

**Discussion Questions: Bettelheim, Jones, and Kolbenschlag
“A Closer Look At Cinderella”**

Please write your answers down and be prepared to share them with the class.

“The Thematic Core of Fairy Tales” by Steven Jones

1. Jones states that fairy tales are “highly functional,” and these functions fall into three categories: the psychology of the individual, the sociology of the community, and the cosmology of the universe. How does he define each of these categories, and how do they serve readers or listeners?

2. Jones states that “the cosmology depicted in fairy tales is also frequently connected to social institutions, suggesting that these institutions are ‘natural,’ that is, cosmically sanctioned and therefore justified” (paragraph 4). What does he mean by this statement, and why is this important?

3. How does Jones describe the role or function of Oedipal conflicts in fairy tales? How does this discussion and interpretation of these Oedipal conflicts differ from Bettelheim’s?

“Cinderella’: A Story of Sibling Rivalry and Oedipal Conflicts” by Bruno Bettelheim

1. What is Bettelheim’s definition of “sibling rivalry”? How does this definition differ from the way we usually use the term? How is it possible for an only child to experience sibling rivalry?

2. What is “primary narcissism” (paragraph 20)? What are the “oedipal conflict” and “oedipal guilt” that Bettelheim discusses? What is the symbolic significance of ashes, according to Bettelheim?

3. How does Bettelheim relate primary narcissism, the Oedipal conflict, and Oedipal guilt to the Cinderella tale (in other words, when is Cinderella in these stages, and how are they shown)?

4. Why does Cinderella feel she deserves both her ill treatment and her ultimate triumph, according to Bettelheim? How is the child reading or hearing the story comforted by this?

“A Feminist’s View of ‘Cinderella’” by Madonna Kolbenschlag

1. Kolbenschlag states that Cinderella’s “willing acceptance of a condition of worthlessness and her expectation of rescue (as a reward for her virtuous suffering) is a recognizable paradigm of traditional feminine socialization” (paragraph 5). What does she mean by this statement, and why is it important?

2. In paragraph 6 Kolbenschlag says that Cinderella has “internalized the consciousness of the victim”; what does this mean? What does she mean by the terms “mirror” and “model”? According to Kolbenschlag, how does Cinderella serve as both mirror and model for women?

3. What is the symbolic significance, in the Perrault version of the tale, of Cinderella’s returning by midnight? How does Kolbenschlag compare a traditional interpretation of this rule to a more modern one? What is the “double life that many women experience” (paragraph 11)?

4. What are the symbolic meanings of the ashes and the slipper, according to Kolbenschlag?

5. Explain what Kolbenschlag means in her last paragraph.