

Cinderella & The Glass Ceiling Book Club Kit

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Introduction

Once upon a time, there were two little girls who loved princesses... but then they grew up, gained some life experience, read some books that weren't written by the Brothers Grimm and realized that most fairy tales are some patriarchal, heteronormative, white supremacist bullsh*t. So they rewrote them. And now you're reading the stories in this book!

Okay, no more third person. Hi! It's Laura and Ellen. Thank you so much for making our book your book club pick! This is our fairy tale dream come true! We hope this book inspires thoughtful discussions about feminism, social issues, your childhood... and whether Sleeping Beauty's gown looked better pink or blue. Mostly, we hope our book brings you and your book club lots of laughs!

*Ever After,
Laura & Ellen*

A Quick History of Fairy Tales & Feminism

We've done some basic research for you, so you'll be full of horrifying facts at dinner parties like how the stepsisters in Cinderella originally cut off their toes to fit the glass slipper or how at one point, women couldn't vote!



The phrase "fairy tale" broadly means a short story or folktale with magical elements that imparts a moral or lesson. Most fairy tales come from an oral tradition, meaning they were told and re-told for many generations without ever being written down. The people that we think of as the "authors" of fairy tales were usually just the men who wrote them down (typical).

The Brothers Grimm from Germany are the most famous of these men, and they recorded many fairytales that we know today: *Hansel and Gretel*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Snow White*, to name a few.

French men and women like Charles Perrault and Madame D'Aulnoy also recorded fairy tales, that had been kept alive by aristocratic women telling them in salons. These French fairy tales include *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, and a different version of *Sleeping Beauty*.

One of the most famous collections of fairy tales is *One Thousand and One Nights*. A woman named Scheherazade tells a prince a different story each night but doesn't finish it, in order to prevent him from killing her. How sweet!

The fairy tales you probably read as a child or watched in a Disney film were often dark in their own right (trying to cook two nice German twins in an oven because they liked candy in *Hansel and Gretel* gave us many nightmares), but they have nothing on the original fairy tales. Did you know that Cinderella's stepsisters cut off their toes and heels to try to put the glass slipper on? Goldilocks falls out of the window and breaks her neck. And as for the Little Mermaid? She watches the prince marry someone else, dies by suicide, and becomes some bubbly sea foam. This is the kind of story that can ruin a nice beach vacation.



FEMINISM

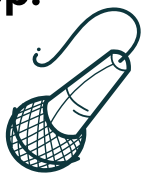
As long as women have existed in patriarchal societies, they have been fighting for equality and human rights. Feminist historians have broken this fight up into “waves.” “First wave feminism” broadly encompasses the suffragette movement and the fight for women to have fundamental rights in the eyes of the law in the late 19th and early 20th century. They wanted to vote. Seems reasonable!

The publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan is considered the start of “second-wave feminism,” with a broader focus on equality for women, like reproductive rights and rights in the workplace.

Now we are either in the third or fourth wave (another debate!). There’s a major focus on intersectional feminism that fights for women of all races, sexuality and gender expressions. It acknowledges the challenges that arise from being a woman and a member of another marginalized group. In the last few years, the #MeToo movement has brought to light the harassment and discrimination that women face generations after first-wave feminism began. It’s a little like déjà-vu for women who have been fighting for this shit their whole life.

That’s a lot of waves and definitions and rights and it’s certainly true that the word “feminism” means many different things to different people. We think feminism simply means that however someone identifies in terms of gender, they should be treated equally. We also like Beyoncé’s definition: “It’s very simple. It’s someone who believes in equal rights for men and women.”

Mic drop.



Discussion Questions

What is your definition of feminism? Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?

What fairy tales did you read or watch growing up? What did you like about them? What bothered you?

Who were your favorite female characters or role models from fairy tales growing up? What did you like about them? How could they have been portrayed differently?

What beauty standards did you learn from the way princesses were portrayed in films?

This book covers a lot of issues related to feminism such as the gender pay gap (Mulan), beauty standards (Rapunzel), consent (Sleeping Beauty), sex positivity and single shaming (Thumbelina). What issues were left out that you think should have been included?

Is there a fairy tale that isn't covered in this book that you think could use some adapting? What fairy tale, and how would you adapt it?

What theme or issue from the book do you relate to the most? Is there a personal experience that came to mind while reading the book? What was it?

Did this book change the way you think about fairy tales? In what ways?

Do you think that recent movie remakes and new fairy tales have successfully updated the genre?



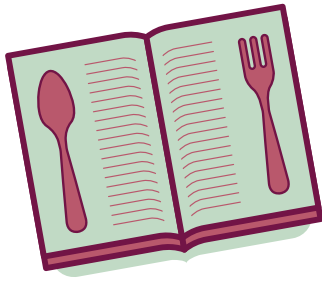
Game Time!

TRUE OR FALSE: REAL LINE FROM A FAIRY TALE MOVIE OR MADE UP?

- 1) "She's the one! the lucky girl I'm going to marry. The most beautiful girl in town. That makes her the best. And don't I deserve the best?"
- 2) "Girls talk too much"
- 3) "She's a female! And all females is poison! They're full of wicked wiles!"
- 4) "A woman could never rule the kingdom! She'd be far too emotional. She needs the calm and wise mind of a man to guide her."
- 5) "A princess dress must be pink! Blue on a girl is unsightly."
- 6) "Don't underestimate the importance of body language!"
- 7) "It's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas and thinking."
- 8) "Now dear, you don't want to be an old maid, unmarried at 20!"
- 9) "Leave the sewing to the women!"
- 10) "You're speechless, I see. Such a fine quality in a wife."

ANSWERS:
1. True (Beauty and the Beast) 2. True (Peter Pan) 3. True (Snow White) 4. Fake
5. Fake 6. True (The Little Mermaid) 7. True (Beauty and the Beast) 8. Fake
9. True (Cinderella) 10. True (Aladdin)





Recipes

Fairy Dust Popcorn

INGREDIENTS:

1 bag of plain popcorn
12 oz bag of white chocolate
Cinnamon

Powdered ginger
Sprinkles of choice

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Melt the white chocolate over a stovetop on low (or melt in the microwave). Be careful not to burn! (We learned this the hard way!)

2) Pop a bag of popcorn (don't overpop- sweet popcorn doesn't taste great with burnt edges. We also learned this the hard way... evil spells are difficult to perfect.)

3) Pour into a large bowl.

4) Pour the melted white chocolate over the popcorn and quickly mix with a spatula to coat.

5) Sprinkle in about 1/2 tsp of cinnamon and 1/2 tsp of ginger and stir.

6) Mix in about 2-3 tablespoons of sprinkles.

7) Scatter additional sprinkles on top for extra magic! You can never have enough fairy dust!

8) Let the bowl set in the fridge until chocolate hardens. Break apart into large chunks and enjoy a magical evening!



Princess and the Chocolate ChickPEA Cookie Cups

INGREDIENTS:

11 (15 oz) can no-salt-added chickpeas ½ cup chocolate chips
OR 1¾ cups cooked chickpeas ¼ teaspoon baking powder
⅓ cup maple syrup ¼ teaspoon baking soda
⅓ cup choice of nut butter



INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Preheat oven to 350°F.
- 2) Pulse chickpeas in a blender or food processor until broken down.
- 3) Transfer to a bowl and mix in the baking powder and baking soda.
- 4) Stir in the maple syrup, nut butter, and chocolate chips.
- 5) Press into a non-stick muffin pan, and bake for 12-15 minutes.
- 6) Let cool before serving.

recipe created by friend of the authors, @whitneyerd

STEPMOTHER'S EVIL POTION

INGREDIENTS:

Gin
Lime Juice
Honey
Ice
Prosecco or Cava
Edible flowers for garnish



INSTRUCTIONS:

Combine 1.5 oz gin, 1 oz lime juice and 3/4 oz honey with ice and shake.

Pour in a glass and top with 1 oz of prosecco or cava for some fizz!

Watch the magic begin to work!

Garnish with edible flowers to disguise your evil potion.

***To make this as a punch for a group, pour 1.5 cups gin, 1 cup lime juice, and 3/4 cup of honey into a pitcher. Let the honey dissolve for a few minutes, and stir until combined. Add ice. Pour individual portions into glass and top with prosecco or cava. Garnish the bowl or individual glasses with the edible flowers to disguise your evil potion.**

Did you and your book club create these treats and have a display fit for a princess' feast? Post on instagram and tag @feministfairytalebook so we can see and share!



AUTHOR Q&A

WITH LAURA LANE & ELLEN HAUN

What made you decide to write this book?

Ellen: Laura and I met in a sketch comedy writing class in New York. Laura kept bringing in very funny sketches about princesses, so I approached her about writing a sketch show all about fairy tale princesses becoming feminists. We wrote the sketch show, named it *Femme Fairy Tales*, and got a run at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre in New York City. The show was very successful and ran for about a year, and from there we decided we wanted to adapt the stage show into a book.

Laura: The response for the show was so powerful and positive, I had this moment where I thought: this should be a book! These fairy tales needed to be retold and it can't just exist on the stage. I want more people to see what we've written! I was also pregnant at the time and was thinking about how I had internalized all of the patriarchal fairytales I watched and read as a child and how I wanted to retell these for my child. I had turned my previous sketch show about dating into a book called *This Is Why You're Single*, so I thought, maybe it could happen again! Sure enough, we got a book deal.

How did you adapt a sketch show into a book?

Ellen: The sketch show only had five different stories in it: *Little Mermaid*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Peter Pan*, and *Rapunzel*. For those stories, we did pretty faithful adaptations of the sketches. For example, *Rapunzel* in the show grows out her armpit hair, just like in the book. We did get to expand those sketches, though. In the sketch show, *Cinderella* is mostly about how painful it would be to wear glass slippers. There are a lot of physical gags of Cinderella being in extreme pain. But in the book, we expand the idea to be a more biting critique of social class and income inequality. Obviously, we had to expand and add more fairy tales - we added 7 to make a total of 12 stories. It was fun to read a bunch of different fairy tales and think about how they could be adapted. It was like making the world of feminist princesses bigger.

Laura: It was hugely helpful to have been able to essentially workshop half of the book in front of audiences on the stage, but not everything translated to the page. Certain jokes and endings just didn't work anymore so we had to change them slightly. For the new chapters, we spent a lot of time sending them to friends and getting notes, workshoping them just like we would a comedy show.

What personal experiences influenced the stories?

Ellen: We talked a lot about our experiences being catcalled when we wrote *Little Red Riding Hood*. We debated how Little Red Riding Hood should handle it, because we've both handled that situation differently in different contexts. I also got married over the course of writing the book, so I liked writing Thumbelina. I liked creating a sassy little character who didn't want to get married, no matter what anyone said. She felt like my alter ego!



Laura: The entire book is inspired from either personal experience or the experiences of people close to us and then we tried to find the humor in some really tough topics. We both spent time secretly going to Planned Parenthood and this experience inspired our Little Mermaid chapter to break the taboos around vaginas and sex education. As a magazine editor, I was given promotion after promotion without a raise, which inspired the *Mulan* chapter about equal pay. Both of us have only ever been given a raise when there was a woman in charge. My experience and frustrations at magazines also informed the *Beauty and the Beast* chapter and the critique on diversity in the media. My sister uses a wheelchair and is an activist so she inspired the microaggression theme of the *Snow White* chapter and she was very helpful with feedback on that one.

How did you write the book with two people?

Laura: We were both used to collaborating with other comedians when it came to writing sketches or scripts and it turns out writing a book with someone isn't much different! Going into it though, you never know if personalities will gel or your attributes will compliment each other or come into conflict. A lot of things need to line up when you co-write any project: you need to have a similar vision, similar work ethic, similar schedule, similar comedic taste and complementary skills. Since we'd worked on our sketch show together, I knew we worked great together! My biggest advice for someone in a writing partnership is to find someone who is nice and who you enjoy hanging out with! I'd also co-written my first book with someone else and what I did when we got that book deal was I Googled: how to write a book with more than one person. I read an interview where the co-writers of a book described outlining chapters together and then each person would go off and do a draft of a chapter on their own and then swap back and forth so it all had the same voice. That's basically what we did at first but by then end we were writing in the same room. When we disagreed on a joke, we'd talk it through, fight for what we loved but if someone really didn't like something, we cut it. You have to give the other person veto power. In the end, a lot of chapters we ended up writing line by line in the same room actually and just trying to make each other laugh. I like to be the one typing and Ellen is great at editing as we go. I also had a newborn when we were writing the book so that was a whole other challenge.

Ellen: We literally wrote sitting next to each other, both with google docs open and typing away.

If you could be one fairy tale princess who would it be?

Ellen: As a kid, I'd say Sleeping Beauty. I had a Sleeping Beauty doll and you could turn her dress inside out so it could be both blue AND pink. As a grown up, I'd say Elsa, because I'd like to rule a kingdom with my sisters.

Laura: I played dress up with my younger sibling and would put on plays very frequently, at the misfortune of my parents who had to watch these terrible plays in front of our fireplace way too often. I dressed up as many princesses, but I loved playing Wendy. She wasn't a princess per se, but she was the eldest sibling of three, which I could relate to. Luckily, I was never kidnapped by a manchild in real life.



ILLUSTRATOR Q&A

WITH NICOLE MILES

What drew you to this project?

Any feminist project is always going to pique my interest, but I went through a period of being really into fairytales and mythology as a kid that probably hasn't really gone away.

How did you approach the illustrations?

I tried to pick scenes that summarized the stories without either giving too much away or focusing on too minor a part, but most of all I wanted the visual humor to feel sassy and modern to match the written humor and not let it get stuck in medieval "ye olde" visuals.

What stories did you connect with the most?

I probably connected most with Rapunzel's story the most because that one in particular highlighted the various, seemingly contradictory ways of being a womxn and a feminist. I sometimes worry about not having the perfect words for the inevitable prickly discussions (whether with your average "bro" or with that less-liberal-than-you-thought acquaintance) around seeing women and non-binary folks as fully rounded human beings deserving of human rights. It's good to remember that we're not obliged to be perfect nor to be universally opposite to everything feminine nor to be a monolithic group that all express their myriad identities in one pre-defined, unchanging way.

Did you watch or read fairy tales growing up? If so, what were your favorite ones and which ones did you have problems with?

My mum tells me I loved singing in loud, shrill shrieks to *Snow White* and I remember being a big fan of *The Little Mermaid*. Later I was fascinated when I found the original Grimm's tales. *Mulan* was a complete wonder to me - I really loved that one. And, I guess these two aren't quite fairytales, more like legends, but I loved *The Road to Eldorado* and *Atlantis: The Lost World* which had a wealth of interesting characters who were all so different and, at the time, felt really culturally diverse even if I can now clearly identify all the cringey stereotypes that were pretty heavily being leaned on. Although I recognize that I was obviously beyond the target age group when *The Princess and the Frog* came out, I was disappointed with that one. I don't remember it well (which probably says enough) but I recall thinking the villain was wasted on the weak story. I feel a little sad about things like that because it often feels like they capitalize on minority groups' desperation for stories with which to identify even if those stories don't live up to the hype.

What did you want to change about the way princesses are portrayed?

The romantic (insta-) "love" aspect gets old pretty quickly and I'm realizing the older I get how much more I prefer a focus on friendships. I guess that's what some animation studios have been doing with stories like *Brave* and *Frozen*, so seeing more of that would be great. It would have been good to see more princesses who weren't just running away from problems thrust upon them by society, but proactively going after something they wanted. Maybe if great stories were written and then at the last minute the protagonist's gender was just swapped à la *Alien's Ripley*, that could be fun.

What's your favorite illustration in the book?

Probably the one for *Beauty, the Beast & The Tabloids* because it was such a complex, high-energy scene and I wanted to get both the urgency and the bizarreness of it while still lending visual clarity to what was happening.



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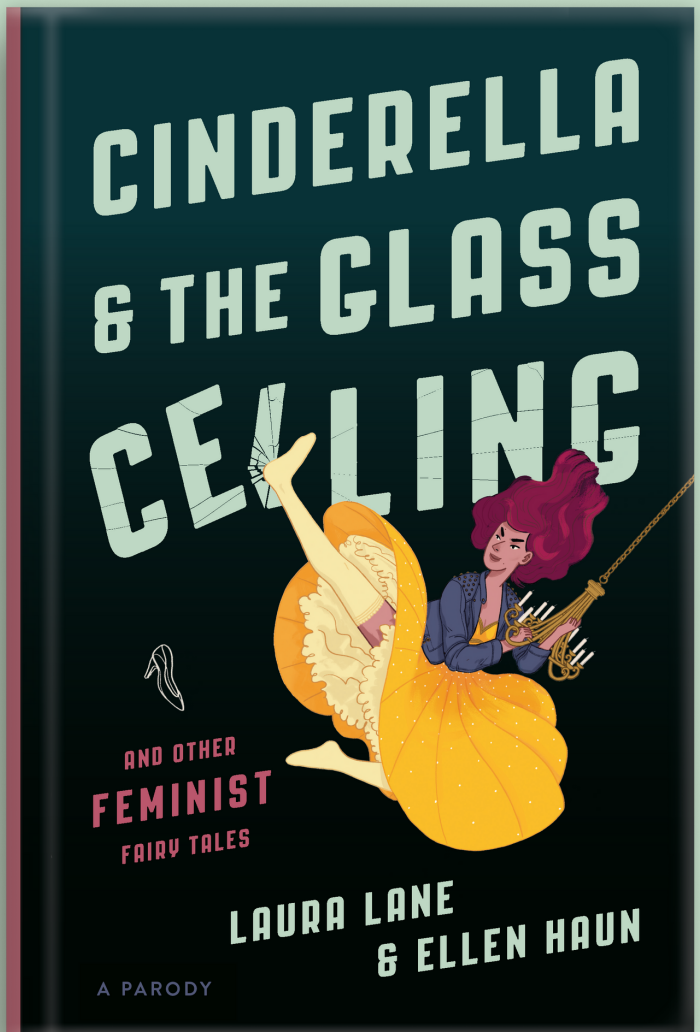
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Ellen Haun & Laura Lane



Nicole Miles