. In Merida's case, she does not need a man or someone else to save her in the danger situation. She beliefs about herself that she can save her mother from her father and the curse that she makes.

As Inness (2004) said that women are independent, Moana and Merida can express Moana and Merida can express themselves as independent women in their daily lives, especially in their duties as princesses. They show that they can survive by independently believing in their own choices. They also show their decision in deciding to save their family from danger. They also

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show that they can do whatever they want without being afraid of being a princess. Some people or groups think princesses cannot decide what is right or wrong in their decision. That is the point that makes Moana and Merida change these groups' point of view.

### **Merida and Moana's Smartness**

Another characteristic of Moana and Merida of Disney princesses of the third generation is their way of showing their smartness. Smartness means that as women, they critically plan to resolve her problem by using her knowledge and intellect. Moana and Merida, as the third generation, show their ability to solve their problem. Merida and Moana express their smartness are by resolving their own problems in making complicated solutions. I found that Moana and Merida show incredible intelligence in their characters Moana dares to solve the problems faced by her island with her ingenuity. When the people of her island are unable to figure out how to save the island, Moana tries to give an opinion that appears simple but would be able to resolve the situation. Moana is trying new things to solve the residents' problems on her island. The solution given by Moana looks simple, however she shows that she can become a reliable leader who can find solutions to problems that occur. In addition, Merida's character also shows much intelligence. She does it by making a good strategy. She comes up with many ways to get her mother out of the palace and away from her father. When she has to trick her father, she is also able to negotiate with her younger siblings. She finds a way for this problem to be resolved by negotiating with her younger siblings. From this, I can see her showing her intelligence in terms of negotiation.

Another trait of girl power characters in terms of intelligence is that they have a good self-control. Moana's level of self-control is middling, while Merida can be said to have reasonably good self-control. An example of Moana's medium-level of self-control can be seen when she has to fight Teka. She initially sees that Teka cannot be in water. Moana hurries to find a way to get past this puzzle by exposing Te Ka to water. From my observation of Moana's character, I can conclude that she somewhat lacks self-control, because the task she wanted to complete came undone because of her recklessness. However, other things prove that Moana still has some level of self-control. When she reflects on her wrongdoings, she is still able to correct her behavior and actions for the future. As for Merida's character, I can assume that she has a good level of control. It can be seen that she is not in a hurry even though it is time to get her mother back to normal. She can fast think about the solution and still calm.

Despite have a good self-control, smartness can also be seen by having various abilities and talents. intelligence is not just about knowing or understanding but also possessing skills and talents. Because even though one may know the theory, if one cannot perform or execute what one learnt, one will not be able to work well. From the examples above, I can see that Merida and Moana characters can reflect girl power and are different from the first generation of Disney princesses. Merida and Moana prefer using their intelligence rather than their physical strength. They will think about every step of their decision and make sure it will succeed.

### **Merida and Moana's Boldness**

The last characteristic Moana and Merida possess as third-generation Disney princesses is their boldness. Moana and Merida, as the third generation of, show their boldness. They are as a new character in Disney showing it in their characters. In the third generation, the princesses show their boldness by facing danger, being confident in revealing themselves, being bold enough to speak up, daring to oppose the opposite, and leaving their comfort zone.

The first point where Moana and Merida express their boldness is their willingness to face danger. In terms of facing danger, the characters of Merida and Moana give a different impression. One can say it is not often that children's media depicts a female character facing the challenges Merida and Moana face. However, Merida and Moana's characters are different

from the average depiction of women, especially since they are princesses who traditionally are expected to sit quietly and let other people solve their problems. They dare to face danger without knowing what will happen in the future. Moana is very brave in facing the dangers she experiences. Moana shows that she is able to go through everything without obstacles. She even looks brave in challenging the danger she is facing because she has no doubts at all in herself and is sure that she can face the danger well. In addition, Merida also shows no hesitation in threatening danger. In fact, Merida dares to provoke danger. Provoke here is more towards wanting to know more about ways to restore her mother's condition to normal.

One of the other characters of boldness can be seen from the way they are confident in revealing themselves. They show what they have and they have nothing to hide. Moana and Merida show their weaknesses and strengths. Moana and Merida are never afraid that their weakness will be seen or become a threat to them. Instead, their weaknesses are used as opportunities for self-awareness so that they may know when to take bold action and when to pause. They both want to show when they are at their weakest, they still want to get up and inspire other people to join their noble pursuits.

Moana and Merida also show the boldness to give opinions. Bravely arguing for their stances, in this case, does not mean that Moana and Merida intend to harass or bully others, but that they have something important to say and are willing to say them in front of a lot of people. Moana and Merida show how they dare to express their opinion. They understand when, where, and how to give their opinion. Moana and Merida both believe that staying silent and waiting is not right and that they must be bold enough to say what needs to be said before silence or complacency settles in a group. This can be seen from the way Moana and Merida voice their opinion on what should also be their right to express an opinion for the common interest.

The fourth characteristic of courage is the courage to oppose the opposite. In terms of opposition, this does not mean that one should have no rules or principles, but that one should have the courage to do what should be done and stop when something is wrong. In addition to daring to fight against the status quo, Moana and Merida want their battle to not end in vain. In other words, they want their rights to be heard, both as successors and as children who want to achieve their goals of bettering their society and themselves. Moana and Merida want to show that a woman can also stand against injustice or unfairness, not as mere dissidents, but as visionaries who want to change the fate of everyone for the better. In a way, they are both against the status quo. They do not want their lives to be regulated by the rules that constrain them. They want to be free to express their true selves without having to think about what other people say. Therefore, they try to show that they dare to have a different opinion and dare to fight societal expectations.

The last characteristic of boldness can be seen from Moana and Merida daring to step out of their comfort zone. Stepping outside of the comfort zone entails entering an uncomfortable position that the characters have never experienced before, and Moana and Merida both show this willingness to step out of their comfort zones within their character arcs. Sometimes, people prefer to stay in their comfort zones rather than venturing outside of it, and that often becomes a problem that will be difficult to solve. However, Moana and Merida defy that habit by challenging themselves and leaving their comfort zones, which is a revolutionary evolution for today's women especially. As a woman, you have to be brave to get out of your comfort zone in order to understand current situations and problems. Modern women now not only exist to be mere listeners or cheerleaders for others, but to also be partners in solving the challenges we face in the present day.

### **CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK**

For this study, I will use the girl power theory to find out how Merida and Moana can reflect the characteristics of girl power. Rebecca Walker as pioneer of the third-wave pioneer, she believes

a new wave of feminism is needed because many young women view second-wave feminism as rigid, judgmental, and divisive. The term "girl power" was employed to describe female empowerment. Third-wave feminism recognizes that different definitions of feminism exist at the same time. Girl power "suggests that 'feminine' and 'empowered' are not antonyms: girls can make their own decision, speak their minds, raise their voices, and be aggressive while engaging in the production of normative femininity" (Hains, 2005, p1). Girl power seeks to demonstrate that femininity will lead to women's power. Girl power rearticulates society's false perception of femininity. It has played an essential role in shaping society's perception of women. Women have the freedom to create a goal in their life. "Girl Power represents a 'new girl': assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity" (Gonick, 2006, p.2). Despite from the three characters above, girl power can be seen as independence, boldness, and smartness. Also, in other word independence can be reflect to decisiveness, and bravery can be reflected to boldness.

Girl power's first trait is independence. "A woman who pays her bills and does not allow a man to undermine her stability or self-confidence" is what it means to be an independent woman. She fully supports herself and her family and is proud to be capable of doing so" (Moody, 2011, pp. 190-191).

The second characteristic of girl power is smartness. Women do not approach strangers and ask for assistance. They have their own voice to express their worry, and they can walk with their own feet to accomplish their goals. They have complete freedom to do anything they desire, to follow their decisions or choices, and to accept responsibility for their choices in life. Women who are intelligent have the ability to express their opinions to society. She will be able to share her ideas and concepts in order to benefit the community around her. According to Innes (2004) tough women of today have grown from original Angels and other such figures, and they can rely on both intelligence and power. (Innes, 2004, pp.10-15) Women are encouraged to defy those ideals by the girl power movement.

The third characteristic of girl power is bravery. According to Merriam dictionary bravery is the quality or state of having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty. It means that being brave is not only about moral strength but mental strength too. If a woman wants to be considered to have girl power, she needs a strong mental and moral state. When women want to try anything new, they must have guts and be willing to take risks. Women do not have to wait for help or to be rescued. Women do not always appear to have the power of beauty or to benefit from their looks. Women can be powerful and self-sufficient by utilizing their abilities or knowledge. Women can be powerful and self-sufficient by utilizing their abilities or knowledge. "Strong" indicates she guards her happiness and peace, looks after her relationships with her family and friends, and stands up for what is right, even if it means standing alone (Johnson, 2013). Women are brave to carry out their decision or choices and take responsibility for it.

## CONCLUSION

There are three characteristics from girl power that I found in Merida and Moana characters: decisiveness, smartness, and boldness. To reveal the connotations of the pictures, I applied the girl power theory to look at my analysis.

The finding of my analysis is Merida and Moana can show the new image of Disney princesses. The first characteristic is decisiveness, Merida and Moana can show that they can choose their future and can depend on themselves. They are not willing someone to make their future because they know what the best for themselves. The second characteristic is smartness, Merida and Moana can show their smartness and quite fast to resolve the problem. Even, the idea is quite simple, however, they make it work and easy to other people follow. The last

characteristic is boldness, Merida and Moana can show their boldness to fight the problem or big issue in their journey to save the people that they love. They sacrifice their lives to protect the one they love without thinking their safety.

From the three characteristics above, I can conclude that Merida and Moana as a princess can prove that they are the new image of Disney princesses. They are shown their characteristic that able to change the perspective of people about princesses. Merida and Moana prove that as a princess, they are able to choose what they want to do, they are able to find the solution, and they are able to protect their people that they love.

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