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Teaching Our Children the Requirements for Success: A Class Analysis of Disney's Pocahontas

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While many children and their parents love Disney princess movies for their "feel good" themes, these movies function not just as entertainment but also as agents of socialization, reinforcing to viewers what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in society. The movies contain hidden messages about race, gender, and class that can play into negative stereotypes absorbed by children. A closer examination of Disney films like *Pocahontas* can shed light on what social lessons Disney is teaching our youth.

Many articles have been written about how Disney movies stereotype gender and race, but few critics have analyzed the ways class is represented in these movies. Social class is something many Americans do not like to talk about or even believe exists, but the reality is that class difference does exist. The way Disney represents social class shapes the way that children view the working class and the upper class elite. A critical analysis of the popular Disney film, *Pocahontas*, reveals that it discourages the pursuit of upward social mobility that is the cornerstone of the American dream and portrays class standing as an unchangeable trait. Although Disney has started to create fairer and more realistic representations of gender and racial diversity, Disney fails to promote fair representations of social class. With a better understanding of what messages Disney is teaching our children, we can demand more realistic and better characters and story lines.