

Beauty and the Beast



Rated: G
Running Time: 90 minutes

Themes: Seeing inner beauty, controlling temper, romantic love, the joy of reading, redemption, selflessness, gentleness, bravery, mercy and compassion, humility, loyalty, avoiding vain conceit

Cautions: The plot relies on fairy tale enchantment (a magic mirror, a spell that must be broken). Several busty women wear low-cut dresses. Lumiere is a ladies' man. A mural features bare-bottomed cherubs. Men in a pub drink beer. Expect a few perilous or violent moments, including Gaston stabbing the beast before falling to his death.



Story Summary

This animated Disney musical (a 1991 Best Picture nominee that also became a Broadway smash), opens somewhere in the French countryside where a selfish prince is serving time as a hairy beast—the price for shunning an enchantress disguised as a hag. She cast a spell on his entire household. The only way it can be reversed is if the prince, now a hermit in his dreary castle, can love someone and earn *her* love before the last petal falls from a special rose.

Miles away in a charmingly provincial little town, we meet the pretty, kind-hearted Belle. She's a bookish girl who gets odd looks from her neighbors, including a chauvinistic hunter named Gaston who tries in vain to bag her as his wife. This narcissistic lout fails to see Belle's true beauty. To Gaston she's a quaint dreamer much like her "crazy" inventor father who, it so happens, is heading to the fair with his latest contraption.

During that journey, Belle's dad gets lost in the forest and seeks refuge in the Beast's castle. He's welcomed by a talking candlestick, clock and tea set—servants transformed by the spell. The angry Beast, however, doesn't like trespassers, so he locks up the wayward inventor until Belle finds him and offers to take his place. The Beast's loyal servants think this girl could be the one to end the curse. But with their monstrous master already flying into rages, matchmaking won't be easy.

Before long Belle and the Beast do develop a sweet friendship. He strives to be sensitive to her needs. She manages to see beneath his gruff exterior. Yet just as it appears the spell will be broken, he nobly releases her to care for her ailing father.

Then Gaston stirs the villagers into a frenzy, eager to storm the castle and make the Beast his latest trophy. Pride and

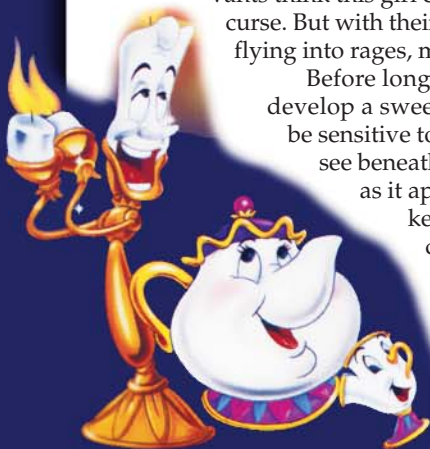
fury lead to his demise, but not before Gaston delivers a mortal blow. Belle rushes to the Beast's side and tearfully professes her love for him just in time to ensure their "happily ever after."

Family Activity

Create a crepe paper rose. Cut a strip of red crepe paper 15" long and 2" to 3" wide. Hold one bottom corner and gather the paper toward the part you're holding, an inch at a time. When the entire strip has been gathered, wind one end of a green pipe cleaner several times around the part you're holding to make a stem. Cut a leaf out of green construction paper, creating a pinhole at one end to pull the stem through. On the leaf, write something beautiful you see *inside* a friend or family member, then bless that person by giving them the rose.

Talking Points

1. Explore the selfishness and prejudice that got the prince in trouble to begin with. Read 1 Peter 5:5 and discuss the need for kindness and humility.
2. Children can get hung up on negative impressions of others. Praise Belle's ability to see past the monster and cultivate the Beast's gentler side. Ask if there's someone in your child's life who could use a little extra grace or patience. Prayerfully nurture that relationship together for the benefit of both children.
3. Ask, "Was Gaston good or bad? What did he do or say that made you feel that way?" As you explore examples, be sure to discuss his shallow emphasis on physical beauty, which is a big problem in our culture. He foolishly says that Belle is "the most beautiful girl in town; that makes her the best." Explain that noble character is what makes Belle truly beautiful, and that being cute is just a bonus (Proverbs 31:30, Colossians 3:12-14).
4. Discuss Belle's willingness to give up her own freedom to spare her father (John 15:13). Draw comparisons between her sacrifice and the one Jesus made for us (John 3:16). —by Bob Smithouser



Rewrite the Scene

Ask your mom or dad to come up with words you can use to fill in the spaces below, according to the type of word each blank requires. Don't show anyone the story yet. After all the blanks are filled, read *your* version of the scene aloud. The sillier the better! When you're finished laughing, go back and insert words that describe the scene as it appeared in the movie.

One adjective day, Belle and the Beast took a adjective walk in the place. He was very emotion because he wanted to impress her and win her noun. She smiled when plural animal ate food from his paw, and laughed when they landed on his body part. "He's no prince adjective," Belle thought. Yet she realized he was actually adjective deep inside. So she hit him in the face with a noun, just to be playful. Then he made a giant noun to verb at her, only to have it fall on his noun. It was a adjective day, and the start of a adjective friendship.

Can you help Maggie, um, I mean "Belle" reach the castle's west wing and the enchanted rose?

