

Faria Ali

Professor Pastore

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Exploratory Essay

We consider family to be the people closest to us, who would never betray us, but is that always the case? In the story of Cinderella, she is mistreated by her stepfamily, yet she always remains kind and ends up having a happy ever after. Only in some of the versions, Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother are punished. Do they deserve to be held accountable for their behavior and punished? Or do they deserve a chance at forgiveness? Specifically, does the family of Cinderella deserve forgiveness?

Even if it is our family who makes us suffer, they deserve to face the consequences of their action. In a *New York Times* newspaper from September 7, 1913, there's a story about a real-life cinderella story where the "Cinderella" Alice Fibly is tortured by her step-parents. In the story, it states, "Both defendants were therefore step-parents of the girl, who became the drudge of the family. She was sent out at a very early hour in the morning, frequently kept out until late at night, and was often seen picking up food from the gutter" (*A Cinderella of To-day*, 4). Even though they were the caretaker of the poor girl, these stepparents would make the girl suffer because they didn't think of her as their own. The step-father was led off the hook and the step-mother was imprisoned. Even family can be our worst enemy and they deserve some sort of punishment for it. In this case, it was step-parents but there are many other situations where parents by blood are horrible to children, these people should not have the right to do that to

children even if they are their own. In the Grimm brothers' "Cinderella", Cinderella's real mother dies and her father remarries. He comes home with his new wife and her two daughters and is never heard from again. Cinderella suffers the torture her stepfamily put her through and ends up going to the ball because of the tree in her mother's grave and her animal helpers. She catches the Prince's attention and he falls in love with her. After she leaves the ball, he searches for her with her shoe and eventually finds her; she is rewarded with her marriage to the prince, and her stepsisters have their eyes plucked out by the birds. Though this punishment was a bit extreme, the stepsisters were horrible to Cinderella and definitely needed to face some consequences.

In the article, *Household Resource Allocation in Stepfamilies: "Darwin Reflects on the Plight of Cinderella"*, Anne Case, I-Fen Lin, and Sara McLanahan study the relationship between food consumption and money spent on food in households with stepchildren and with biological children. They state, "The concrete result is that the presence of stepchildren is associated with lower food expenditure for home consumption, when those children are stepchildren of the mother (237). This shows that step-parents, specifically mothers, would have a tendency to feed their step-children less than a mother with her own kids. There is this natural sense of cruelty towards step-children. In another version of Cinderella called *Cinderella Cat* by Giambattista Basile, Zezolla is the daughter of a prince, her mother dies so her father marries a cruel woman. Zezolla dislikes this woman and tells her teacher how she wished her father married her instead because she was so kind to Zezolla. The teacher instructed Zezolla on how to kill her stepmother and get her father to marry her instead. The plan works but now that the teacher is her stepmother she brought out her six children who were in hiding, and they all treat Zezolla horribly. She makes her way onto the ball and marries the prince from the ball, but her step-siblings were not punished in this story. This story shows that even people we trust as our

families can turn out to be the ones who hurt us the most. Zozella's teacher was the only one who Zozella felt could replace her mother, but she ended up using Zozella to marry a prince and was a terrible mother to her. This connects to the food study since there is the idea that stepmothers may treat their stepchildren a bit different from their biological but it also shows how family, in general, can harm you as Zozella thought of her teacher as her family.

Next, in the article, "Cinderella": Family Pathology, Identity-Sculpting, and Mate-Selection", the family in *Cinderella* are studied including her father who is rarely present. The writer states, "The stepsisters, having been previously sole object of their mother's maiming urges, are also impelled toward viciousness as a safety-seeking identification with the mother. The father, having married into a family of victimizers, enjoys them money-earning which buys him immunity so long as there exists another target" (Rosenman 378). The Step-siblings typically treat Cinderella this way because of their mother. The mother may fuel their jealousy or just make them feel like it is right to act that way towards their stepsister. The father usually runs away from the issue. He does not involve himself or ever tries to protect his daughter. He seems like he is either scared of getting on the bad side of his new wife or is too blinded by love to realize she is doing anything wrong. Not only do Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother treat her wrongly, but her father also does not once try to protect her. Even our blood family can choose to be selfish and protect themselves over other family members. Another thing that can be noted is that the stepmother usually starts the ill treatment of Cinderella but she is rarely ever punished. She controls the rest of the family and the consequences never go to her.

In *Cinderella*, we can see how family; blood family or stepfamily, can torment us. They deserve to be punished for their actions depending on how severe these actions are. Some things can not be forgiven, even if it is our loved ones who do those things. Cinderella is persecuted by

her family in every version but does not always penalize them and even sometimes forgives them. They do not really deserve to get that forgiveness so easily.

Works cited:

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