

Psychoanalysis of Rumpelstiltskin

In Rumpelstiltskin there are 2 main themes. These are power and greed.

Rumpelstiltskin starts with a conversation between a poor miller and a king. The miller wants to make an impression on the king, and appear more powerful in the king's eyes. He boasts to the king in order to attract attention that he has "a daughter who can spin straw into gold." The king, who understands the link between wealth and power, invites the daughter to the castle to put this skill to the test. This shows us that the miller wants to impress the king, as the king is more powerful and the best way to do this is to show a power the king does not possess.

The first two nights, the king establishes his power over the girl by threatening to kill her if she fails to spin all the straw into gold. On the third night, he informs her that if she again succeeds in spinning the straw to gold, she shall become his wife. He does not ask her opinion; she has no power to refuse his decision. This shows power as the rich dominate the poor.

Secondly is the theme of greed. The king is so desperate for gold he keeps the miller's daughter in the castle for three nights under threat of death. When he takes her as a wife, he thinks to himself, "Even if she is only a miller's daughter, I will not find a richer wife in all the world." This shows that greed equals power in his mind and he cares little about anything else.

The little man 'Rumpelstiltskin' who helps the miller's daughter turn straw into gold is very greedy. He takes no pity on the girl and her dilemma but instead wants a reward for him helping her. He takes the only two possessions she owns, her necklace and her ring. When she has nothing more of value to give him, he makes her promise to give him her first born child.

There is also symbolism in this fairytale. The classic rags-to-riches storyline of turning straw into gold. The miller is poor, so he claims that his daughter can spin straw into gold. This represents his desire to get rich-quick without earning his money. We could also see this as another theme of greed, he is not prepared to work for money but he is prepared to use his daughter to get some. It also foreshadows the overnight transformation of the girl from the poor miller's daughter to the queen.

A more subtle symbolism is the use of the number three. The number three is used throughout the fairytale i.e. "(The little man) sat down before the spinning wheel, and whir, whir, whir, three times pulled, and the spool was full."

Also, the king makes the girl turn straw into gold in 3 different rooms over 3 separate nights therefore giving her three chances to prove her talent.

Finally, after the birth of the queen's first child, Rumpelstiltskin returns in order to claim her child as she promised him. He gives her three days to figure out his name or he will take her child.

I researched this and found that "The number three is a very mystical and spiritual number featured in many folktales (three wishes, three guesses, three little pigs, three bears, three billy goats gruff)." (Britannica Online Encyclopaedia.)

If you put this into the context of time there is the past, present and future. The fact that the number three is used so often in Rumpelstiltskin and many other fairy tales shows the importance of the number to societies of the past and the present.

Finally, at the end of the story when the Queen reveals that she has found out Rumpelstiltskin's name, he screams, "*The devil told you that!*" He stomps his right

foot so hard that the ground swallows him up to his waist. He is killed when he takes his foot and rips himself in two. I think this demonstrates how evil cannot exist once it has been named.

Finally I found this interesting but it is perhaps not symbolism.

"The queen took fright and offered the little man all the wealth of the kingdom if he would let her keep the child, but the little man said, "No. Something living is dearer to me than all the treasure of the world. "

I thought it was interesting that the miller cared more about power than his daughter as he offers her to the king; the king cared more about acquiring gold than the life of the girl; but the little evil man valued something living above material wealth. Is this a lesson to teach children? That you can't judge a book by its cover?

In conclusion I think Rumpelstiltskin has many different interpretations and I could use the text for a lot of different type of literary criticism.