



# Beauty and the Beast:

## The Magic of Being True to Yourself

### Story Magic

A merchant with three daughters loses his fortune, so the family moves to the countryside. The two eldest daughters are dismayed. The youngest, Beauty, accepts the change with grace. One day the merchant hears that his ship has been found. The eldest ask him to bring them dresses and jewels. Beauty asks for a rose. The merchant discovers his ship has been robbed and returns home with nothing. On the way, he gets lost and a snowstorm hits. He finds an enchanted castle where he spends the night. As he leaves in the morning, he sees a rose in the garden, which he picks for Beauty. At once a Beast emerges and says the ungrateful merchant must die. The merchant explains it's for Beauty; the Beast says if one of his daughters returns and takes his place, he can live. The father goes home to say goodbye to his daughters. Beauty insists on taking his place. They return to the enchanted castle, and Beauty stays. She discovers the Beast is kind and thoughtful: she has everything she wants. Every night, he eats with her. Every night, he asks if she will marry him. She always says no. One day she sees

in a magic mirror (or a dream) that her father is ill. She asks to go home. The Beast says she can, but she must return in a week's time. She agrees, and with the help of a magic ring, she goes. She takes care of her father, and her sisters persuade her to stay longer. One night she dreams that the Beast is dying. She goes back to the castle. She finds him in the garden, near death, and professes her love and says she will marry him. He turns into a handsome prince. They are married and live happily ever after.

## Versions and Variants to Consider

Versions of "Beauty and the Beast" are told all over the world; see Betsy Hearne's anthology *Beauties and Beasts* (1993) for variants from places like Turkey, Indonesia, and Japan. Most of these are not available in picture book form, but they can be told or read to young children.

*Beauty and the Beast*, retold and illustrated by Jan Brett, is a simply told and beautifully illustrated version depicting the servants at the Beast's castle as various animals in fancy dress. [Note: There is no magic mirror in this version.]

*Beauty and the Beast*, retold by H. Chuku Lee and illustrated by Pat Cummings, is a retelling of the traditional European story told in the first person from the perspective of Beauty. It is set in a land that draws inspiration from the culture of West Africa and the architecture of the Dogon of Mali.

*Beauty and the Beast*, retold and illustrated by Warrick Hutton, takes on a dreamy, timeless feel from the watercolor artwork, along with the less "fairy tale-like" clothing.

*Beauty and the Beast*, retold by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Meg Park, features succinct writing and cartoonish pictures that make this an easy transition from the Disney version to the more traditional story for younger children. There isn't a magic mirror in this one; Beauty learns of her father's and then the Beast's illnesses through dreams.

*The Great Smelly, Slobbery, Small-Tooth Dog*, retold by Margaret Read MacDonald and illustrated by Julie Paschkis, shares many of the same themes as "Beauty and the Beast," but the Beast is a dog. This British folktale is told in a playful way, and the illustrations are bright and cheerful.

*The Dragon Prince*, retold by Laurence Yep and illustrated by Kam Mak, features an ancient Chinese Beauty and a dragon Beast that is a bit more complicated than its European cousins, but older preschoolers who are familiar with the classic tale and its various versions will enjoy finding overlaps.



## Themes of Attachment and Relationships

There are several models for relationship in this story: both the deep bond between Beauty and her father and the growing bond between Beauty and the Beast. Unlike the fathers in "Rapunzel" and "Hansel and Gretel," Beauty's father is not willing to sacrifice his children to the Beast; it is only when Beauty insists that he reluctantly agrees. Beauty's devotion to her father is complete, much as most children's devotion to their parents, even when things aren't going well.

Beauty's love for the Beast also grows over time, which is unusual for fairy tales that often include love at first sight. It is based on kindness, mutual interests, conversation, and trust: all values that children are learning as they develop friendships.

### *Questions to Explore the Protective Factor of Attachment with Children*

1. Why do you think Beauty's father doesn't want her to go to the Beast even when she says she is willing? Why do you think she volunteers?
2. What are some things the Beast does that help Beauty want to be his friend? What are some things Beauty does that the Beast feels happy about?

## Themes of Initiative and Executive Functions

When Beauty decides to take her father's place with the Beast, it is a sign of initiative. More than just bravery, it is taking responsibility for her own actions. Had she not requested the rose, her father would never have angered the Beast.

An equally important way Beauty shows self-efficacy is in continuing to say no to the Beast's request to marry her, even though she is afraid at first that she will anger him. Children often have a hard time saying no to their friends even when they really don't want to play or go along with something. This is especially true when they perceive their friends as having more power, for whatever reason, or when it's an older child or adult.

In addition, Beauty does not hesitate to ask to go home when she wants to see her family. In some versions, her father is ill; in others, she is just homesick. In all cases, she shows the will to ask the Beast for the one thing he says she cannot have: permission to leave the castle.

Beauty thinks carefully about what is right for her: when she insists that she go to the enchanted castle in her father's place, when she asks to go home, and when she refuses to marry the Beast until she is sure it is right for her. By holding her up as someone who is both kind and strong and willing to do hard things when she believes they are right, we are helping children learn about self-efficacy in a gentle, subtle way.

### *Questions to Explore the Protective Factor of Initiative with Children*

1. What were some of the brave things that Beauty did? What do you think helped her do these things?
2. When the Beast kept asking Beauty if she would marry him, she kept saying no. Can you think of a time when a friend wanted to play but you didn't? What did you do?

### **Themes of Self-Regulation**

While it's debatable whether Beauty's father picking a rose showed a lack of self-regulation, children who have been taught not to touch things that are not theirs will certainly see it this way. This is especially true since young children judge the "badness" of actions by the severity of the consequences. The father picked a rose (despite very good intentions) and then the Beast says he must die or give up his daughter. It will be hard to argue with a four-year-old that his behavior was okay!

Beauty's broken promise to return to the Beast, however, is a clear instance of not using self-regulation. Unlike the stalwart Cinderella, who leaves the ball just in the nick of time, Beauty is tempted by her sisters and forgets her promise. However, she does return immediately after dreaming that the Beast is dying. Learning that even kind, good people sometimes have a hard time keeping promises is a powerful lesson, especially for children who have been disappointed by caregivers or who have disappointed others by not demonstrating self-regulation. Combined with the idea that you can make things right if you regain control, Beauty offers hope for children (and all of us) who have made choices we wish we hadn't.

### Questions to Explore the Protective Factor of Self-Regulation with Children

1. Why do you think the Beast got so mad at Beauty's father for taking a rose? Has anything like that happened to you? What did you do?
2. Beauty promised the Beast she would come back after a certain amount of time. What do you think made her break her promise? How do you feel when that happens to you? What can you do to make it better?

### Additions to the Story Center

- Pencils or pens with flowers on top (found in dollar stores or make your own by taping on an artificial rose)
- "Beast/creature" pencil toppers (can be found around Halloween and saved for later)
- Glitter crayons
- "Enchanted garden" paper: Put flower stickers on any paper, or use floral stationery or cards
- "Beast" paper: tear or cut brown paper bags into writing paper
- Story inspirations basket: Include an artificial rose, a tiny teacup, paper lace doilies, "jewels," a small mirror, a swatch of fake "beast fur," a "magic ring," and perhaps a version of Beauty and the Beast (Samantha Easton and Ruth Sanderson's version is very small and perfect for inclusion here).

### Ideas for Storytelling/Storyacting

While Beauty is the star of the show, many children are also fascinated with the Beast, who is, after all, way more fun to act out. Allow children to be fierce and ferocious if they write these parts into their stories. Children learn self-regulation through recognizing the beast within themselves, and storytelling/storyacting is one way to play with these ideas.

Because the movie is such a dominant part of popular culture, it's likely children will add various Disney characters into their stories as their memories are triggered. If this happens frequently, encourage children to try a different way of being a candleholder or a teapot to tap into their imaginations and keep their storyacting from repeating what they've seen.

## Caring Magic

### Magic Mirror, Magic Mirror

Beauty saw the Beast in her magic mirror; children will “see” their friends and try to mirror their movements.

You will need:

- Wand for teacher to wave
  - “Magic” item for the “mirror” to hold
1. Have children face a partner. One child is the mirror, and the other is the person looking into the mirror. A “magic” bracelet, ring, or scarf will help younger children remember whether they are the person or the mirror.
  2. Wave your wand and ask the child looking into the mirror to make slow movements that the mirror (the other child) copies.
  3. Wave the wand again and say, “Magic mirror switcheroo!” At this cue, children switch roles.

### How it builds attachment and relationships

It is challenging for children to put themselves in another's place, both physically and emotionally. This activity supports their ability to decenter. By paying close attention to another child's movements and facial expressions to copy them, children become better able to read social cues, a necessary component in social relationship building.

### Caring for a Beast

One child's well-loved toy or lovey may look “beastly” to the rest of us. This activity helps children see the beauty in tired classroom toys and gives them a chance to *give* a little TLC, something that many children don't often have the chance to do. This activity can take place over several days or be completed in one play session.



You will need:

- A variety of bedraggled dolls and stuffed animals in a basket or bag
  - Brushes, combs, baby wipes; depending on the materials of the "beasts," you may be able to use a water table with baby shampoo or gentle detergent
  - Baby blankets, cloth diapers, towels, and other soft pieces of fabric
  - Assortment of children's barrettes and ribbons
1. Discuss with the children what they think of when they hear the word *beast*. Show them the basket of unloved dolls and animals and ask them to describe what they see. Explain that these toys have not been loved by children for a long time, and tell them they are going to help transform these "beasts" into handsome and beautiful toys again.
  2. Take "before" pictures of each beast if desired.
  3. Ask the children to work individually or in pairs to wash, comb, comfort, and dress the toys.
  4. Allow children to decide which materials to use and how to use them to make the beasts feel loved.
  5. Encourage children to talk to their beasts throughout the process. Model this if you notice children aren't naturally doing so.
  6. After the children have completed the transformation, have them share their "beauties." [Compare "before" and "after" pictures if desired.]

Note: Adapt this activity using live plants that children care for daily. Rejected plants on sale are great because they can be brought back from their "beast" state with care.

## How it builds attachment and relationships

We know young children need love. But they also need to be able to show love, even to the unlovable. This activity encourages them to be the giver of love and see what a difference caring can make. Not only does it offer children insights into the subtler messages of the story, but it also allows them to feel good about their contributions. Because the class shares the experience, it builds a sense of community around the idea that love transforms.



## Doing Magic: Playing Magic

### Props for Dramatic Play

- Tea set or teacups (sturdy china cups purchased at garage sales are extra special)
- Place settings: place mats, “silverware” (silver plastic flatware adds sparkle), napkins (make special cloth napkins from squares of fabric remnants)
- Fabric for children's DIY costumes: capes, gowns, and so on
- Hand mirrors
- Fabric or plastic flowers
- Flower vases
- Candlesticks
- Costume jewelry, including chains (old or made by children)
- Beast mask (see page 10)

### Props for Blocks/Building and STEM

- Old CDs (as magic mirrors)
- Toilet paper and paper towel tubes (painted by children or wrapped in foil)
- Gems
- Foil
- Clean recycled aluminum cooking containers (small is best)
- Artificial flowers
- People figures
- Animal figures

### Props for Sensory Tables

- Rose oil, rose water, or actual rose petals added to your favorite slime or playdough recipe
- Petals from roses and other flowers added to the water table, along with tweezers and cups (these can be the disassembled flowers from your discovery/science center)



## Props for the Discovery/Science Center

- Basket of various "beast" fur pieces (synthetic or natural)
- Variety of flowers, including roses, that can be dissembled and examined
- Tweezers
- Magnifying glasses of various sizes
- Mirrors (folding mirror panels that can stand up offer extra interest with dual images)
- Paper to record/draw findings
- Children's books about flower parts and identification and/or animal fur (if used)

## Doing Magic: Making Magic

### Watercolor Resist Stained Glass

Although the Disney animated film has stained glass windows featured prominently, most picture book versions do not. However, a number are illustrated with watercolors, and children will enjoy both the process and the dreamy look of these watercolor resists that they'll create by painting over a crayon drawing they have made.

You will need:

- Set of watercolors (one per child)
  - Paintbrushes
  - Water cups
  - Black or dark crayons
  - Heavy white paper: watercolor paper, thick construction paper, or card stock
1. Ask children to make designs on their paper with the crayons.
  2. Demonstrate how to moisten the watercolor paints with a wet paintbrush, if needed. Have children moisten each of their colors. Either they can add to their designs, or you may want to sing a song as the watercolors soften.



## 3. Paint over the crayon marks:

- Dip brush in water, wipe on cup, and then wipe brush over chosen pre-moistened color. Swirl gently.
- Place brush on paper and stroke.
- Return brush to water, swirl, wipe off excess, then choose the next color.
- Repeat until entire paper is covered. The crayon marks will not be covered because the wax “resists” the color.

## 4. Variations: Have children make designs with glue (be sure to let it dry thoroughly before painting), with tape, or with plain address label stickers.

## How it builds initiative and executive functions

Watercolors have a very different look and feel than other media young children usually use. This activity, because it is not representational, helps children explore color and how it blends on the paper without worrying whether they are “right” or not. It also encourages problem solving as children discover that the paint doesn’t stick to their crayon marks.

In addition, the specific sequence must be followed to get clean, bright colors. Learning and practicing this sequence develops the executive function of working memory, as well as effortful control, related to self-regulation.

## Beast Masks

Children love masks, and creating their own beast mask helps them to make connections between the many ways the Beast is represented in the story.

You will need:

- Brown paper grocery bag with a rectangle cut out for the eye hole (one for each child)
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or glue (staplers optional)
- Pencils, markers, or crayons
- Yarn, string, fake fur, fabric, stickers, chenille stems, and so on

1. Ask children what kind of beast they think they would turn into if a bad fairy bewitched them.
2. Show children the variety of materials they can use to create their beasts.



3. Give each child a paper bag, pointing out the eye hole and the sides where their arms will go. These areas will need to be left open and undecorated.
4. Encourage children to experiment with different materials first before gluing or taping them to their paper bags (their masks).
5. When the masks are done, cut arm holes in the sides of the bags.
6. Let children share their inner beasts!

## How it builds initiative and executive functions

Like most open-ended art activities, creating a beast mask nurtures problem solving, self-efficacy, and executive function skills. Children use cognitive flexibility to imagine how a bag and a bunch of materials can turn into a beast. As they assemble the materials, they are solving problems: What can I use for horns? How can I make this fur stick? What shape are my beast's ears?

Because there is no one right way to make a beast, each child's ideas will transform the bags into unique and playful masks. This supports self-efficacy. Because the end goal is to have a fun beast mask to wear, children are motivated to put in the time and hard work to finish their masks.

## Mirror Polishing

This mirror-cleaning activity is inspired by Montessori Practical Life activities. There are many excellent descriptions and videos online about how to do this and other Montessori Practical Life polishing activities. They work well with "Cinderella," "Hansel and Gretel," and other stories in which characters perform household chores. Once children have gone through the process a few times, the activity can be put in a center where they can do it independently.

You will need:

- Mirrors of various sizes
  - "Mirror polish" (dish soap works)
  - Paper towel for applying the polish/dish soap
  - Pieces of felt for polishing
1. Share with children that when Beauty wanted to use her magic mirror, she had to be sure it was clean.
  2. Apply one squirt of dish soap onto the mirror (children can do this themselves).
  3. With a paper towel, smear the soap all over the mirror.

4. Wait a few minutes until it dries. While waiting, encourage the children to sing (to the tune of “London Bridge Is Falling Down”):
 

Beauty’s going to clean her mirror, clean her mirror, clean her mirror!  
 Beauty’s going to clean her mirror, so nice and shiny.  
 Take the felt and circle round, circle round, circle round.  
 Take the felt and circle round, ‘til it’s clean and sparkly.
5. Once the mirror is dry, ask the children to wrap a piece of felt around their fingers and make small circles on the mirror, starting at the upper left-hand side and working their way from left to right, top to bottom, continuing until all of the soap is gone and the mirror is clean.

### How it builds initiative and executive functions

Like all of us, children enjoy seeing the fruits of their labor, which is one reason the Montessori Practical Life activities, which provide “meaningful work” for children, are so engaging. While this simple explanation doesn’t do justice to the rich way these activities are used in Montessori classrooms, this modification provides children a way to feel competent while developing the executive functions of working memory and effortful control.

## Superpower Magic

### Musical Chairs

This adaptation of the classic children’s game leverages children’s imaginations and interest in the story to magically develop self-regulation skills.

You will need:

- Chairs set up back-to-back in a line or in a circle with seats facing outward
  - Music and a device to play it that allows for easy stops and starts (any music can be used, but try instrumental/piano versions of Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*)
  - One rose or one beast (or a picture of one) to place on one seat (optional)
1. The game of musical chairs can be played in the traditional way, where there are one too few seats: Children walk around the chairs, and when the music stops, the child who doesn’t get a seat is out. Alternatively, use the same number of seats as children, and place either a rose or a beast figure on one chair. In this version, the child who sits on the “magical” seat gets to decide which direction everyone will walk during the next round.



## How it builds self-regulation

Both versions of musical chairs promote self-regulation, but in slightly different ways. In both, the child has to focus on two conflicting things: listening to music and moving, while listening for the music to stop and quickly sitting on the closest seat. The fact that the children must keep moving and can't wait for the music to stop and then must suddenly shift gears and sit provides that anticipatory edge that delights children in the context of play while promoting self-regulation.

The typical way to play, where one child is out at the end of each round, also promotes self-regulation because young children may get upset if they are out. Learning that no one wins every time helps them modulate their emotions. While this is certainly a valuable life skill, for some young children it is still a task beyond their reach. Placing a rose or a beast on one seat still promotes the "edge" of having to listen, move, and pay attention for the cue to stop. It also offers a concrete object to focus on, rather than a more abstract missing chair. In addition, very young children or those who have self-regulation challenges can develop these skills without having to manage negative feelings about losing or being excluded at the same time.

## The Beast Says

Like so many traditional children's games, this adaptation of Simon Says helps children tame the self-regulation beast. No materials are required.

1. Tell the children that you are the Beast, and ask the children to face you.
2. Say, "The Beast says, make a scary face!" (or any other command), and model it.
3. Ask the children to do what the Beast commands, if preceded by "The Beast says."
4. Tell the children that when the Beast issues a command without saying "The Beast says," as in "Stomp your feet!" (and stomping), they should refrain from imitating. Children should not be "out" in this version, since those who miss the cues need practice the most.



## How it builds self-regulation

When we are on autopilot, our executive function skills are off-line. The traditional game of Simon Says promotes the ability to frame shift: to stop doing something that our automatic brain wants to keep doing. Children must listen carefully to the commands and not just watch what the Beast is doing. The more they practice this, the more skilled they become in overcoming their first impulses.

## Transition Activity: Who Stole the Rose from the Beast's Garden?

Adapted from Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar, this activity is a great time filler when children are waiting. It promotes self-regulation and working memory and helps children remember each other's names! No materials are required.

1. Have children start the chant; clapping or slapping knees is optional but helps keep the rhythm and adds an additional action to focus on, promoting executive functions and literacy skills.
2. Model for the children how to start. Say "[Mary] stole the rose from the Beast's garden" and start the chant [see below]. Once children have learned the chant, the child named can respond, "Who, me?" Until then, the whole group can chant it.
3. Ask the child named to pick the next child: "[Jamal] stole the rose from the Beast's garden!"
4. Continue until everyone has had at least one turn or the waiting is over.

Who stole the rose from the Beast's garden?

[Mary] stole the rose from the Beast's garden!

Who, me?

Yes, you!

Couldn't be!

Then, WHO?

[Jamal] stole the rose from the Beast's garden!

Who, me?

Yes, you!

Couldn't be!

Then, WHO?



## Transition Activity: Beast Pose (aka "Lion Pose")

This yoga pose transforms children into the Beast if they listen *very* carefully.

1. Have children sit on opened knees, with hands between them and fingers pointed back toward their toes.
2. Ask them to lean forward, keeping their beast arms straight.
3. Tell them to raise their head, open their mouth, and stick their great beastly tongue out as far as they can.
4. Have the children open their eyes as wide as they can and imagine a horn growing right between their eyebrows.
5. Ask them to take a deep breath in through their nose, and as they slowly let their breath out, let the sound come from their throat.

