

The Frozen Phenomenon and the Impact on Your Young Child

by P. Donohue Shortridge

- \$1.072 Billion in worldwide sales
- #1 all-time for sales of an animated movie
- The soundtrack – over 2.5 million copies sold
- Untold future downloadable and DVD sales,
- Plus it's now on cable.
- Untold \$\$ in product tie-ins; marketers call this "synergy"

Princesses!
Vast Snow Fields!
Magic!
A Great Song!
Brilliant Disney Animation!
What's not to love?

But for what-age children? 10-year olds? 3-year olds?

Frozen is a Disney-ized version of a fairy tale. Fairy tales, myths, fantasies and legends are intended for older children and adults. They are designed to capture the imagination and often contain scary scenes and moral dilemmas that younger children cannot comprehend.

Children under 6 years old process information differently than do older children and adults. Young children absorb the impressions, the words, sights and sounds in totality without full cognitive understanding of the nuances, context and meaning of the words, the mediated visual cues and the auditory input, especially the movie soundtrack. Further, they cannot yet filter out these impressions.

One of the tasks of the young child is to discern the difference between real and unreal; they are busy experiencing and categorizing the actual three-dimensional objects of their world and putting a name to them. Once they have that foundation firmly established, they can then more easily move into representations of reality such as

fantasy stories, jokes, puns, sarcasm and more fully comprehend complex human relations. Indeed, the elementary age child revels in all this. But what of the 3 and 4 year old? Young children, generally speaking, are not there yet.

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So what about *Frozen*? Some parents report that their young child loves *Frozen*, knows the words to the songs, and begs to watch it again and again. So it must be OK for young children, right? But, just because content is animated and the characters are compelling and the music is stellar, *Frozen* is still a fairy tale with some dark subject matter.

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The Frozen Phenomenon

Indeed, you might tell yourself that it's OK to let my child watch *Frozen* **because** of the animation and music and the girl-power theme. You reason that your child is too young to grasp the sexual innuendo, the crude jokes, and other adult references, not to mention the violence, thinking that these elements will go right over his head.

You may say,

"Well, my child isn't showing any ill-effects."

Perhaps. But what about behaviors that you may not specifically link to watching this movie, yet if you observe your child closely, you may see some:

Sleep disturbance
Rude and disorderly behavior
Generalized fears
Less ability to focus, shorter attention span
Less ability to recover from a melt-down
Clingy behavior to parents
Obsession with watching *Frozen*

Frozen contains a series of set-ups that show the happy innocents living their lives, followed in rapid sequence by their devastation and almost death.

Frozen contains a series of set-ups that show the happy innocents living their lives, followed in rapid sequence by their devastation and almost death:

- Sisters playing, laughing, then one sister seriously hurts the other;
- Children have parents, then the parents die by drowning in the sea;
- Anna's exuberant song and dance (*For the First Time*) and hopeful love, then Elsa shuts her out, tells her to leave, says she can't get married;
- Anna collaborates with Kristoff, then mortal peril; indeed, a long series of scenes of mortal peril is in store for all the innocents: Anna, Kristoff, Olaf and Elsa;
- Anna is about to kiss her love Hans, then he betrays her;
- Anna escapes from Hans only to get lost in a blizzard;
- Kristoff is about to rescue Anna, but she turns to ice.

In the end, the question parents face is, ***"Will I allow my young child to see *Frozen*?"***

It's rated PG, by the way.

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The Frozen Phenomenon

The following is a list of some of the movie's content, specifically the dialog, the visuals and references to the music score. Read the quotes and excerpts below in a stream as though you were a young child. It is by you taking in the totality of impressions that might give you some understanding of what is coming at your young child. As you read this list, ask yourself, "Is this what I want my young child to absorb?" Remember children under six years old take it all in. They may not understand it, but it goes in anyway.

- The very first scene is shot from below the ice, the sound of heavy footsteps gets louder, then a jagged saw cuts through the ice with the sharp tip pointed toward the viewer.

- In an early scene, Elsa, while sharing her magic powers with her sister, Anna, unintentionally hurts her (knocks her out) and worries she might be dead. Her father confronts her and says,

"Elsa, what have you done? This is getting out of hand."

Ominous music plays while the dad (the king) carries Anna to the healer troll.

- Elsa is scolded and told to control her powers

"fear will be your enemy,"

She is told to limit her contact with people, including her sister.

"We'll lock the gates."

"Conceal it, don't feel it"

- Parents die in a storm at sea, the girls are now orphans, on their own. We see Anna exhibiting loneliness, grief and separation from her sister.

- Skip to three years later – Elsa's coronation day.

Anna's language includes:

"I don't know if I'm gassy or elated." and

"This is totally bizarre".

- Anna falls on top of handsome prince Hans in the boat and says,

"This is awkward" and,

"You're gorgeous."

Hans is portrayed as handsome, sincere, innocent and honorable. We are sucked in just as is Anna. Hans says of his childhood,

"Three of my (older) brothers pretended I was invisible.

That's what brothers do."

Anna and Hans decide to get engaged.

More dialog,

"One day she just shut me out."

"Can I just say something crazy?"

"All you know is how to shut people out."

"Elsa, please I can't live like this anymore."

"Then leave."

"Why do you shut people out, what are you afraid of?"

- We see Elsa turning the whole town to ice. Town elders accuse Elsa of sorcery and call her a monster with ominous music playing.

Visuals include babies crying, fear in the faces of the townspeople, and a brooding dark backdrop as Elsa flees (more ominous music) with Anna chasing after her, calling in desperation for her sister to come back.

More visuals: the town now freezes over, nothing moves, people suffering.

Anna decides she must go after her sister, and says,

"Tonight was my fault. I pushed her."

More dialog includes words and phrases like,

"The queen has cursed this land, she's a monster."

"... trust her"

"... getting hurt"

"it's too dangerous"

"She's my sister, she won't hurt me."

- Visual – winter blizzard, more dark music

Visual – Elsa all alone, wide shot of vast snow, ice and mountains, with Elsa seen as a tiny figure in this immense lonely world.

- Elsa sings, "Let It Go" a catchy tune for sure; here are some of the lyrics:

"A kingdom of isolation and it looks like I'm the Queen"

"Don't let them in, don't let them see,

"Be the good girl you always have to be"

"Conceal, don't feel"

"Turn away and slam the door"

"I don't care what they're going to say"

"No right, no wrong, no rules for me"

"Let it go, let it go, that perfect girl is gone"

"Let the storm rage on"

- Visual of Elsa's transformation, from a good girl she no longer "has to be". She loosens her hair and shakes it down, and magically now has on a sexy form-fitting gown highlighting her womanly curves with it slit up one leg. She sashays provocatively in her high heels.

- Next, we meet Kristoff, the kind of clumsy, not so handsome guy who says to his reindeer,

"Reindeers are better than people."

- Anna meets Kristoff and demands he take her to find Elsa. Banter between them includes lines like:

"What made the queen go crazy?"

"She got mad."

"Pay attention"

"Didn't your parents ever warn you about strangers?"

"I just thought she had something about dirt"

"Pay attention"

"What size?"

"Size doesn't matter"

Kristoff picks his nose and says

"All men do it." and

"You have friends who are lovers?"

"I'm not buying it."

The Frozen Phenomenon

•Kristoff and Anna are being chased by a pack of wolves.

"Don't fall off and don't get eaten."

"I don't trust your judgment."

Visual and sounds of Kristoff's sleigh falling off the edge of the mountain and crashing below: The banter between Kristoff and Anna includes,

"I just paid it off."

"This whole thing has ruined me for helping anyone ever again."

"She'll die on her own – you won't get your new sled if she is dead."

"Sometimes I really don't like you."

"Yellow in snow? No. no."

"You're creepy."

•Meanwhile back at the frozen town, townspeople are saying the word, treason in reference to Elsa.

Hans is nobly passing out blankets while at the same time is part of the plot to kill the queen.

More dialog in these scenes:

"I've been impaled."

"You're going to kill yourself."

"I'm just hurting you out here."

"Go ahead and cry, I won't judge."

"Do you think she knows how to knock?"

•Anna finds her sister and says,

"You look different"

"I didn't know what I was capable of."

"...the storm inside of me"

"...so much fear"

•To force her sister to leave, Elsa conjures up a fearsome giant snow monster who picks them up and throws them down the stairs. The monster chases them down the mountain and almost catches them. The snow monster kicks Olaf off the mountain and Anna and Kristoff also fall off the mountain.

Meanwhile the assassins hunt for Elsa, they trap her and she says to herself,

"Don't feel" while icicles like daggers close in on her face and body, with very ominous music playing.

•Anna, Kristoff and Olaf travel to find Kristoff's family. Here is some of that dialog:

"They can be a little inappropriate"

"Take off your clothes"

"I passed a kidney stone"

"What's the issue dear, why are you holding back from such a man?"

"He only likes to tinkle in the woods"

"Your life is in danger, put there by your sister, if not removed you'll freeze forever."

"Only an act of love can thaw a frozen heart."

Meanwhile back at the ice castle, the snow monster greets Hans and the assassins. There is chasing up the stairs after the queen with crossbows loaded and pointed at the queen to kill her. Ominous music. She begs for her life. The assassins shoot their crossbows at her, she is saved only because she magically puts up an ice shield around herself. Hans chops off the legs of the snow monster. Elsa, with rage on her face, impales one of the assassins with icicles used as daggers.

Hans says to Elsa,

"Don't be the monster they fear you are."

They deflect an arrow from one of the crossbows and it hits the chandelier, breaks the cord and the camera shows the chandelier about to fall on Elsa.

•The next scene shows Elsa in chains in prison.

•Kristoff hustles Anna back to Hans to get love's kiss, but right as Hans is about to kiss Anna, his face changes from love to cruelty. His voice transforms from love to ridicule, telling her that right after they marry he would have to stage an accident.

"All I have to do now is kill Elsa."

More ominous music as Hans locks Anna in the room, she's crying on the floor. Hans tells everyone that Anna is dead. Says her sister killed her.

Townspeople say that there is no doubt Elsa is a monster.

"I charge Elsa with treason and sentence her to death."

"I don't know what true love is."

"Kristoff loves me?"

Suddenly, the entire palace turns to ice and Anna and Olaf have to escape.

"We're trapped." More ominous music. Anna tries to find Kristoff in the snow blizzard, she gets disoriented and lost. Anna's hands start to turn to ice. Broken boat parts are falling on Kristoff. Urgent music plays. The ice is now breaking up and the reindeer, Sven falls into the ice and almost drowns.

Hans tells Elsa that her sister is dead because of Elsa.

•Kristoff sees Anna who is about to freeze to death while at the same time, Hans draws his sword to kill Elsa. Anna runs to save her sister from Hans' sword while turning completely to ice which breaks the sword as Hans attempts to kill Elsa. Suddenly Anna thaws out.

"You sacrificed yourself for me?"

"I love you"

•Suddenly the whole town thaws out, the blue sky returns, and native American music plays.

Anna punches Hans in the face and he falls overboard and is now in jail.

The End

Next up for Disney: *"Disney's Planes: Fire and Rescue"*

"I never understood why you want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane."

"We're not, we're jumping out of you."

Donohue will present
"Talking to Parents About Children's Media Time"
 at the 2015 AMS conference in Philadelphia.
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P. Donohue Shortridge is a Montessori consultant, conducting staff development sessions and parent night talks. She is also the creator of the DVD, *Aidan's Muddy Adventure*, illustrating to parents the ease with which the young child adapts to his natural surroundings.

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