

## TWISTED TALES Amy Senechal

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Once upon a time, in a land far far away, the tales and stories that you once read as a child are not all as they seem ...

In this article, I will be analysing the collection of short stories from *The Bloody Chamber* written by Angela Carter. Within her ingenious creation, Carter is able to completely transform these traditional tales that we have grown up with. Specifically, Carter twists these tales by deconstructing the core elements of what characterises them.

The Darker side of life has always fascinated me, as delving deeper into the origins of stories often uncovers the legends that lie behind them. This is why it may or may not surprise you that the innocent bedtime stories we all know and love are actually inundated with eerie backstories. These twisted tales are definitely not something suitable for innocent minds unless you want to give that poor child a nightmare!

When reading the spectacular short stories of *The Bloody Chamber*, one which truly stood out from the rest was, *The Snow Child*. Albeit the smallest, tucked away just filling two pages out of the whole collection, it is impossible to ignore. Unfortunately, there is no magic mirror nor any dwarfs, poisoned apples or even a happy ending. However, it is evident that Carter has derived this story from the childhood favourite, *Snow White*.

Through dominant themes of jealousy, Carter explores the aspects of male power, critiques gender roles and adds a heavy dose of horror to create a sense of impending doom. Carter repeatedly uses an array of different literary devices to foreshadow the horrific ending of this tale. For example, the Count's wish is embellished with the simile 'red as blood' which suggests danger and foreshadows the girl's doomed fate.



Additionally, Carter references the black of a raven's feather, a bird often associated with death. Furthermore, the rose, a flower with thorns, is beautiful and dangerous; it perhaps represents the femme fatale characterisation of the Countess. The Count is able to handle the rose freely and gives it to his wife but 'It bites!' she exclaims. As a final line, this adds

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a level of complexity to the story's conclusion establishing an ambiguity that has us wondering if she is refusing the rose, knowing what it can do, or if she has fallen victim to its teeth herself.

Existing on two pages alone, this story of Carter's is a condensed, tightened version of the tale that, in its brevity, denies the reader any space to look away from the horrors that unfold. Following in the fairy tale tradition, *The Snow Child* contains only what is relevant to the narrative and drives the plot forward. Carter's symbols are presented in the same sophisticated layers expected in these tales; she continually subverts assumptions and destabilises the story. Such narrative decisions invite the readers to be co-creators in the experience. We can read our own meaning into the events we encounter whilst never taking our eyes off the hidden meanings within the lines of the text. In doing so, I believe Carter, in turn creates a very good horror story, while still having the ability to shed light onto important societal problems that are still relevant today.

