

Youth Culture Lesson
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Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Princess Power

Does Disney Tell Girls that Skinny Is Beautiful?

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What Happened:

On Nov. 25, 2009, Disney officially introduced Tiana, heroine for *The Princess and the Frog*, to the world. She's already earned accolades for being the first African-American member of Disney's fabulously successful line of princesses.

Tiana shares many traits with her royal sisterhood: She's young, beautiful and thin. She'll be the animated idol of countless young girls who want to emulate her every move, and some believe that combination is not altogether good.

While some experts worried that Disney's skinny princesses might cause girls to be anxious about their own looks or weight, a recent study suggests that 3- to 6-year-old kids can watch such films and not feel bad that they're not as skinny or as beautiful as Tiana (or Cinderella or Belle). However, the study also found that half of these girls already were worried about being too fat.

Many experts believe that while Disney princesses may be OK, the constant parade of skinniness that we're subjected to in the media *does* influence how we feel about our bodies. Some believe films such as *The Princess and the Frog* can be used as learning tools and explain that Tiana's super-thin physique isn't really achievable or desirable in the real world.

"We need to help our children challenge the images of beauty, particularly thinness, that they see and idolize and encourage them to question how much appearance should be part of their self-worth," said Dr. Stacey Tantleff-Dunn of the University of Central Florida to ScienceDaily. "We should help them build a positive self-image with an appreciation for many different types of body attributes."

Talk About It:

Disney's been cranking out princesses since 1937, when *Snow White* was released. Do you have a favorite Disney movie? A favorite Disney princess? Why do you think these princesses are so popular?

Do Disney princesses teach us anything? Could they be good role models for little girls? Which one makes the best role model? Why?

Is there too much pressure on girls to be skinny? If so, from where does that pressure come: movies? Fashion magazines? Friends? Family? Boys?

Boys probably aren't pressured to be skinny as much as girls, but are they pushed in other areas? Are they expected to be tall? Athletic? Must they act a certain way?

What the Bible Says:

“Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman without discretion” (Prov. 11:22).

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Prov. 31:30).

“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious” (1 Pet. 3:3-4).