

Practice Read

BEFORE YOU READ

Familiar stories can take on fresh new life when told from an unexpected point of view. Following are two versions of the fairy tale “Beauty and the Beast.” The first version is told from a traditional point of view; the second is told from an unusual point of view. As you read, look for ways in which the point of view of the narrator can affect the story’s overall theme and overall impact.

Beauty and the Beast

Mara Rockliff

YOU'RE TELLING ME!

Pause at line 10. Circle the pronouns that the narrator has used so far to describe the story characters. Is this narrator a story character?

Version 1

Once upon a time there lived a merchant with three daughters. All three were lovely, but the youngest was loveliest by far. Her name was Bella, and she was as sweet as she was beautiful.

One day the merchant got ready to leave on a long journey. “What shall I bring you from the city?” he asked his daughters as they stood by the door, watching him saddle his horse.

10 “A golden comb!” said the oldest, tossing her long raven hair.

“A diamond necklace!” said the middle daughter, arching her swanlike neck.

The merchant turned to Bella. “And you, my dear?”

“Just come home safely, Father,” she said. “I don’t need anything else.” But then, noticing her sisters’ frowns, she

quickly added, "But I do love flowers. You could bring me a rose."

20 On his first day in the city the merchant bought a comb of gold so pure it was almost white. On his second day he bought a necklace of diamonds that glittered like frozen tears. But not a rose in the city seemed lovely enough for his beautiful Bella.

His heart was heavy as he started home. He stopped in every town along the way, but there wasn't a rose to be found.

Suddenly, up ahead, he saw a fabulous castle. He rode closer. And there, by the castle wall, grew the most **exquisite** rosebush he had ever seen.

30 He looked around, but the castle seemed deserted. Surely, he thought, the owner wouldn't mind if he took just one.

But as he plucked the rose and turned to go, the air split with a terrible roar. "WHO DARES STEAL MY ROSES?"

40 Before his terrified eyes stood an enormous, hideous beast. The merchant fell to his knees, quaking with fear. "Please spare my life," he said. "If not for my sake, then for the sake of the loving daughter for whom I picked this rose."

"Loving daughter?" growled the beast. "All right, I'll spare you then. But you must bring her to me in three days. Otherwise I'll know you were lying. I will track you down and I will show no mercy."

The merchant begged and pleaded, but the beast was unmoved. "Three days," he repeated.

The two oldest daughters were thrilled to receive their expensive presents. Only Bella noticed the sadness in her

WORD KNOWLEDGE

A **simile** is a comparison between two unlike things which uses the word *like* or *as*. Underline the simile in lines 21 and 22. What two things are being compared?

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

exquisite (eks-kwiz'it) *adj.*: very beautiful, lovely, or delicate.

YOU'RE TELLING ME!

Re-read lines 36–48. Underline what the narrator tells you about the characters' inner feelings.

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 60. According to this narrator, why does Bella decide to stay with the beast?

INTERPRET

Why might the beast have been “silent a long time” (line 64)?

YOU'RE TELLING ME!

Re-read lines 73–79. Underline what the narrator tells you about Bella's actions.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

exterior (ek-stir'ē-ər) *n.*: outward appearance.

father's eyes. Finally she persuaded him to tell her what
50 was wrong.

“You took the rose for me,” she said. “I will face the
beast for you.”

“No!” he cried. But she was determined. So they
saddled up the horse and together returned to the castle.

The beast met them at the gate. “You may go,” he told
the merchant. “But she must stay.”

“No!” the merchant cried again.

But Bella looked into the eyes of the beast and saw into
his heart. “I will stay,” she said.

60 The castle offered every comfort Bella could wish, and
the beast was kind. She grew fonder and fonder of him. But
as the months passed she pined for her father and sisters.
“Please,” she asked, “couldn't I visit them just for a week?”

The beast was silent a long time before he replied. “A
week,” he said. “No more.”

Bella was so happy to be home that she forgot all
about the waiting beast. A week passed, and then two. It
was nearly three weeks when Bella finally returned.

70 But the castle stood dark and empty. Where was the
beast?

At last she found him. He lay next to her rosebush, his
eyes closed, his breathing weak and shallow.

“Oh, dear beast!” she cried, cradling him in her arms.
“Please, please, don't die. I will never leave you again.”

At that, the beast vanished, and a handsome prince
sprang to his feet. He'd been under a curse, which Bella had
broken by seeing past his fearsome **exterior** and loving the
man within. The prince married Bella and brought her
family to the castle, and they all lived happily ever after.

First of all, I was perfectly happy getting turned into a beast. When you're a prince, everyone wants something from you. One minute a bunch of peasants are pounding at the gate, begging you to **slay** some dragon that's laying waste to the village; the next minute it's yet another whiny damsel in distress, expecting to be rescued. Never a moment's peace. But a huge ugly beast, people don't expect so much from. They seemed pleased as punch that I wasn't devouring them—as if I would trade my dinner of rare

90 roast beef in horseradish sauce with tiny red potatoes for some hairy unwashed peasant. Yuck.

So everything was just peachy until that ridiculous traveling salesman came barging into my garden, trampling my petunias and snapping off one of my prize tea roses without so much as a by-your-leave. No respect for private property, that's the problem with merchants today.

Obviously the signs saying KEEP OUT didn't bother him in the least. So I thought I'd try a little reverse psychology. I told him I'd take his life if he didn't bring back his

100 daughter. I thought the bit about bringing his daughter back was a particularly nice touch. Won't be seeing *him* again, I told myself with great **satisfaction** as he hightailed it off my land.

Imagine my shock when he showed up a few days later, daughter in tow. I couldn't believe it when he dumped her on my doorstep and took off.

I believe it now. Oh, boy, do I believe it.

She means well. That's the worst of it. Her type always does. Right from the start it was "Beast, wouldn't wheat

110 germ and fat-free yogurt be a little more heart-healthy than

**VOCABULARY
DEVELOPMENT**

slay (slā) v.: kill or destroy in a violent way.

**YOU'RE
TELLING ME!**

Re-read lines 81–91. Who is telling the story? Circle the pronouns that clued you in.

**COMPARE &
CONTRAST**

Re-read lines 92–96. What information can the narrator *not* reveal that is revealed in the first version of the story?

**VOCABULARY
DEVELOPMENT**

satisfaction (sat'is-fak'shən) n.: fulfillment of needs, expectations, or wishes.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Re-read lines 108–118. How are Beauty and her beast in this story different from the same characters in the first story?

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

consolation (kən'sə-lā'ʃən)
n.: lessening of sadness or disappointment; comfort.

YOU'RE TELLING ME!

What does this narrator say about his life with Bella? Underline the passage. What is the message of this version of the story?

rare roast beef?” And “Look, Beast, I knitted you this lovely hat to keep your head warm while you garden.” A knitted hat! Just because I’m a beast doesn’t mean I want to go around looking like a complete idiot.

When she said she was going home to her father, all I could think was, Better him than me.

“But I’ll be back!” she trilled.

“I’ll be waiting,” I said glumly.

A couple of weeks later I was weeding my petunias
120 when I spotted her marching up the road. As I turned to flee, I stepped on the garden rake. The handle popped up and smacked me in the forehead. I bellowed in pain before I passed out cold.

When I came to, she was wringing her hands and batting her eyes. “Poor Beast,” she said. “Poor, poor Beast. I should have known you couldn’t go on without me. I’ll never leave you again!”

And the next thing I knew—poof—prince time again.

My only **consolation** is, I don’t think she’s one bit
130 happier than I am. She’d never admit it, of course. Especially not in front of her sisters. But a handsome and universally admired prince just doesn’t offer the same scope for her talent as a big ugly beast. Not as much room for improvement. You know?