

### Cinderella is a fairy tale

by Viv Regan



- 1 'Once upon a time, there was a beautiful young girl named Cinderella. She had two ugly stepsisters who were very cruel to her.' As the opening lines of *Cinderella* suggest, the story is not a postmodern masterpiece or a haunting tale of familial dysfunction. It is a classic Disney fairy tale: a childish fantasy packed with sparkly magic. It is, in short, a kids film.
- 2 Sadly, given the online hullabaloo surrounding the release of Kenneth Branagh's new live-action adaptation of *Cinderella* (which is out today), you could be forgiven for thinking that *Cinderella* is a threat to children. Upon word of the film's release, the ugly stepsisters of the commentariat united with a few 'perpetually petrified parents' and railed against *Cinderella*, criticising, in particular, the incy-wincy waistline sported by Lily James, the actress playing the pauper-turned-princess. According to the likes of Dr Rosie Campbell, a reader in politics at Birkbeck, the film sends the wrong message to young girls. 'This focus on beauty, this "pinkification" of the Disney role model. No wonder we are struggling to get young women engaged with politics', Campbell told the *Guardian*. So now even the crisis of politics is being laid at the doorstep of Disney!
- 3 They may have been leaping to the film's defence, but the cast and crew also seemed to take the role-modelling malarkey seriously. In one interview, James said: 'The film is about courage, kindness, strength and

beauty from within so they [the critics] are focusing on the wrong thing.' *Cinderella* screenwriter, Chris Weitz, went even further, telling the *Daily Beast* that Gandhi was the inspiration for Cinderella's 'inner strength' in the film. So, while Cinderella may not kick ass, at least she's 'Gandhi in a gown'.

- 4 How peculiar it is to think that *Cinderella* (or *Frozen*, which was praised for its feisty female leads) has a role to play in bringing up our kids. It speaks to a very confused idea of what a role model is to think that a fictional character can, and should, hold such sway over children's development. Adults here are re-cast as little more than extras.
- 5 The anti-*Cinderella* campaign is typical of the megalomania of today's 'think of the children' campaigners. Not only do these people think it is their job to pry into adults' family lives; it seems they also think it's okay to pry into children's imaginations, too.
- 6 If you go, enjoy the film. After all, it's just a bit of fun.

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