

Disney BEAUTY AND THE BEAST THE MUSICAL

Beauty, The Beast and You -
a creative challenge exploring
the 'tale as old as time'

National
Literacy
Trust

BACKGROUND

The story of a “beauty” and her “beast” has enchanted children and adults around the world for centuries. Rooted in legends from ancient Greece, India, and Africa, the “tale as old as time” has been interpreted in myriad cultures and periods, each version reflecting the hopes, fears, moral codes, and gender stereotypes of the society in which it was written. The best-known version of *Beauty and the Beast* is unique among fairy tales, based on the literary work of two women, Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve (1685-1755) and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711- 1780), rather than the famous male authors of the genre: Charles Perrault (1628-1703), the Brothers Grimm (Jacob: 1785-1863, Wilhelm: 1786-1859), and Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875).

In 1740, Villeneuve published *La Belle et la Bête*, not as a platform for educating children or examining French society, but rather to entertain her salon friends with the romantic intertwined histories of a beauty and her beast. In 1756, Beaumont emigrated from France to England, becoming a tutor and author. She shortened Villeneuve’s version, leaving out the personal histories of Beauty and the Beast and ending the story with the Beast’s transformation. In the hands of two female authors, being well-read became a defining quality of this modern hero, who continues to attract fans over two centuries later.



ACT ONE

Once upon a time in a faraway land, an Enchantress turns a selfish and spoiled young Prince into a hideous beast. To break the spell, the Beast must learn to love another and earn their love in return before the last petal falls from an enchanted rose. If he cannot, he will be doomed to remain a beast for all time.

Meanwhile, Belle, a young woman in a provincial French village, arises to greet the morning. The villagers bustle about their daily business as Belle makes her way through the town, engrossed in a book. While the villagers gossip about how odd they find her introversion and love of reading, the boorish Gaston plots to marry her solely on account of her looks (**Belle**).

Belle arrives home to find her father, Maurice, struggling to stabilize his newest invention. Belle confides in him her worries that people think she is odd. Maurice reassures her, and once he finally fixes his machine, sets off to showcase his brilliant work at the fair. Soon, however, Maurice loses his way in the woods and encounters a pack of wolves (**Maurice Travels**). Fleeing for his safety, Maurice stumbles upon a castle and pleads for shelter. Once inside, he encounters the enchanted staff – Lumiere, Cogsworth, Mrs. Potts, Chip, and Babette – who were also transformed by the Enchantress's spell. After Maurice's initial shock, they try to make him feel comfortable, but the Beast appears and imprisons the intruder.



Back in the village, Gaston proposes to Belle (**Me**), much to the dismay of the twittering *Filles de la Ville*. Belle refuses him and expresses her longing for adventure outside the mundanity of village life (**Belle – Reprise**). Belle notices Lefou wearing her father's scarf which he says he found in the woods. Concerned for her father, she runs off in search of Maurice.

As the castle staff transforms more completely into objects each day, Lumiere and Cogsworth lose hope that the spell will ever be broken; however, their hope returns when Belle enters the castle in search of her father. Belle finds Maurice in the dungeon, but the Beast appears and prevents their escape. She offers herself in exchange for Maurice's freedom; the Beast agrees, sending Maurice back to the village and Belle to her new room where she reflects on her choice (**Home**). Mrs. Potts and the enchanted wardrobe, Madame de la Grande Bouche, encourage Belle not to lose hope (**Home – Reprise**).

At the village tavern, Gaston mopes about his rejection while his cronies try to boost his spirits (**Gaston**). When Maurice barges in claiming that a monstrous beast is holding Belle captive, Gaston devises a plan to trick Belle into marrying him (**Gaston – Reprise**).

Meanwhile, the castle staff tries to teach the Beast to act like a gentleman, but when Belle refuses to join him for dinner, he loses his temper (**How Long Must This Go On?**). Meanwhile, the enchanted staff serves a hungry Belle an extravagant meal, despite their master's orders (**Be Our Guest**). Afterward, Cogsworth and Lumiere lead Belle on a tour of the castle, but when Belle sneaks into the west wing, the Beast discovers her and once again loses his temper. A frightened Belle flees the castle, leaving the Beast alone with his remorse (**If I Can't Love Her**).



ACT TWO

As Belle dashes through the forest, a pack of wolves advances on her, but the Beast leaps in and saves her. Having a change of heart, Belle accompanies the Beast back to the castle and tends to his wounded arm. The staff – as well as Belle and the Beast – notice that there is a change between them (*Something There*). Belle and the Beast bond, giving the staff hope that the spell soon might be broken (*Human Again*). Belle asks the Beast to have dinner with her, and the two share a wonderful evening that concludes with a dance (*Beauty and the Beast*).

Despite her feelings for the Beast, Belle longs to see her father. Using the Beast's magic mirror, Belle sees that Maurice is in trouble, and the Beast lets her go in order for her to save her father from Gaston and a frightened and angry mob. Though the Beast has finally learned to love, he fears he has lost his final chance to regain his humanity before the last rose petal falls (*If I Can't Love Her – Reprise*).

Belle finds her father in the woods and, upon returning to the village, confesses that the Beast has changed the way she sees the world (*A Change in Me*). Gaston, accompanied by Monsieur D'Arque, the asylum proprietor, arrives with plans to send Maurice to the asylum if Belle refuses his marriage proposal. To prove her father's words are true, Belle uses the Beast's magic mirror to show him to the villagers. Jealous of Belle's kind words for such a "monster," Gaston emboldens the villagers to set off on a quest to storm the castle and kill the Beast, while Belle vows to return to the castle to warn him (*The Mob Song*).

Once he's infiltrated the castle, Gaston confronts the Beast in the west wing and stabs him before stumbling and falling off the turret to his death. Belle arrives and holds the dying Beast in her arms, telling him that she loves him (*Home – Reprise*), thereby breaking the spell. The Beast transforms back into the Prince, the staff becomes human again, and they all live happily ever after (*Transformation/Finale*).

asylum: Asylums were often used to sinister ends to remove and detain community members that society disdained. Today, individuals experiencing mental health crises may visit psychiatric facilities.

