

Reflection in Society and Self

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The most powerful words come from stories, whether through the soothing words of a princess who gained the love of her soulmate, or narratives that minorities spread as a coping mechanism amongst threats from dominating forces. The Mythology & Folklore class focused on in its venture to bring attention to stories long since ignored in society. When I was brainstorming what story I wanted to tell in our assignment to create an original myth, I knew that it had to be something that brought to attention all of the wrongdoings that previous mainstream stories have told. We often criticize minority depictions in older literature in their lack of presence and autonomy. They possess either the role of the villain, the subservient, or no role at all. Yet despite this awareness, we still cling to the old standard. The white standard. The standard that is heterosexual. The standard that is men. Thus, the first step I had to take was looking into the history stories and how they frame their minority characters.

Utilizing the library database, I knew the possibility that my specific inquiries may have been too narrow to have a wide variety of options to choose. The approach I took was to make my keywords brief—such as “folk tales” and “stories”— and then work towards narrowing down what I needed. I selected all the databases to ensure that I would have a variety of sources but made sure to filter them so that I would only see scholarly, peer-reviewed journals that were fully available online. This step helped narrow down the search results to fit the designated requirements of the assignment. Then, it was time to read the article titles and skim each abstract to see which articles I would use. I garnered relevant research from multiple sources due to my method, which allowed me to educate myself on differing perspectives and approaches. There was, however, a trend in which database showed up in the articles that I chose: the MLA

International Bibliography Database. Five out of my eight sources would originate from that database as I summarized their relevancy in my annotated bibliography.

The annotated bibliography would serve as an essential to my proposal, as we learned in the class how writing does not exist within a vacuum, but rather within the influence of culture, politics, and economics. By reading the previous research those other scholars have done on minority depictions in writing—mostly fictional—I understood the stereotypes and their harmful effects in some folktales and myths alongside positive depictions and their social influences. This information allowed me to comprehend where I stand as a scholar in the conversation and guided me in what to include and exclude when drafting my proposal. Thus, my proposal situated minorities and minority-coded characters in positions of power and as the focus of the story. Where many instances of minorities have been placed in roles of antagonists, the antagonists within my story are those who are narrow-minded, serving as a parallel to the oppression minorities face. Furthermore, to remove the minority characters from the role of an aggressor, which is another major stereotype presented in my research, the antagonists of the story harm themselves in their prejudiced ways rather than at the hands of the protagonist and their people.

The creature that I created, the “hermits,” are as peaceful and misunderstood as the people we know. Sometimes, it’s the black civilian walking home at the wrong time or the gay teacher who can’t mention their partner to their students. It can be the hardworking woman who is admonished for being a burden because she bears no children, or the lower-class mother who is “taking advantage” of the taxes of others. It is not their job to protect themselves, but rather our collective duty to prevent acts of discrimination from ever happening. The way to achieve this is by dismantling harmful stereotypes and creating inclusivity within the literature we read and media we consume, one story at a time.