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Long Live the Evil Queen: Once Upon a Time's Evolved Villain

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Long Live The Evil Queen



By: Frank Lombardi

Mirror on the wall, who's the fairest Queen of all? In today's pop culture, many traditional villains are beginning to be turned into antiheroes. ABC's television show *Once Upon a Time* has taken a number of fairytale villains and provided them both a background and character growth. Specifically, the adaptation of the Evil Queen has shifted from primary antagonist to redeemed hero over the first three seasons. The show also displays her in the real-world rather than just a fairytale universe. I claim that this radical development occurs due three essential aspects: the Evil Queen and Snow White; motherhood; and lastly, fighting a powerful enemy.

12 / 15 / 2014

INTRODUCTION

Once Upon a Time, there was an Evil Queen. And she cast a Curse that would give her everything she could ever want. At least she believed it could. Motivated by her hatred of Snow White, she cursed an entire nation transporting every fairytale character we know and love to a world where all of their memories and happy endings would be taken from them: our world. Her curse created a quaint little town named Storybrooke in Maine where she “ruled” as Mayor Regina Mills. The citizens would be stuck in their unhappiness as time stood frozen; forbidding the possibility of anyone achieving a happy ending. The Queen reveled in their despair...for a time. Casting such a powerful curse came with a price: the curse would leave a hole in her heart. As the days went by, she learned that revenge was not enough. She was lonely. Soon she realized that her emptiness could be cured by adopting a child, a son whom she named Henry.

However, she felt her happiness fading away when she learned that his birth mother, Emma, was the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming, and that Emma was the one who could break the curse and restore the happy endings. In the end, her love for Henry allowed the Queen to remove her fear of Emma and enjoy her son. Emma did eventually venture to Storybrooke after Henry found her and she stayed to make sure that Regina was a good mother to Henry. The two women feuded for a long time. Regina realized that Emma could destroy both of her happy endings: ending the curse and claiming Henry as her own. When resorting to her legendary poisoned apple, Regina attempted to poison Emma. Yet it was Henry who ingested the apple and found himself in a death-like sleep. The tragedy finally caused Emma to know the truth and forced the two mothers united to save Henry.

Emma's kiss of true love woke her son and broke the curse. Regina fled to save herself from the town's reactions of vengeance. When magic returned to Storybrooke, Regina reverted to her Evil Queen nature, yet, it was Henry who forced her to abandon that fate and seek redemption. After a long journey, Regina sought to change herself for the sake of her son. This led to her willingness to risk sacrificing her own life to ensure her son's safety and saving Storybrooke; uniting with her enemies (Snow White, Prince Charming and Emma) to venture to Neverland and face an evil Peter Pan; saving Henry; having Emma take Henry from Storybrooke when the town was in danger and breaking her curse, returning everyone back to the Enchanted Forest; facing the Wicked Witch of the West; resolving her past with Snow White; and being capable of using white magic. By succeeding in these obstacles, Regina was able to achieve redemption. She found a true love in Robin Hood and was finally seen as a hero in Henry's eyes as well as the eyes of the town members. Regina received her happy ending.

The tale of the Evil Queen and Snow White has been told for centuries. Beginning with the Brothers Grimm, hundreds of adaptations were created that altered the fairytale and the Evil Queen's portrayal. With each version, the backstory of the Queen is expanded and we learn a “past” and (often) a more intricate reason for the hatred for her stepdaughter. In the original tale, there was nothing known about the Evil Queen. There was neither an explanation of how she came to possess her magic mirror nor the extent of her witchcraft. An identity was not provided

for the wicked woman and so she was known as merely the “Queen”. Certain adaptations made her villainous nature apparent by entitling her the “Evil Queen” or the “Wicked Queen”, yet in the original fairytale, she was merely known as “the Queen”.

One of the best known adaptations of the classic fairytale was produced by Walt Disney as the first ever feature-length animated film. In this version, the Evil Queen is a force of pure villainy. Her name and backstory are irrelevant to the tale, having her actions be the significance of her character. The Queen’s main role is that of a truly evil woman seeking to destroy the purely innocent princess. When viewing the film, her identity did not matter. The only substance of importance was that she was a truly evil villain.

In 2011, seventy-four years after the release of the animated tale, Disney's affiliate television station, ABC, released the fictional show *Once Upon a Time*. The show follows the lives of fairytale characters after being cursed into the real world by the Evil Queen. In this version, the writers and producers are attempting to transform the traditional queen into a more humanly-relatable character. Over the course of the three seasons, we see the queen (named Regina) evolve from the traditional Evil Queen to a real-world mayor/mother, who converts from the primary antagonist to a redeemed antihero. What is the significance of these modifications to the character? In my opinion, a television show needs to keep its viewers interested in the long-running (and changing) storyline. In order to ensure that viewers remain interested in reoccurring characters, strong emotions must be invoked.

Within the last few decades, the face of villainy in fictional pop culture has changed significantly. Certain television shows, movies, and even novels have altered the typically antagonistic character into an almost antihero archetype. The television show *The Sopranos* used this method by having audience members enraptured by a drama about members in the mafia.

Gregory Maguire retold the classic tale of *The Wizard of Oz* from the perspective of the Witch of the West in his novel *Wicked*, which later was adapted into the hit Broadway musical. Recently, one of the most talked-about television shows is a Netflix original series that tells the stories of female inmates in *Orange is the New Black*. Why are audiences captivated by these traditionally despicable characters? In my thesis, I explore this phenomenon through an analysis on one of the most legendary villains, the version of Evil Queen that appears in *Once Upon a Time*.

I chose to analyze this particular villain because she is Disney's first feature-length film antagonist. Walt Disney titled her as the Wicked Queen and is the only Disney villain who does not possess an identity. In the animated film, she is displayed as two separate characters; the Wicked Queen and the Old Hag. By creating her as a type of "Jekyll and Hyde" persona, the audience sees a large comparison between the regal woman and the cartoon-like witch. Walt Disney Studios consider her to be the cruelest and most cold-hearted villain they have ever created.

When *Once Upon a Time* premiered in 2011, the primary antagonist was the Queen from Snow White. Here, they titled her as the Evil Queen; a title that was identified by not only the entire kingdom, but by the Queen herself. Not only was the traditional fairytale persona displayed, but a more relatable and humanistic version was presented through the Storybrooke Mayor Regina Mills.

Although the original animated villainess was essential in the construction of Regina, I chose to focus my study on *Once Upon a Time*'s villain due to the show's "fleshed-out" character. Over the course of the three seasons that I analyzed, Regina evolved from antagonist to redeemed hero. This is a unique change for any villain to have, let alone one of Disney's most infamous villains. It is my claim that this development occurs due to the advancement of today's

society and the need to explain what we fear and do not understand. The evolution of the Evil Queen occurs primarily due to three relationships: Regina and her son; Regina and Snow White; and lastly, Regina and the Wicked Witch of the West.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there is an insufficient amount of research on the show due to the series being relatively new, the Evil Queen adaptation appearing in *Once Upon a Time* can be analyzed and compared with her portrayal in Disney's 1937 film. By analyzing the character using the animated film as well as possibly the written Grimm's story, *Once's* queen is being portrayed in an entirely new light.

The writers who composed Disney's original *Snow White* initially attempted to provide a deeper explanation behind the Queen's motivation for Snow's destruction. Rather than have the story merely be about the jealousy of another's beauty, the writers initially wanted the Queen to have a more rational reason for her competition with her innocent stepdaughter. Scholar Ollie Johnson compiled his text about some of Disney's infamous villains discussing the characters' design, creation, and original plot descriptions. "The story meeting notes from October 1943 say, 'Queen wants to marry PRINCE, but he refuses to acknowledge that she is not the *fairest in the land* since he has seen SNOW WHITE...[the queen] has him dragged away so that he will not interfere with her diabolical plans for SNOW WHITE'" (Johnston 54). Originally, the film's writers wanted this storyline to create a more complex character. However, due to time restraint, this plot was eliminated. Rather than removing a song, the writers chose to exclude motivation for the Queen. She remains a villain with a petty reason for her vengeance rather than an interesting character with the possibility of seeming human. The writer's provided a reason for her downfall as well. When transformed into the Witch, "away from her castle, without the

protection of her regal status, her servants, her Huntsman or her books of magic, the potions, the laboratory, she is more vulnerable” (Johnston 54). I believe that the writers needed to limit the Queen so that she could be defeated; otherwise, she was seemingly immune to failure. When the Witch is presenting Snow White with the apple, viewers witness the young, beautiful and innocent princess facing off against the old and ugly witch. The viewer sympathizes with Snow White and is disgusted by the hideousness of the witch. If the villainess was in her naturally beautiful form, there would not have been such loathing.

The animated film was released during Disney’s “Classic Era,” a span of thirty years from 1937 to 1967. During these decades, two other films were released, each with villainesses being the epitome of evil. Similar to the Evil Queen in *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* had vindictive females causing deception and maliciousness for our heroines, showing that the use of these villainesses was a reoccurring theme in the early princess films. In Amy Davis’s book *Good Girls & Wicked Witches: Women in Disney’s Feature Animation*, the Queen is compared to both Lady Tremaine (*Cinderella*) and Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty*) to analyze her magical and humanistic sides. The antagonists for both *Cinderella* and *Snow White* were stepmothers. They both seek to prevent their stepdaughter’s from attaining happiness (love). “In *Snow White* and *Cinderella*, there is much the same parent-child set-up: the heroine’s natural parents are dead, and they have been left in the care of an evil, domineering, jealous woman who has taken over the home and rights that should have been the heroine’s and usurped them for herself” (Davis 104). Maleficent is not Aurora’s stepmother, yet she is an older woman who enacts magical destruction on the younger heroine for her own selfish gain. The motherly figures in these classic princess films seek the downfall of those they were supposed to raise/protect.

However, due to the lack of biological factors, it is more “acceptable” for the women to treat the heroines with such blatant hateful and aggressive actions.

“[The villainesses] change themselves into other things when functioning in their usual form is not working for them. They actively seek to control not only their lives but also their circumstances. They are strong, fearless, and often very creative. They are mature, powerful, and independent. In short, they are everything that their female victims are not” (Davis 107). By analyzing this imagery of other maternal figures in Disney’s “Classic Era,” I can begin to determine the reason for “The Queen” being portrayed as a nameless vanity-driven force of evil in this classic film. It is not only the maternal hatred that unites these villainesses, but the fear that they inflict by appearance alone. They use their dark powers and cruel natures to intimidate the heroines into submission; making the princesses inadequate to attain their own happy endings. The heroines are introduced either at birth or as children, where the villainess is provided no backstory prior to the conflict.

In Disney’s development of the character of The Queen, Walt and his animators pitched many ideas before selecting the regal woman viewers have come to fear and love. In the primary stages of the character designs, the animators had depicted her as a fat and comical villain and are believed to have styled her based on the characters in Disney’s short features *Silly Symphonies*. Animator Albert Hunter was made the lead designer of the Queen and introduced the more realistic character style that is in the film today. He envisioned the Queen as beautiful, regal, cold, and sinister, making this the scariest character that had ever been animated at that time. Walt Disney himself described the Queen as “a mixture of Lady Macbeth and the Big Bad Wolf. Her beauty is sinister, mature, plenty of curves...she becomes ugly and menacing when

scheming and mixing her potions; magic fluids her transform her into an old witch-like hag” (quoted in Johnson 55).

The Queen, although described as a beautiful woman (the most beautiful in the lands actually), is still the epitome of evil. From the beginning of the animated film, she is characterized as the villain even before she makes an entrance. She is the first character we see in the animated tale and opens the film with her spell that summons the spirit within her magic mirror. “In the storybook opening and plot synopsis at the beginning of *Snow White*, the Queen’s epithet is ‘wicked and vain’; along with other descriptions implying that she is undesirable. She insists on being the ‘fairest of them all’, and as long as she is deluded into thinking she is, she is controllable and not outwardly evil to Snow White” (Rabison 41). By controlling Snow White and treating her as a servant, it appears that the Queen is undermining the princess’s credentials as well as the girl’s beauty. It is not only the girl’s beauty that the Queen seeks to destroy, but her desirability as well. For how could a servant girl compare to the beautiful regality of the vain stepmother? From the original written story by the Brothers Grimm, the Queen’s sole motive is to destroy her competition. Within the most recent adaptations, the Queen’s motives have been expanded. She still seeks out Snow White’s demise, but due to the current times, beauty is not the sole reason for the young princess’s destruction.

Over the course of the three seasons of *Once Upon a Time* that I analyzed, characteristics of some of Disney’s films as well as some classic elements that were presented in this television series. The basis for Disney films appears to always be about “good triumphs over evil,” however in this show; some of the most iconic villains are main characters. The villains are also receiving understanding and crucial character development. Captain Hook (*Peter Pan*), the Queen of Hearts (*Alice in Wonderland*), Rumpelstiltskin (*Rumpelstiltskin*), and the Wicked

Witch of the West (*Wizard of Oz*) are merely some of the classic fairytale villains that have been expanded on *Once Upon a Time*. Not only are they provided backstories and explanations behind their evil nature, but in many cases, sympathy is developed for the characters. *Once Upon a Time*'s key slogan (in regards to their villains) is that "Evil is not born; it is made". It is revealed that in the fourth season, this trend will continue by explaining the evilness of the Snow Queen (*The Snow Queen*), Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty*), Ursula (*The Little Mermaid*) and Cruella DeVil (*101 Dalmatians*).

Once Upon a Time is not Disney's only production that has recently modified legendary villains in a modern-day light. In the summer of 2014, another adaptation of one of the original Disney classics was released. *Maleficent* retells the tale of the iconic horned villainess from the 1959 film *Sleeping Beauty*. In the original version, nothing was known about the evil sorceress aside from the fact that she could turn herself into a dragon and seemingly had some displaced anger by cursing a newborn. The goal for this new film was to create a backstory for the villainess and provide the audience with her rationale for her evil spell. This film exemplifies how far Disney is willing to reintroduce the idea of villainy. In Charles Solomon's book *Once Upon a Dream: From Perrault's Sleeping Beauty to Disney's Maleficent*, the scholar discusses the evolution of the tale as well as the production of the reworked 2014 film. *Maleficent* producer, Don Hahn, worked on the film adaptation from its conception. "When we talked about this movie, we wondered if we could do a Disney version of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. Have a character do something that is empirically terrible – curse a child – but set it up in such a way that you felt differently about it" (quoted in Solomon 111). In fact, the only element of the film that was not different from the animated version was the infamous christening scene when Maleficent cursed Aurora.

Excluding the almost line-for-line curse scene, the remainder of the tale is nothing like the original. New relationships develop throughout the film as well as twists to the elements of the classic film. “‘ We’re not trying to reinvent something that works. We’re adding layers to the character of Maleficent and peeling them back to reveal things we didn’t know about her,’ offers [special effects artist] Robert Stromberg. ‘In the animated film, we see a slice of her life, the evil slice. In our version, we learn how and why she became that way. Where she started and what turned her to the dark. We kept the Maleficent we know and love, and bookended her with a bit more history and character development’” (Solomon 171).

Current television shows and films are adapting legendary classics and putting their own unique spin on them. *Maleficent* and *Once Upon a Time*, in particular, take an iconic villainess and (not necessarily alter) but expand her story. Maleficent and Regina remain powerful and evil sorceresses; the faerie curses an infant princess, the queen poisons an apple. The principle elements to the Disney films remain in these adaptations. However, audiences are given the events that took place before “once upon a time, in a faraway land” as well as the story after the “happily ever after”. It is by seeing these events that audiences are given insight into the villain as well as an explanation to her evil nature. These newer adaptations not only reveal an evolution of villains, but are also applicable when it comes to understanding the unchanging relevance fairytales continuously present whether in the present or past.

Jack Zipes provides an analysis to the original versions of the “Snow White” fairytale in his book *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*. He claims that fairy tales evolve as humans evolve so that the stories can always remain relevant despite the changing time periods. “With each retelling the tale touches on basic instincts and moral codes and also adapts itself to the environment in which it is produced” (Zipes 131). When analyzing the fairy

tale “Snow White”, he focuses his research on the relationship between the innocent youth and her fierce stepmother. Zipes discusses that the first two paragraphs of the 1857 Grimm version provides the message of the story; competition and selection between two females. The queen is motivated to destroy her stepdaughter because she is her competition and threatens the queen’s youth and beauty. This provides the notion that women compete with one another to receive the attention and desire from men. Zipes brings to question: how does one attract a partner without killing off the competition that could potentially undermine your self-worth? Although this is the typical dilemma for the Evil Queen, killing off the younger competition, the *Once Upon a Time* version functions on a more complex level for deeper character development.

In the Official Companion to the television show, *Once Upon a Time: Behind the Magic*, the show’s writers and actors discuss the portrayal of their Evil Queen. During the first season, Regina is the primary antagonist in both the real world and the Fairy Tale flashbacks as the Evil Queen. However, when the curse is broken at the end of season one and everyone remembers who they are, Regina is put on a new path. Due to her love for Henry, she attempts to seek redemption for her evil past deeds. The second season has many ups and downs where she slips and falls back on the self-serving and evil path, yet by the season finale, she is willing to sacrifice herself to save everyone she had cursed. Lana Parrilla (the actress portraying Regina) states, “I absolutely love Regina and the path she is on now, which is the road to redemption. I love that she is such a complex character, and that there is nothing black or white about her. She is multi-layered and multi-colorful--she truly is a tortured soul, but I have a lot of empathy for her and compassion” (Bennet 46). By season three, Regina is no longer viewed as a villain and has finally reached redemption in both the eyes of Henry as well as her previous enemy Snow White. But what is the significance behind the writers and producers making these changes to

the Evil Queen? Was it to enrich the story or just to keep from having the plotlines drag on for the run of the series? Would it not have been far more interesting to keep such an intense and powerful villain for the run of the series?

METHODOLOGY

I explored these questions by analyzing three relationships that I believed led to developing a stronger and more popular version of a legendary villain. I discuss her relationship with her adopted son, Henry, over the three seasons as well as the enemy-turned-ally relationship with his birth mother, Emma. Due to the classic and necessary relationship to the original fairytale, I studied the interactions between the Evil Queen and Snow White in the fairytale universe as well as the relationship between Mayor Regina and Mary Margaret. To strengthen these two claims, I provided specific examples of interactions throughout the seasons. The final element I analyzes the producers' plan of pitting Regina against an equally powerful and well-known female villain, The Wicked Witch of the West. The intention was for viewers to be rooting for the Evil Queen. The network issued the promotion for the second-half of the third season by using the title "Wicked vs Evil". The slogan became a pending hashtag on many forms of social media outlets. By pitting the two iconic sorceresses against each other, Regina became glorified in the eyes of viewers.

Although I had not initially planned on looking for these three relationships when I first began analyzing Regina's character development, I found that my notes continuously incorporated these themes. Forming my notes on the seasons was only one part of developing my analysis. In order to truly analyze the importance of Regina's evolution, I reexamined each episode of the seasons. After taking notes on each scene that either displayed or mentioned Regina, I read episode summaries online to confirm the events I had mentioned. Due to the

constant display of Regina and Henry throughout the seasons, I immediately noticed that this was the fundamental relationship to analyze. I chose to include her relationship with Snow White because theirs is the only relationship that concerns the traditional fairytale and lastly, the Queen's battle against the Witch is what truly showed her evolution and capability of changing into a heroic character.

A challenge that I faced with this analysis was that the first three seasons consisted of sixty-six episodes, yet Regina was not necessarily always essential to the episode's plot. In certain episodes, there would be a scene that proved important to Regina's character but she was not the focus of the episode. Often, there would be a conversation between Regina and another character that could be greatly important to this analysis. However, the interaction would typically be a glimpse of an issue that was being explored throughout the season or a select amount of episodes. Certain interactions, such as the complex relationship between Regina and Emma, would be both interesting to analyze and useful to explain Regina's development, yet they were not the most crucial reasons for her character evolution.

Rather than looking at every relationship or a large list of episodes, I chose to use select scenes to analyze the evolution as well as possibly applying the study when discussing relationships with other villains. By analyzing these relationships, I will be able to prove that *Once Upon a Time* turns an Evil Queen into a human being. By making the Queen seen as a human, viewers are more likely to understand, sympathize, and root for the evolved character throughout her vast development.

ANALYSIS

Regina's significance in the show has always been consistent. In the first season, she was pivotal as the primary antagonist, thus nearly episode had at least one incarnation (the Queen or

the Mayor) appearing. The second season, continued to include her as one of the main characters due her attempting to redeem herself while occasionally reverting to her villainous ways. Lastly, one of the third season's main themes was redemption and focused on how villains are able to change their predetermined fairytale fates, thus making Regina's storyline one of the most crucial plots.

Once Upon a Time has destroyed the archetypal "Evil Queen" formula by providing the villainess with an identity, a background, and a family. This version of the legendary villainess is far more evil than any other Disney-related incarnation has ever been before. She is willing to resort to any measure of evil so long as she gets what she wants. Her villainy is not only inflicted on her stepdaughter, but rather every citizen in the Enchanted Forest is exposed to her evil nature. The Queen is also given a real-world persona by enacting her curse. In Storybrooke, she is Regina Mills; the town's mayor. This element allows her to be perceived as a human rather than merely an evil "fictional" sorceress. Her Storybrooke persona also makes any evil action she commits in the real world appear magnified due to the realistic and relatable setting.

In the premiere episode, *Pilot*, the Evil Queen interrupts Snow White and Prince Charming's wedding to announce that she is going to cast a Curse that will rip away every member of their world and transport them to a land where their memories and happy endings will be lost. The Curse is what creates the town of Storybrooke in Maine as well as provides the Queen with a sense of humanity as well as the position of town Mayor. Over the course of the series, viewers are provided glimpses of the Evil Queen in the Enchanted Forest prior to her Curse and see that her villainy is greatly expanded outside of her classic fairytale. In this universe, every citizen regards the Queen as evil and is aware of her attempts to kill Snow White.

Not only is she known as the “Evil Queen” by the inhabitants, but she herself welcomes this dark persona and lifestyle.

In the traditional fairytale, it can be assumed that no one is aware of the Queen’s evil nature. She is depicted of having no interaction with Snow White until finding out that her stepdaughter is the “fairest”. In this television series, the Queen is displayed interacting with many citizens of her kingdom and being perceived as a villain. On her hunt for Snow White, the Queen burns down entire towns that she believes is protecting her fugitive stepdaughter. She is unable (or unwilling) to see herself as being evil and justifies her actions stating that once Snow White is dead, the citizens will see her “kindness”. She eventually realizes how the kingdom sees her and embracing her reputation when she states, “The Queen is dead. Long live the *Evil Queen*” (*The Evil Queen* s2e20). This realization could have had two possibilities; the Queen realizes her villainy and wants to change to be a better (and beloved) ruler *or* this would not affect her at all. Indeed this realization led her to embrace her evil nature as well as have it fuel her villainous ambitions. The television show depicts the legendary poisoned apple scenario, however, in this version the Queen is not in the disguise of the Old Hag. Instead, she confronts Snow White appearing in her natural state of regality. She also tells Snow White the exact nature of the poisoned apple threatening that if Snow White does not eat the apple, the evil woman will kill everyone that Snow White cares about. This makes the Queen’s approach less secretive and Snow White’s action of eating the apple seen as sacrificial rather than manipulated. The Queen’s later action of cursing the kingdom displays her true evil nature in this series. When her initial act of attempting to destroy one victim turns onto an entire nation, the audience shows the depth of her hatred and villainy.

The Evil Queen was the most ruthless and feared ruler in any of the kingdoms in the Enchanted Forest. Her magical abilities make her immune to rebellion from the other rulers due to the fear that she inflicts. In fact, the only sorcerer who rivals her own magic is Rumplestiltskin, who taught her the craft. Staying in the Enchanted Forest would have never allowed the Evil Queen to develop. Through performing the darkest and most villainous act of casting the curse and transporting everyone to Storybrooke, unbeknownst to herself, the Queen was placed on her road to heroism. One of the largest significances about this personification of the Evil Queen is her relationships. Over the course of the series, we witness Regina experience friendships, motherhood, romance, and alliances. The most important relationship that is explored is maternity.

In the classic fairytale (as well as in the Enchanted Forest), the only motherly title we experience with the Queen is being Snow White's stepmother. There is no maternal love depicted in that storyline. The relationship consists of the Queen attempting to destroy her stepdaughter. *Once Upon a Time* not only includes the traditional wicked-stepmother-angle but also expands their relationship. In both the literary fairytale as well as Disney's animated classic, it is unclear as to how old Snow White was when her father married the Queen. In the television series, Regina meets her future stepdaughter when Snow White is a child. She saved the young princess from a runaway horse which is what led the king to proposing to Regina. Regina's mother (Cora) forced her to accept the proposal even though her daughter did not wish to marry the king because Regina was in love with her family's stable boy, Daniel. Snow White discovered their love and attempted to have Cora dissolve the proposal, however Snow's interference resulted in Cora killing Daniel (*The Stable Boy* s1e18). This is the reason for the Queen's hatred of her stepdaughter. By incorporating this backstory, the writers provide a more

significant depth to the story having it being comprised of betrayal and vengeance rather than merely vanity.

What is unique about this adaptation is that we are provided with events that occur after the poisoned apple attempt. In the original Disney animated tale, the Queen dies thinking that she was victorious and therefore is unaware that the princess awakens. Even in the Brothers Grimm fairytale, the Queen is killed at the wedding of Snow White and Prince Charming by forcing her to dance in red-hot iron shoes. *Once Upon a Time* has Snow White and Prince Charming fight the Queen after he awakens the princess and the couple dethroning the Queen (*The Cricket Game* s2e10). This expansion of the tale deepens the Evil Queen's hatred and leads to her most villainous action. For it is after her defeat that the Queen decides to cast her Curse. In Storybrooke, we are given a further look at their dynamic through Regina Mills and Mary Margaret Blanchard.

After succeed in her curse and arriving in Storybrooke, the Queen (now Regina) revels in the aftermath of her Curse (*Welcome to Storybrooke* s2e17). Snow White's new identity is a single elementary school teacher names Mary Margaret. Part of Mary Margaret's new daily routine is volunteering at the town's hospital where she visits a man lying in a coma (Prince Charming/David Nolan). By casting the Curse, Regina removed Snow White's happy ending just as the princess had done to her long ago. However, casting such a powerful spell came with a steep price; the Curse would leave Regina with a hole in her heart so a part of her would never be truly happy. Regina eventually realized that destroying Snow White's happiness did not complete her and that she desired to fill the void by adopting a son (*Save Henry* s3e9).

After Regina located the baby boy in Boston, she struggled with motherhood and felt inadequate with her infant son. Due to the child's constant crying, Regina attempted to locate

information about the birth mother to dissolve any option of a birth defect. When she learned that her adopted son's mother was an eighteen-year-old woman that was found outside Storybrooke when the town was "created", Regina realized that the woman was the prophesized daughter of Snow White. After this realization, Regina wanted to return her son to the adoption agency. At the last minute, Regina abandoned her decision and decided to keep Henry, feeling as though she would be able to give him his best chance. In order to be the best mother for her son, Regina created a memory potion that would remove her memories of the identity of Henry's birth mother. In the episode, Regina recites *her* story to her infant son while removing her memories to give her son his best chance.

Regina Mills: Once upon a time there was a queen. And she cast a glorious curse that gave her everything she wanted... or so she thought. She despaired when she learned that revenge was not enough. She was lonely. And so she searched the land for a little boy to be her prince. And then... she found him. And though they lived happily, it was not ever after. There was still an evil out there lurking. The Queen was worried for her prince's safety. While she knew she could vanquish any threat to the boy, she also knew she couldn't raise him without worrying. No. She needed to put her own troubles aside. And put her child first. And so the Queen procured an ancient potion of forgetting. It's all right. If the Queen drinks the potion, she won't forget her child. She'll only forget her worries. Her troubles. Her fears. And with those gone, she - and her prince - can indeed finally live happily ever after.

By Regina removing her memories, she risks her Curse being broken in order to be a good mother for Henry (*Save Henry s3e9*).

We do not see another moment of Regina's motherhood with Henry until he returns to Storybrooke after locating his birth mother, Emma. Throughout the first season, viewers see Regina's sole ambition is to be the only mother figure in Henry's life. Due to her nature as the Evil Queen, Regina resorts to numerous dark methods attempting to remove Emma from her son's life. Her techniques are primarily realistic due to the lack of magic in Storybrooke, such as trying to manipulate Emma into wanting to leave Storybrooke. Regina attempted to drive Emma out of town by: framing her for theft; murdering the man Emma loves; framing Mary Margaret

(Emma's roommate/friend/Snow White) for murder; and finally attempting to poison Emma with the poisoned apple. However, the cruelest action is when Regina attempts to poison Emma by using the original poisoned apple that she used on Emma's mother, Snow White. Was she doing these evil acts to make herself the only mother in Henry's life or because the success of her curse is the only way for her to have a happy ending?

Before Regina decides to use the poisoned apple, she is asked if it is not better to let Henry leave Storybrooke so that her Curse can remain intact. However, she states that she wants to have both her son and her revenge. By resorting to the legendary weapon, viewers are shown that even in this new "real world" the woman remains the Evil Queen. Yet, when Henry ingests the poisoned apple rather than Emma, Regina willingly works with the Emma to save her son even at the expense of the Curse ending. When Henry awakens and her spell *is* broken, Regina tells her son that she does love him. Rather than feeling as soon as the Curse breaks, Regina appears to be happy Emma was successful at ending the Curse by happily stating, "you did it" (*Land Without Magic* s1e22). Her primary concern was that the Sleeping Curse that was on Henry was broken. She appeared to not realize that the original Curse was broken until it is stated by another person.

When magic returned to Storybrooke in the season two premiere, Regina resorted to her former ways as the Evil Queen to both terrorize the residents of the town as well as forcing Henry to come back to her. To preserve her own safety as well as achieving Henry's returning with her, Regina intimidated the citizens through her use of magic. The Evil Queen's nature delves into Regina's only concern; getting everything that *she* desires. However, after realizing that she is attempting to force Henry into loving her, Regina tells him that he is going to live with David/Prince Charming (*We Are Both* s2e2).

Regina Mills: [to Henry] I don't know how to love very well. I wasn't capable of it for a very long time. But I know, I remember...that if you hold onto someone too hard, that doesn't make them love you. I'm sorry I lied to you, that I made you feel like I didn't know who you are. But I want you to be here because you want to be here, not because I forced you. And not because of magic. I want to redeem myself.

This quotation shows that Regina is attempting to evolve from the "Evil Queen" and putting what is best for Henry ahead of what she desires. Throughout the season, Regina is conflicted between trying to give up magic as well as struggling to be a better person for Henry. Numerous times during the season, Regina returns to being antagonistic due to the townspeople refusing to accept that she is trying to be redeemed.

In the season finale, the townspeople are in danger of being destroyed due to a trigger built into the Curse being released. Realizing their son's danger, Regina and Emma unite again to find the trigger and Regina is willing to try to slow it down to allow everyone to escape back to the Enchanted Forest. The magic required would take every ounce of her power and Regina would be sacrificed. "Tell [Henry] that in the end it wasn't too late for me to do the right thing," Regina tells Emma. "Everyone looks at me as the Evil Queen. Including my son. Let me die as Regina". When she originally cast the Curse, Regina wanted to sacrifice everyone else's happiness to ensure her own victory, thus her willingness to sacrifice herself in the second season's finale displays the character change. This exemplifies her primary concern is her son's safety. It no longer matters who Henry is with, as long as he is safe.

By Regina's willingness to die for everyone's survival, the Charmings see that she has changed and are unable to let her die for them. As Snow White stated, "we will be building a future on Regina's blood". Henry, Emma, and the Charmings refuse to let Regina die and it is by uniting the magic of Regina and Emma that they destroy the trigger and save the town. However, before they can relish in their safety, Henry is abducted and taken to Neverland. In

order to save her son, Regina unites with the Charmings, Emma, Captain Hook, and Rumplestiltskin to save Henry (*And Straight On Til Morning* s2e22).

The third season was split into two storylines; the first eleven episodes focused on Neverland and the last eleven episodes centered on the Wicked Witch of the West. During their time in Neverland, Regina had to work with her old enemies to accomplish a common goal. Throughout the challenging alliances, the unified team is able to save Henry from the (in this series) villainous Peter Pan. In the first half of the season, Regina remarks on her actions in the past and how she feels about them in the current moment. “I did cast a curse that devastated an entire population. I have tortured and murdered. I should be overflowing with regret, but...I’m not. Because it got me my son” (*Save Henry* s3e9). After making this claim, Regina defeats Peter Pan and helps the group escape Neverland. Some could claim that this triumph shows how wicked and evil she is for feeling no regret over all of the evil she has done. I, however, believe that it depicts the love she has for her son. She is on the verge of heroism (in fact saving everyone) but she cannot regret her evil past because every action she did lead her to Henry.

Regina’s maternal love for Henry is tested once again in the midseason finale. After Peter Pan casts a Curse on Storybrooke, Regina was the only person who would be able to stop it and again save the town. To do so she would need to undo her original Curse, sending everyone back to the Enchanted Forest. She must again pay a steep price; Henry would not be able to return because he was born in the real world. Regina has Emma take Henry so that he would not have to be alone. “I’m a villain,” said Regina in her goodbyes to her son. “Villains don’t get happy endings.” Henry responded by telling Regina that he does not see her as a villain and that she is first and foremost his mother. During the entire first season, Regina fought with Emma to keep her out of Henry’s life, yet in the midseason finale of the third season, Regina wanted him

to go with his birth mother so that he could be safe. She puts Henry's needs ahead of her own desires so that she could ensure that he would have his best chance.

In the second half of season three, Regina is shown with Snow White and Prince Charming back in the Enchanted Forest after stopping Pan's Curse. She has a new relationship with them due to their alliance from Neverland and the three decide to continue to act as a united front to show strength to the kingdom. With this transition, we are shown many direct interactions with Snow White and Regina rather than Mary Margaret and Regina. Over their time in the Enchanted Forest, Regina discusses with Snow White her pain of losing Henry. Snow White helps Regina find comfort and to try to find happiness (*New York Serenade* s3e12).

The maternal instincts that Regina developed over her years being Henry's adoptive mother continue to emerge despite the separation from her son. Before discovering who the new threat is, a young boy in the group's party is nearly attacked by a flying monkey. Regina grabs the boy, Rowland, and saves him, then uses her magic to transform the winged creature into a stuffed animal for the child. The boy's father (Robin Hood) later said to Regina, "The way you grabbed [Rowland], it's clear that you have the touch of a mother" (*Witch Hunt* s3e13). Regina's relationship is also more protective with her original stepdaughter after their ordeals in Storybrooke and Neverland. They are now perceived as equals even on the boarder-line of friendship. When Snow White becomes pregnant again, Regina agrees to help protect the baby from the threat of the Wicked Witch of the West named Zelena.

In a later episode after returning to Storybrooke due to a new Curse, Regina and Mary Margaret are shown alone discussing the threat of Zelena. They first discuss their past from before the poisoned apple incident as well as their future being in danger due to the Witch. They both agree that they need to let go of their pasts and work together to prevent Zelena's threats.

Regina and Mary Margaret experience something that no Evil Queen and Snow White tale has ever included; forgiveness. It is through her parentage of Henry that Regina was able to learn how to love and how to forgive. By giving the Queen a child, Regina develops a humanity as well as a future never imagined for a villain; a happy ending.

Over the course of the third season, the lengths of Regina's love are tested again and again. Between her alliance and forgiveness with Snow White; her developing friendship and teamwork with Emma; and lastly her motherly love for Henry, Regina's character deepens due to the expanded interactions with others. She begins to appear as a human rather than merely a fictitious sorceress. Another layer is added during the third season. In the third episode, *Quite a Common Fairy*, it is revealed that Regina had a possibility of another soul mate despite Daniel's death. Regina was afraid to let go of her anger and refused to meet the man. However, this decision would not be able to last forever. Later in the second half of the season, we (and Regina) learn that the man was Robin Hood. Their relationship forms during two aspects; the Queen and Robin Hood (after returning to the Enchanted Forest) and Regina and Robin Hood (back in Storybrooke). Regina having a love interest is a new way to demonstrate the evolved character's ability to love. Rather than focusing solely on maternal love, we are able to see the first romantic love since her transformation into the Evil Queen.

In the Enchanted Forest, Regina and Robin Hood clash numerous times. He is depicted as being the only person to challenge Regina. Rather than ever use magic to harm him, Regina meets his sarcastic and often snarky remarks with her own form of sass. In Storybrooke, the two find each other all over again due to the Curse removing their memories. Here, they begin a more typical relationship formed through dating and friendship. Regina opens up easily to Robin Hood and confides in him when she feels lost. After learning that Zelena wants Regina's heart,

Regina magically rips it from her chest and asks Robin Hood to protect it for her. When the Witch steals the heart by threatening Robin's son, Rowland, Regina states that Robin Hood did the right thing giving away the heart because "nothing is worth the loss of a child" (*Bleeding Through* s3e18). Rather than being concerned with her own life, or threatening Robin Hood for his "failure", Regina acknowledges that being a parent makes a child's life more important than your own, emphasizing her maternal instincts that developed from raising Henry.

Regina herself lost her child by having to say goodbye to Henry to save everyone from Pan's Curse. During her time in the Enchanted Forest, she continued to grow and had to accept that she may never see her son again. After returning to Storybrooke, Regina is unable to be with Henry because his memories are clouded from the last Curse. When the Charmings, Emma, and Regina realize that the way to end Zelena's memory curse is to restore Henry's memories, Regina is willing to overcome any obstacle to regain her position in the eyes (and heart) of her son. Although it was assumed that it would take Emma once again using the kiss of True Love, it was actually Regina who broke the Curse. This form of magic not only proved the love she has for her son, but provided her with the ability to use White Magic. Regina was the *Evil Queen*, depicting that she relied on only Dark Magic. She even acknowledges this by stating that dark magic is all she knows. Thus by being capable of using White Magic, audience members see Regina's character finally reaching heroism and proving that she truly has changed.

Although relationships helped strengthen Regina's character, what truly destroyed the villain stereotype was the writers' use of pitting her against another evil character. The main antagonist of Season 3b was the Wicked Witch/Zelena. Not only was this character another female sorceress, but she had a biological tie to the Evil Queen. Zelena was Regina's older half-sister. Regina's mother, Cora, had given up Zelena when she was a baby because that infant

would not be able to provide the life she desired. Zelena was transported to Oz where she later learned of her history. She became extremely jealous of Regina and sought to find a way to use magic to alter the past so that she could be the queen and the sorceress chosen to cast the Dark Curse.

ABC Studios installed this character to challenge Regina and increase both the character's popularity as well as the audience's desire to have her redeemed. The publicity for the second half of the third season was entirely "Wicked vs Evil" which directly pitted Regina against Zelena. The entire Wicked Witch plot centered on the two sorceresses having to battle with only one could be the winner; this made the audience root for Regina.

Zelena was considered to be completely "Wicked" and that the only way she could be defeated was through the use of White Magic. Regina and Zelena fought during the story arc and by using Dark Magic, Regina was always beaten by her older sister. However, Regina was capable of using White Magic due to her love for Henry (proven through accomplishing the Kiss of True Love) and defeated Zelena's memory spell. When Zelena appeared to have succeeded in opening her Time Portal, the final battle begins. Charming, Emma, Robin Hood, and Regina confront the Witch and each attempt to close the portal but all fail. This shows that the traditionally heroic characters were not capable of defeating the Wicked Witch. After defeating the heroes, Zelena uses magic to suspend Regina in the air suffocating her. She tells Regina that they were both destined to be evil/wicked and that nothing could change their destiny. Robin Hood gets Regina's heart back, and the moment he holds it in his hands, Regina unleashed White Magic defeating Zelena. By Charming, Emma, and Robin Hood failing, it makes Regina's success all the more important because it displays her new persona of being a hero. Regina then prevents anyone attacking Zelena saying that she has been seeking to enact vengeance for too

long and that it got her nowhere. She stated that heroes do not kill; thus identifying herself as a hero (*Kansas* s3e20).

Although I formed my analysis specifically on Regina's actions and storyline throughout the three seasons, there were numerous other aspects that contributed to the Queen's portrayal. The dialogue as well as how the actress presented her lines appeared to change accompanying Regina's advancements. In the first two seasons, Regina's lines were only delivered in two vocal tones: stern when conveying villainy, and sincere when talking either to Henry or about her strives for redemption. However, in the third season, Regina was provided sarcastic dialogue to strengthen her fan-base and to have her appear more likeable. This new addition led to fans naming the sarcastic character "Sass-gina". Although Regina's vocal delivery changed, the Evil Queen's remained the same. Actress Lana Parilla stated, "I can't really bring the mayor into Fairy Tale Land, but I can definitely bring the Fairy Tale Land Queen into Storybrooke" (Bennet 48). It is more acceptable for Regina Mills to change because she is not seen specifically as first-and-foremost a fairytale character; however, therefore it would seem more difficult for audience members to initially see the traditional villain evolve.

In addition to the dialogistic alterations, Regina's appearances began to adapt as well. In the first and second seasons, when Regina was primarily an antagonist, she was typically outfitted in black and grey pant-suits or dresses. The shirts she wore were often blacks or greys having the only other colors being red or purple. The same was for the Evil Queen. Her costumes followed the same color schemes. In Storybrooke, her hair was always a little shorter than shoulder length. When the third season ran, her outfits included brighter colors having one of the most popular being blue. Her hair had also grown longer, which could arguably being used to show the passage of time. However, I analyzed these changes showing that her character

was advancing from the original villainous role. Mayor Regina undergoes not only storyline alterations but dialect and costuming as well to advance her evolution. These vocal and (seemingly) comedic lines depict how different she has come from being the antagonist to someone with a darker/sarcastic humor. Although these were two factors I had originally included when forming my analysis, I found that the most dominant changes occurred due to the three important relationships.

Regina's interactions with Snow White, Henry, and Zelena are the largest components that display the character's altered persona. In this show, every relationship combines to form the more complex and sincere character. Mary Margaret allows the Evil Queen to display forgiveness. Emma provides a depiction of friendship and personal growth. Robin Hood became a chance at happiness and a possibility of love. Zelena challenged the depth of evil and the struggle to seek redemption. However, the key element in Regina's character development was her son Henry. Henry showed that anyone can be capable of love. He provided her with a desire for redemption as well as a depiction of how even the Evil Queen is capable of true love.

Regina Mills: Not long ago I was a lot like you [Zelena]. I wanted to kill someone who'd wronged me. And I failed. Had I killed Snow White, I wouldn't be in this world. I wouldn't be with these people and I wouldn't have my son, Henry. So no, Zelena, I won't kill you. Instead I'm gonna give you what I got. I'm going to give you a second chance. Take it. Use it. Evil isn't born; it's made. And so is good.

CONCLUSION:

Believing that *Once Upon a Time*'s rendition of the Evil Queen would be similar to nearly every other adaptation would be a strikingly erroneous assumption. The complexity of her character cannot compare to previous (or future) incarnations of the legendary villain. Regina's capability to transform from antagonist to hero is the largest feature that sets her apart from the countless other "Queen" characters. This transformation could not have been

believable to audience members without the three vital relationships I have analyzed in this thesis.

Although each relationship I examined appears to be unrelated to the others, it is by uniting the three that collectively make Regina's redemption believable. The love that Regina has for her son is what leads her towards being capable of resolving her past hatred with Snow White. Concerning the battle with the Wicked Witch of the West, Regina's love for Henry drives the need to protect him which makes her powerful enough to break her history of dark magic and being successful at channeling white magic. Out of the three relationships, I believe that Regina's maternal element is the motivation for her to change. Henry proves that not only can the Evil Queen love another, but that someone is also able to love her. This breaks the archetypal Evil Queen model.

The Evil Queen is a notorious villain who has survived both centuries and countless adaptations. Her vanity and ruthlessness drove her to attempting to poison, not only an innocent girl, but her stepdaughter nonetheless. The first on-screen villainess animated by Walt Disney was just as vindictive as the original literary queen. The largest difference was adding true sorcery to the Queen. In the Grimm version, it was not specified that she used magic to kill Snow White, but instead appeared to use different means of poison. In Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the Queen used dark magic to transform herself into the Old Hag as well as a witch's brew to poison the infamous apple. The specificity of sorcery shaped the future adaptations of the Queen.

Ranging from *Snow White and the Huntsman* to the Hallmark television movie, *Snow White: Fairest of them All*, the Queen's character included not only witchcraft, but also a more intricate explanation of her history. Given an identity and a past, the once simple queen is turned

into a more three-dimensional character. The specifics and details of her origin fuel her motives and make her more understood by the audience.

When *Once Upon a Time* finally created its adaptation of the Queen, the show followed the methods of other filmmakers and fleshed out her character. Regina was shown as an innocent girl who saved the child Snow White from a runaway horse. By Snow White betraying her trust and telling the Regina's mother of her true love, Regina lost her happy ending. There was a complex reason for the hatred and the topic of vanity was irrelevant to the storyline. We then witness Regina turn to Rumplestiltskin to learn magic, hoping to be able to use the craft to bring her love back to life. Learning that this was not possible, she gives in to the darkness.

Throughout the course of the season she continuously gives in to her lust for revenge and audiences see her embracing her dark nature. What is truly significant about this adaptation is that the entire kingdom knows her as the Evil Queen. In other adaptations, the citizens are unaware of her evil nature. By Regina embracing her title as the Evil Queen, we witness that she is willing to give up her humanity to fulfill her revenge. Later in the story, we see her openly tell Snow White the nature of the poisoned apple curse and threaten her friends and true love if she does not take the apple. The darkest action we see is when Regina subjects the entire kingdom to the Dark Curse because her vengeance for Snow White is not enough.

I chose to focus the majority of this thesis on the character after enacting the Dark Curse and her life in the real world as Storybrooke's mayor. This persona is more important than the Evil Queen because we see how she acts in a modern and realistic universe. In Season One, we see Mayor Regina without the ability to rely on magic but still embracing a dark nature. When magic is brought to Storybrooke in Season Two, Regina is shown relying on her sorcery but is willing to give up her magic to be a better mother for Henry. During the course of the season,

Regina struggles between attempting to become a good person as well as giving into her traditional dark nature. The significance of her returning to the darkness is brought on by the reunion with her mother, Cora.

In this paper, the subject of maternity is important because Henry was what led her to both seek and be successful in her redemption. Had I more time, I would have liked to analyze how it was originally a source of maternity that led to Regina turning evil. Cora murdered Regina's love and manipulated her daughter into becoming Queen in order to fulfill Cora's own desires of climbing the social ladder. To be free of her oppressive mother, Regina embraced magic and used it to banish her mother to another world (Wonderland). Regina had opposed magic due to her mother's reliance on it and that she believed it corrupted Cora. Yet by using magic to banish her mother, Regina begins to follow on the same path. Like Cora, she was tutored by Rumplestiltskin and eventually was corrupted by magic on her desire for the vengeance of Snow White's demise.

In this thesis, I explored the benefits of Regina's maternal relationship with her adopted son which led to the forgiveness of her stepdaughter (Snow White). She also achieved redemption by being pitted against another villain, making her appear the lesser of two evils. By exploring her relationship with Cora, it would be possible to analyze the reverse of these two effects. Cora's maternity led Regina to being evil and her alliance with her mother made Regina into an even more fearsome villain.

Regina is one of the most popular characters in the series. From conception, Lana Parilla was one of the top billed actors. Her fan-base has expanded immensely with her followers deeming themselves "Evil Regals". Not only are her followers fans of the character, but the

fame of the actress has extended as well. The writers and producers regard Regina as one of the show's most successful characters and her development is one of their major focal points.

The expansion of the Evil Queen's character made her appear more relatable and better understood by viewers of *Once Upon a Time*. Regina is not the first character who has been adapted so that a traditional villain would be more relatable and accepted by audience members. In one literary adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* storyline, *Wicked*, the Witch of the West is provided a backstory and identity making her an antihero rather than the vile sorceress. Movies have also expanded characters in films like Disney's *Maleficent* retelling where the evil fairy from the animated classic *Sleeping Beauty*, is not only given a backstory, but has the entire story changed so that Maleficent would be seen as both a villain and a hero. Films and novels have something that most television series do not, a time constraint. *Maleficent* could only tell the story of the sorceress in less than two hours. *Wicked* could only be told in a certain number of pages and the musical adaptation had a time limit as well.

There have been a number of television shows that explore the traditional characterizations of "evil" creatures. *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries* transform vampires into glorified immortals rather than the usual monsters. *Dexter* turns a serial killer into a hero who punishes truly evil criminals. *The Sopranos* is yet another series that glorifies traditional criminals, the mafia, and has audiences rooting for them. Although I chose to focus this thesis on the Evil Queen, had I more time to do extensive research, I would try to determine how villains are being redefined in television pop culture.

There has always been a temptation to the dark side. Audience members find villains alluring and see them as truly interesting characters. There has to be a balance between good and evil because one may not exist without the other. An interesting plot can only emerge due to the

rivalry: a hero is only as powerful as the villain is evil. The villain must be strong and cunning as well as powerful. Whether it is through dominance, supernatural abilities, or presence, the villain is always in charge. Typically it must be the villain who holds the most power so that there is a truly significant struggle against the heroes. Although usually seen as unimportant in traditional storylines, the backstory of the villain often explains the ruthlessness and is what makes a tale truly compelling. In the words of *Once Upon a Time*'s Evil Queen Regina, "evil isn't born, it's made".

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