Into the Show:
An In-Depth Analysis
of the
Musical
Into the Woods

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Into the Show: An In-Depth Analysis of the musical *Into the Woods*

*Into the Woods*, a musical by Stephen Sondheim, is based on four familiar fairy tales: "Cinderella," "Rapunzel," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Little Red Ridinghood." In the show, Sondheim develops several themes and characters through his text, music, and the use of fairy tale motifs. Our thesis traces the themes of opportunity, ambivalence, and teaching children, and connects these themes to the music and use of fairy tale motifs and story-telling techniques.
**Stephen Sondheim: A Brief Biography**

Musical theater composer/lyricist Stephen Joshua Sondheim was born on March 22, 1930, to a prominent New York dressmaker and his wife. He began playing the piano and organ when he was seven years old. Sondheim’s parents divorced when he was 10 years old, and his mother moved to rural Pennsylvania. He went to a military school for a while, and when he came home, he spent his time with his mother’s friend and neighbor, renowned Broadway lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II.

Hammerstein became a surrogate father to Sondheim, who looked up to him so much that he later remarked, “I would have become a geologist if Oscar had been a geologist” (Secrest, 53). Hammerstein taught Sondheim much about the world of musical theater.

While Sondheim was at the George School, he wrote his first musical, “By George,” a parody of the school’s denizens. He took the script to Hammerstein and asked him to look at it as though it were written by a complete stranger. Hammerstein reviewed it and said it was the worst thing he had ever read; however, it was not untalented, just bad. Hammerstein and Sondheim spent that afternoon going through the script, line by line. Sondheim said he learned more in that one afternoon than most people learn in an entire lifetime. Hammerstein then outlined a course of study for Sondheim that included having him write four musicals to learn the craft.

Sondheim went to Williams College, where he was going to study mathematics, but later changed his major to music. Upon graduation, he won the Hutchinson Prize for Musical Composition, a two-year fellowship that allowed him to study with innovative composer Milton Babbitt.

Sondheim was finally ready to begin his life as a composer and lyricist of musicals. His first opportunity came with the musical, *Saturday Night*. Unfortunately, due to the death of the producer, the show was put on hold.

Sondheim had other offers, however, including one from Arthur Laurents, who was working with Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein on an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. He asked Sondheim to audition to write lyrics for the musical and Sondheim agreed. The musical became *West Side Story*, with a book by Laurents, music by Bernstein, and lyrics by Sondheim. Sondheim’s next project was *Gypsy*. Originally, he was asked to write both music and
lyrics, but the show’s star, Ethel Merman, wanted someone with a little more experience who was more well-known to write the music. Jule Styne was chosen to write the music, while Sondheim stayed on to write the lyrics.

The first show with both music and lyrics by Sondheim was *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*; it won multiple Tony Awards, including Best Musical. This was followed by *Company*, which also won a Tony for Best Musical. It also broke new theatrical ground introducing the form of a concept musical, which is a show that has no story, merely a group of songs tied together by a common theme. *Company* also won a Grammy Award in 1971 for Best Score from an Original Cast Show Album.

*Company* was followed by *Follies*. *A Little Night Music*, came after that and was composed completely in triple meters. It won the Tony for Best Score in a Musical in 1973, and contains one of Sondheim’s most beloved songs, “Send in the Clowns.” Judy Collins recorded this song in 1975, and it entered the Billboard Top 40 chart immediately. Sondheim won the Grammy for Song of the Year with Collins’ recording in 1976.

*Pacific Overtures* and *Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* came next. With Sweeney, Sondheim mixed musical theater techniques with operatic elements to create a dark, grisly spectacle. It won eight Tonys, including Best Musical, Best Score, and Best Book.

*Merrily We Roll Along* was Sondheim’s next effort. Its story was dark and complex, beginning at the end and ending at the beginning. As innovative as it was, however, it failed in the theater box office and closed after only 16 performances.

Next, Sondheim wrote *Sunday in the Park with George*, which became one of his most acclaimed musicals to date. In 1985, Sondheim and James Lapine (who wrote the book for the show) won a Pulitzer Prize for the show.

*Into the Woods* followed and was considered by the critics to be one of his most accessible shows. In 1987, it won the New York Drama Critics Circle, the Tony for Best Musical, the Drama Desk Award, and a Grammy for Best Original Cast Album.

He went on to write *Assassins* and *Passion*. These were followed by the world premiere of *Saturday Night* at London’s Bridewell Theater in 1998, more than 40 years after he wrote it. It premiered in America at the Second Stage Theater in 2000.
In addition to writing musicals, Sondheim has experimented with teaching, screen writing, composing film scores, creating crossword puzzles for *New York* magazine, and writing plays. He wrote several songs for the movies *Dick Tracy* and *The Birdcage*. He won an Academy Award for his song, “Sooner or Later,” from *Dick Tracy*.

As one of theater’s most respected artists, he has been honored with numerous tributes and revues of his work. Some of these include: *Sondheim: A Musical Tribute, Side by Side by Sondheim, Marry Me a Little, A Stephen Sondheim Evening, Putting It Together, and Sondheim: A Celebration at Carnegie Hall*. In 1993, he was a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors, and in 1997, he accepted the National Medal of the Arts from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Stephen Sondheim is one of the most innovative and talented musical theater composer/lyricists today. His musicals are not only performed on Broadway, but off-Broadway as well, and are popular choices for many college and civic theaters all over the country. His work has permeated the theater for more than 40 years, and he is still writing and composing musicals that have substance and value, both on and off Broadway.
Fairy Tales: A Brief History

Into The Woods, which is based on four familiar fairy tales, is one of Sondheim’s most accessible and popular shows. In Into The Woods, Sondheim develops themes and characters through his text, music, and through the use of fairy tale motifs. Before we begin our journey Into The Woods it is important to first understand the structure and elements found in traditional fairy tales.

The fairy tale was originally an oral art form. Each story was community-authored and survived through the people and multiple tellings. The fairy tale was originally intended for an adult audience, although many have been adapted for children in modern times.

The setting of a fairy tale is often described as, “Once upon a time, in a kingdom far, far away.” Thus the setting seems timeless, although vaguely medieval and preindustrial. Often the setting of fairy tales reflects a nostalgia for a simpler past time. The setting of these tales is extreme; there are no middles. In other words, the setting is either harsh or utopian.

Characters in fairy tales have many defining characteristics. First, like the setting, they are very clear-cut. They are either good or evil, admirable or hateful. Usually, the character in trouble ends up happily, as is the case with Sleeping Beauty who has the trouble of being pricked by a spinning wheel, which causes her to fall into a hundred-year sleep and end up with her prince. In fairy tales, goodness is defined by the situation, not by the characters’ actions. For example, Snow White is considered good because she is “the fairest in the land,” not because she treats the dwarfs well. Also, the good characters are considered good no matter what they do. Jack is essentially a thief who steals from the Giant, but since he is the hero of the story, he is considered good. Physical appearance often defines character; wicked witches are ugly, good princesses are beautiful, and noble princes are handsome. Heroes and heroines achieve their status because they are powerless in relation to someone more powerful than them. As is the case with Cinderella, who achieves heroine status in her tale simply because she is under the control of her wicked stepmother. In addition, heroes and heroines are usually children (Little Red Riding Hood), poor people (the Miller’s Daughter in “Rumplestiltskin”), or foolish people (the Tailor from “The Brave Little Tailor”). The hero is often isolated and forced to act alone, as is the case of Beauty in “Beauty and the Beast,” who is taken prisoner alone in the Beast’s castle. In contrast to the heroes
and heroines, villains have high social status (such as the Queen in “Snow White”), great size and strength (the Giant in “Jack and the Beanstalk”), or great knowledge (the Witch in “Hansel and Gretel”).

There are a few ideas which are sprinkled throughout all fairy tale plots. First, a powerless underdog changes places with the character who had power over him, as is the case in “Cinderella,” where the step-family becomes Cinderella’s servants after she marries the Prince. Second is a rite of passage such as the passage from childhood to adulthood. This idea can be found in the story of “Little Red Riding Hood.” The third, as the most well known plot idea, is that of the happy ending.

In the plot of a fairy tale, action is more important than character development; consequently, conflicts are quickly established and events move swiftly to the conclusion. Plots are unusually structured in a series of intense moments separated by less intense and more broadly summarized connecting passages. Fairy tales also contain repetition which serves as a memory aid.

Several common themes which are indicative of fairy tale writing. The first theme is escaping mighty (“Jack and the Beanstalk”) and evil (“The Little Mermaid”) enemies. Many fairy tales focus on earning a place in the world (“The Brave Little Tailor”). Another theme is accomplishing monumental tasks (“East of the Sun, West of the Moon”). Wisdom comes through suffering (“Beauty and the Beast”). In contrast, there is rarely a question about right and wrong in fairy tales.

In addition to common themes, several other common motifs are found in fairy tales. They are as follows:

- triumph of the youngest, weakest, or most oppressed (“The Ugly Duckling”)
- reversal of fortune (“Cinderella”)
- magic numbers such as 3, 7, 12, 13, 20 (“Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”)
- power of names (“Rumplestiltskin”)
- animal bride and/or bridegroom (“Beauty and the Beast”)
- orphans (“Puss In Boots”)
- journeys (“East of the Sun, West of the Moon”)
- wicked stepmother (“Diamonds and Toads”)


prohibitions ("Sleeping Beauty")
promises ("The Frog Prince")
royalty ("The Twelve Dancing Princesses")
magic helpers ("Jack and the Beanstalk")
impossible tasks ("The Brave Little Tailor")
happy ending ("Rapunzel")
animal helpers ("Hanzel and Gretel")
talking animals ("Little Red Riding Hood")
shape changing ("The Little Mermaid")
brothers and sisters ("Hanzel and Gretel")
wild wood ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs")
Into The Woods: A Brief Synopsis

*Into The Woods* is based on the stories of “Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, Rapunzel, and Little Red Riding Hood. The basic plot of the shows as explained by Michael Patrick Kennedy and John Muir in their book *Musicals* is as follows:

The Baker and his Wife are cursed as barren by the neighborhood Witch. They can overcome the spell only by acquiring Jack’s cow, Cinderella’s slipper, Rapunzel’s hair, and Red Riding Hood’s cape. In so doing they bring untold mischief, not to mention death, to many of the main characters. However, as the first act ends, Cinderella has her Prince, Red Riding Hood has killed her Wolf, Rapunzel has her Prince too and has been rescued from the tower, and the Baker’s Wife is newly pregnant. Happy ever after? Well, no.

In the second act the two princes develop wandering eyes and are back on the case - after the Sleeping Beauty and Snow White respectively. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Giant decided to do a little detective work to avenge her spouse and kill off his murderer. Jack’s mother interposes herself between Jack and his pursuer, and is duly killed. The Baker’s Wife dallies with a prince and is then crushed by the marauding giantess. Even the narrator is sacrificed. By the end, there’s only the Baker and his child, Cinderella, Rapunzel, Jack, and Red Riding Hood left to join together to fight and overcome their adversary, which they do with the help of Cinderella’s friends, the birds. In the closing moments all characters past and present reassemble to offer optimism and reassurance to themselves - and to us.
Act One: Scene 1

"Prologue: Into the Woods"

The show begins in typical fairy tale manner. The Narrator walks onstage and begins with the familiar quote, “Once upon a time” (Lapine and Sondheim 3). Four words into the show, Sondheim throws the audience for a loop by using a sharp unexpected chord to punctuate the Narrator’s traditional opening. Thus, Sondheim is setting the stage and preparing the audience to expect the unexpected. This chord serves another function. As the chord is sounded, the light come up onstage, revealing “three structures.” This is Sondheim’s first use of a fairy tale motif, the number three. The chord opens the Narrator’s book, waking the fairy tale characters up and making them accessible to the audience.

The music continues, “sharp and steady” (Lapine and Sondheim 3), as the characters sing of their wishes. The overlap in the music foreshadows the eventual overlap in the stories as Sondheim intertwines four fairy tales by introducing two new characters. Thus Sondheim parallels music and plot.

Little Red Ridinghood arrives at the “Baker’s door” (Lapine and Sondheim 6) and expresses a wish that’s “not for me, It’s for my granny in the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 7). She wishes for a “loaf of bread” (Lapine and Sondheim 7). As is often the case, food is used to symbolize sex. Little Red Ridinghood turns the attention away from herself and focuses on her granny because she doesn’t want the Baker and his Wife to know about her sexual desires. She is uncomfortable with her blossoming sexuality. Little Red Ridinghood goes on to describe her granny as “poor old hungry” (Lapine and Sondheim 7), which emphasizes her granny’s loneliness and need for sex. The adjective “hungry” suggests an unfulfilled appetite. In this case, an unfulfilled sexual appetite. As she greedily asks for more food for her granny, she “smiles sheepishly” (Lapine and Sondheim 7). The word “sheepishly” refers to the old description “a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” wherein the wolf, who is bad, is disguised as something good, the sheep. In this case, the bad thing or the wolf is sexuality, whereas, the good thing or the sheep, is Little Red Ridinghood’s innocence. Thus, Sondheim shows the audience that she also has sexual desires.

In the middle of Little Red Ridinghood’s wish, Cinderella’s stepmother proclaims, “If you have picked them out again in two hours’ time, you shall go to the Ball with us” (Lapine and
In short, two additional fairy tale motifs are employed. The first is the wicked stepmother motif. The second is the test.

In order to fulfill her stepmother's request, Cinderella sings a song which summons birds who “start picking at the lentils and dropping them into the pot” (Lapine and Sondheim 8). The birds are the traditional motif of the helper animal. In contrast, immediately prior to Cinderella's song, Jack tells his cow “no, squeeze, pal” (Lapine and Sondheim 8), to persuade her to produce milk; however, she doesn't produce any milk. Again, Sondheim mixes the expected with the unexpected. The birds exemplify the expected helper animal motif. On the other hand, Milky-White, Jack's cow, is unexpected in that she is not helpful.

Milky-White, in addition to not producing milk, is a source of annoyance between Jack and his mother. Jack continually refers to Milky-White as “he,” (Lapine and Sondheim 6), forcing his mother to proclaim “It's a she! How many times must I tell you? Only 'she's can give milk” (Lapine and Sondheim 6). Like any good mother, Jack's Mother is trying to teach her child. Teaching children will become a prevalent theme as the show progresses.

Jack's Mother continues to air her frustrations as she explains, “We've no time to sit and dither, while her withers wither with her” (Lapine and Sondheim 8). Here we can see another example of Sondheim linking music and text as well as use of fairy tale motifs. Sondheim uses word painting to describe the cow's withering. The words “withers wither with her” (Lapine and Sondheim 8) shrink from seven letters to six letters to four letters to three letters, which parallels the shrinking cow. In addition, the word wither, is used three times, “withers” (Lapine and Sondheim 8), “wither” (Lapine and Sondheim 8), and “with her” (Lapine and Sondheim 8), which demonstrates the number three motif.

“Little Red Ridinghood has been compulsively eating sweets at the Baker’s house” (Lapine and Sondheim 9). As we discussed before Sondheim uses food to symbolize sexual desires. Therefore while we were being introduced to the other characters, Little Red Ridinghood has been gorging herself on sweets in an attempt to satiate her sexual appetite. When she is through she “swallows, wiping her hands and mouth” (Lapine and Sondheim 9). Again we witness the conflict in Little Red Ridinghood between innocence and maturity; while Little Red Ridinghood allows herself to gorge on sweets she completes an act of purification afterwards by “wiping her
hands and mouth” (Lapine and Sondheim 9).

Then Little Red Ridinghood begins her journey into the woods proclaiming, “I must begin my journey. Into the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 9). Sondheim again uses a fairy tale motif, the journey. Before Little Red Ridinghood leaves the Baker warns her not to “stray and be late” (Lapine and Sondheim 9). His Wife advises her to “save some of those sweets for Granny” (Lapine and Sondheim 9)! The Baker and his Wife are attempting to teach Little Red Ridinghood some of life’s important lessons. Therefore, they are contributing to the theme of teaching children. As she is leaving, Little Red Ridinghood demonstrates her innocence by telling the Baker and his Wife, “The path is straight, I know it well” (Lapine and Sondheim 9). “The path” (Lapine and Sondheim 9), Little Red Ridinghood speaks of represents both the path to her Granny’s house as well as her path in life. Little Red Ridinghood has not been confronted with any life altering decisions therefore, her life’s path is without any forks or bends. In essence, her “path is straight” (Lapine and Sondheim 9).

In the meantime, Cinderella asks, “What’s the good of being good if everyone is blind always leaving you behind” (Lapine and Sondheim 9)? In short, Cinderella is beginning to question the teachings of her parents. She is beginning to form her own idea of what is right and wrong. Right and wrong is another prevalent theme in the show. As she asks these questions she gets agitated and pulls her stepsister’s hair. Florinda punishes her as she “screams and slaps Cinderella” (Lapine and Sondheim 11), illustrating another fairy tale motif, punishment.

At this point, the Witch enters and, “[goes] on to tell the [Baker and his Wife] that she had placed a spell on their house” (Lapine and Sondheim 12). The spell is another example of a fairy tale motif. While explaining her rationale, the Witch talks of her “beautiful garden” (Lapine and Sondheim 12). The garden represent the Witch’s womanhood. When the Witch explains how the Baker’s father stole vegetables from her garden, she uses words such as “robbing ... raping ... rooting ... raiding ... ripping” (Lapine and Sondheim 12-13). These strong words suggest violation, implying that the Baker’s father raped the Witch. During this description the Witch admits she “should have laid a spell on him right there” (Lapine and Sondheim 13). This admission is accented with the “‘Spell’ chord” (Lapine and Sondheim 13).

The spell chord will become an important musical motif in the show. Through the use of
the spell chord Sondheim transforms the spell motif from its traditional fairy tale setting to its more modern musical setting. The spell chord is invoked again as the Witch explains how she cast a spell on the Baker’s family tree, ensuring that it “would always be a barren one” (Lapine and Sondheim 14). This punishment is appropriate since the Baker’s father took the Witch’s beans and left her barren.

During the Witch’s explanation another fairy tale motif, the magic sleep, is used. The Witch “drifts off into a momentary trance” (Lapine and Sondheim 13) or magic sleep. In addition, the theme of right versus wrong is developed during the Witch’s explanation. She recounts how she told the Baker’s father “fair is fair” (Lapine and Sondheim 13) and then requested “the baby that [his] wife will bear” (Lapine and Sondheim 13). It was wrong for the Baker’s father to steal from the Witch. Therefore, the Witch insisted he do the right thing and repay his debt.

Unfortunately, the Baker’s father had more debt than the Witch knew. He had “hid in his pocket” (Lapine and Sondheim 13) some of the Witch’s beans. Beans give rise to vegetables in the same way that a woman’s ova grow into children. With this in mind, it is easy to see that the Witch’s beans represent her virginity. The Witch’s mother “had warned [her she] would be punished if [she] ever were to lose any of the beans” (Lapine and Sondheim 13). The Witch’s was trying to teach her daughter a lesson about the birds and the bees, contributing to the theme of teaching children. The Witch’s punishment, a fairy tale motif, was that she lost her beauty making her unattractive to men. Therefore, in the punishment she bestowed upon her daughter, the Witch’s mother was protecting her and trying to teach her about the evils of the world. The Witch apparently learned her lesson because, upon taking the baby from the Baker’s mother and father, she “hid her where she’ll never be reached” (Lapine and Sondheim 14). In addition to being reinforcement for the theme of right versus wrong, it is also the fairy tale motif of the tower.

The focus is then shifted back to Jack’s house as his mother tells him, “To wish and wait from day to day will never keep the wolves away” (Lapine and Sondheim 15). Jack’s Mother’s philosophy was paralleled in the opening sequence when the characters revealed their wishes, and Jack’s Mother sarcastically stated, “I wish my son were not a fool. I wish my house was not a mess. I wish the cow was full of milk. I wish the walls were full of gold — I wish a lot of things ...” (Lapine and Sondheim 6). Her philosophy also reveals how she feels about Jack’s father.
She likens Jack’s father to a wolf and expresses her desire to keep him away. Furthermore, she states, “We have to live, I don’t care how” (Lapine and Sondheim 15). Sharing her definition of right versus wrong, she feels it is right and necessary to do whatever she can to survive and is not concerned with the consequences. So, she sends Jack “into the woods to journey’s end” (Lapine and Sondheim 16), again employing the journey fairy tale motif.

“Meanwhile, the Witch, for purposes of her own, explained how the baker might lift the spell” (Lapine and Sondheim 16). The Baker and his Wife are required to retrieve one item from each of the four stories represented in the show. “One: the cow as white as milk” (Lapine and Sondheim 16) comes from “Jack and the Beanstalk.” “Two: the cape as red as blood” (Lapine and Sondheim 16) refers to Little Red Ridinghood’s infamous cape. “Three: the hair as yellow as corn” (Lapine and Sondheim 16) is Rapunzel’s hair. “Four: the slipper as pure as gold” (Lapine and Sondheim 16) is the one belonging to Cinderella’s dainty feet. The Baker and his Wife are given “three days” (Lapine and Sondheim 16) to complete this task. This is another example of the number three fairy tale motif. Sondheim uses the Baker and his Wife to represent the audience within the show. Fairy tales were originally told by common folk. The Baker and his Wife represent these common folk. Just as the Baker and his Wife take what they need from these stories, the audience will also extract meaning from the show.

In the distance, a fanfare is heard as the Stepmother announces the arrival of the carriage that will take them to the Festival. The fanfare is the second important musical motif in the show. It is used to represent nobility and is always heard from offstage since nobility is out of reach for most people. Nobility is very far away for Cinderella. Her Stepmother breaks her promise, refusing to allow Cinderella to go to the Festival because “those nails ... those clothes ... with those, you’d make us the fools of the Festival and mortify the Prince” (Lapine and Sondheim 17). The broken promise is another fairy tale motif. As the family leaves, Cinderella’s Father “grunts and exits” (Lapine and Sondheim 17). He no longer cares about Cinderella, making it seem as though she no longer has a father like her counterparts Jack, Little Red Ridinghood, the Baker, and Rapunzel.

“The Baker, having gone off, returns in hunting gear” (Lapine and Sondheim 17). He is ready to lift the spell from his house. He feels “only [he] can lift the spell, the spell is on [his]
house” (Lapine and Sondheim 18). In short, the Baker is trying to act independently from his Wife, and doesn’t want to need her. On the other hand, his Wife insists “The spell is on our house. We must lift the spell together, the spell is on our house” (Lapine and Sondheim 18). Thus, the Wife is a feminist because she believes in equality among the sexes.

As Scene 1 draws to a close, the characters gather and prepare for their journey “into the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 19). They also hint at the development of the right versus wrong theme. The Baker, his Wife, and Cinderella explain, “The path is straight, you (I) know it well, but who can tell — “(Lapine and Sondheim 19)? Like Little Red Ridinghood earlier, these characters too have never faced life-altering decisions, so their definition of right, like the path, is straight. The theme of opportunity is introduced as the characters state “the time is now” (Lapine and Sondheim 20). In the final chorus of the “Prologue,” all the company advises “but careful not to lose the way” (Lapine and Sondheim 21). To them, losing the way is equivalent to losing the right path and, therefore, constitutes their definition of wrong.

**Act One: Scene Two**

“Cinderella had planted a branch at the grave of her mother and she visited there so often, and wept so much, that her tears watered it until it had become a handsome tree” (Lapine and Sondheim 22). While Cinderella is at her mother’s grave she further explores her definition of right versus wrong further. She asks, “I’ve been good and I’ve been kind, Mother, doing only what I learned from you. Why then am I left behind, Mother, is there something more that I should do? What is wrong with me, Mother” (Lapine and Sondheim 22)? This encounter shows further development of the right versus wrong theme.

Then, “suddenly, the ghost of Cinderella’s Mother appears within the tree” (Lapine and Sondheim 22). This transformation is a fairy tale motif, the magical transformation. The tree is also a helper object because it gives Cinderella a dress and slippers to wear to the Festival therefore illustrating the fairy tale motif, helper object. The type of tree Cinderella’s Mother appears in is a hazel tree. Hazel is a symbol of inspiration and wisdom. It is fitting, then, that Cinderella’s Mother tells her daughter, “Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor and good, fortune, like bad, can
befall when least expected” (Lapine and Sondheim 22). Cinderella’s Mother is bestowing wisdom upon her daughter as the symbol of hazel suggests. This bit of wisdom also acts to further develop the theme of opportunity in that Cinderella’s Mother warns her that opportunity doesn’t last forever.

As Cinderella leaves her Mother’s grave for the Festival she sings, “I’m off to get my wish” (Lapine and Sondheim 23). The melody of her song is the fanfare motif, which symbolizes nobility. This is appropriate because Cinderella’s wish is to share a night with the royal family. Thus, Sondheim once again melds music and meaning as Cinderella’s melody parallels her wish.

After Cinderella’s departure, we see Jack taking Milky White to market. The Mysterious Man stumbles upon Jack and tells him, “Why you’d be lucky to exchange her for a sack of beans” (Lapine and Sondheim 23). Essentially the Mysterious Man is trying to influence the story. We will later learn that the Mysterious Man is the Baker’s father whom the Baker believed had died in “a baking accident” (Lapine and Sondheim 12). You will recall that the Baker and his Wife are the audiences representatives within the cast. Since the Mysterious Man is related to the Baker, he, too, acts on the audiences behalf. Traditionally, fairy tales were told by the common people. The Mysterious Man is fulfilling his duty as a representative for the common people by attempting to steer the story in the right direction.

In addition, the Mysterious Man is attempting to right his wrongs by making sure the story is told correctly. The Baker is barren because of his father’s wrongdoings. In order to reverse the curse that was placed on his family, the Baker must get Jack’s cow. When the Mysterious Man witnesses that Jack is unwilling to sell his cow to the Baker for less than five pounds, he intervenes. In short, the Mysterious Man is trying to atone for his mistakes by convincing Jack to sell his cow and thus, helps his son gather the items he needs to reverse the curse and have a child.

**Act One: Scene 2**

**“Hello Little Girl”**

The song begins with the Wolf “rubbing his thighs” (Lapine and Sondheim 24) and groaning. This introduction is suggestive of heavy pre-orgasmic breathing. The Wolf goes on to enumerate the characteristics of Little Red Ridinghood he finds erotic. He describes her as
"especially lush, delicious" (Lapine and Sondheim 24). While it may seem that the Wolf wants to
eat Little Red Ridinghood, in truth, he finds her delicious in other ways. Sondheim uses the word
lush to mean voluptuous and sensual, indicating that the Wolf views Little Red Ridinghood as a
potential sexual conquest rather than a meal.

During the Wolf’s sensual musings, the accompanying music was heavy and tense. The
tone and style of the music reflect the Wolf’s impure desire to take Little Red Ridinghood’s
virginity. In contrast, the music becomes lighter in style when he approaches Little Red
Ridinghood. Before he can have her for his own, the Wolf must first charm Little Red
Ridinghood. Thus, the light and suave style of the music reflects the Wolf’s task and hides his
true motives. In addition, the Wolf is played by the same actor who plays Cinderella’s Prince.
Traditionally, Cinderella’s prince is thought of as Prince Charming. Thus, the Wolf’s inner charm
is reflected through the choice of actor.

Little Red Ridinghood tries to fend off the Wolf by repeating her mother’s advice to stay
“straight ahead” (Lapine and Sondheim 25). In this statement by Little Red Ridinghood, we can
again see the themes of teaching children and right versus wrong. Little Red Ridinghood has
obviously learned from her mother that the only right path is that which is straight.

We then learn that Little Red Ridinghood hasn’t been the Wolf’s only conquest of the day.
The Wolf “mutterts to himself” (Lapine and Sondheim 25) that he had “grandmother first” (Lapine
and Sondheim 25). Grandmother though, was not as easy as the Wolf thinks Little Red
Ridinghood will be. The Wolf refers to Granny as “brittle” (Lapine and Sondheim 25). By
definition, brittle means difficult to deal with. Therefore, the Wolf found it hard to seduce Granny.

On the other hand, the Wolf describes Little Red Ridinghood as “supple” (Lapine and Sondheim
25), which, by definition, means readily bent, yielding or changing readily, compliant or
adaptable. Thus, the Wolf feels it will be easy to get Little Red Ridinghood to stray from her path
and have sex with him.

Little Red Ridinghood continues to stick to her mother’s teachings. She explains “Come
what may [she will] follow the path and never stray” (Lapine and Sondheim 25). Again she is
demonstrating the teachings of her mother and that her definition of right versus wrong remains
constant and straight, like her path. The Wolf on the other hand, has a broader definition of what
is right. He tells Little Red Ridinghood to pick “any path, so many worth exploring” (Lapine and Sondheim 25). He tries to persuade her that there is more than one right. He also, like Cinderella’s Mother, tries to convince Little Red Ridinghood that opportunity is short-lived. He explains to Little Red Ridinghood that “just one [path] would be so boring. And look what you’re ignoring” (Lapine and Sondheim 26). He wants Little Red Ridinghood to stray from her path because opportunities will not last forever.

As Little Red Ridinghood ponders her surroundings, the Wolf again turns inward and muses about the meal he is about to have. He describes Little Red Ridinghood as “scrumptious carnality” (Lapine and Sondheim 26). Carnality refers both to Little Red Ridinghood being meat for the Wolf’s meal, and also to her sensual qualities. This again reflects the Wolf’s desire to have sex with Little Red Ridinghood.

Little Red Ridinghood starts to repeat her mother’s teachings to the Wolf again. This time though, she begins to rationalize, reasoning that “A small delay ... Granny might like a fresh bouquet” (Lapine and Sondheim 26). Little Red Ridinghood’s rationalizations indicate the beginnings of a new definition of right. The rationalization is reflected in the music as an ominous xylophone part is introduced for the first time. By saving the xylophone until Little Red Ridinghood begins to questions her idea of right, Sondheim is reflecting Little Red Ridinghood’s inner turmoil in the music.

Now, sure that Little Red Ridinghood will be his, the Wolf bids her goodbye as he rushes to beat her to Granny’s house. The Wolf’s departing words are, “Goodbye, little girl. And hello ...” (Lapine and Sondheim 26). The Wolf is able to say goodbye to the little girl Little Red Ridinghood was, because she has made the decision to stray from the path. However, he is not yet able to say hello to the woman that she is about to become because she has not yet lost her virginity to him. The song ends with an orgasmic howl, indicating that his initial seduction of Little Red Ridinghood is complete.

**Act One: Scene 2**

The Witch and Baker discuss how the Baker should go about getting the “cape as red as blood” (Lapine and Sondheim 27). The Witch urges the Baker to “go up to the little thing,
and...take it” (Lapine and Sondheim 27). The Baker, on the other hand, has reservations about the Witch’s approach. He tells her, “I can’t just take a cloak from a little girl” (Lapine and Sondheim 27). Little Red Ridinghood’s cloak symbolizes her virginity and more directly her hymen. The cape is referred to as being “as red as blood” (Lapine and Sondheim 27), which is a reference to the blood that is lost when a women loses her virginity and her hymen is broken. The Baker views Little Red Ridinghood as a child who needs to be protected, as she should not yet be losing her cape.

“We suddenly hear Rapunzel singing in the distance” (Lapine and Sondheim 27). The melody Rapunzel sings is the third musical motif of the show, the bean theme. Rapunzel is named after the rapunzel that the Baker’s father stole from the Witch’s garden. That rapunzel was grown out of beans just as Rapunzel was grown out of the beans that the Baker’s father stole from the witch when he raped her. The bean theme will become more important later.

The Baker’s Wife exerts her independence when she follows the Baker into the woods. The Baker does not yet realize how much he needs his wife. He also views his marriage in terms of traditional gender roles wherein the husband provides for the wife who stays at home to raise the children. He feels it is his duty to reverse the curse himself. While he is struggling to remember the Witch’s request he still insists, “the spell is on my house” (Lapine and Sondheim 27) and refuses to let his wife help him. In essence the Baker is still functioning at a juvenile stage of development thinking that the world revolves around him and that everything is owned by him. His egocentric attitude is equivalent to a two-year old who refuses to share his toys. The Baker’s Wife has a more modern view of gender roles. Even after her husband dismisses her, she continues to coach him on the list of necessary items. She believes that they must reverse the curse together.

With the Baker and his Wife’s conflicting views on how their marriage should work, the story begins to get off track. The Mysterious Man enters and says to Jack, “You’d be lucky to exchange her for a sack of beans” (Lapine and Sondheim 29). The Mysterious Man therefore plants the idea that Jack should give Milky White to the Baker and his Wife when they offer him the magic beans.
production.

The Witch calls to Rapunzel, “Rapunzel. Rapunzel. Let down your hair to me” (Lapine and Sondheim 31). Colloquially, to let down one’s hair means to let go of one’s reservations or inhibitions. Therefore, this statement by the Witch is ironic. The Witch is asking Rapunzel to let go of her inhibitions. At the same time that she is keeping Rapunzel locked in a tower to protect her. Later, Rapunzel’s Prince says to himself, “Tomorrow, before that horrible witch arrives, I will stand before her window and ask her to let down her hair to me” (Lapine and Sondheim 31). His musings foreshadow that Rapunzel will eventually break free of the Witch. Since Rapunzel’s hair symbolizes her reservations and inhibitions, when she eventually lets her hair down to her Prince, she will be a grown woman.

In addition, Rapunzel’s hair is described as “yellow as corn” (Lapine and Sondheim 47). By definition, corn refers to something which is unduly sentimental. It is fitting then that the only thing Rapunzel and the Witch “can share [is Rapunzel’s] hair” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). Rapunzel and the Witch do not have a good relationship and therefore are forced to cling to something which is unduly sentimental in order to achieve common ground.

With reference to children, the Witch explains to the audience that, “Nothing’s so distressing though as when they keep you guessing so be sure you don’t leave any doors ajar” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). Again Sondheim uses irony; the tower that Rapunzel is in does not have doors. Therefore, there are no doors which could be left ajar. On the other hand, a door could be looked at as a means of approach or an opportunity. In this example, the Witch is depriving Rapunzel of opportunity when she closes all her doors. Here, we see the theme of opportunity explored from a different angle. Previously, concerned loved ones were warning their families not to overlook opportunity. The Witch, though, is purposely depriving her daughter of opportunity.

The Witch and Rapunzel sing about the “little world” (Sondheim “Our Little World”) that the Witch had made. While, in the beginning, both agree that the “world is big enough for me ... all it needs to be” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). The Witch insistently adds the description “perfect” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). It is significant that only the Witch refers to their world as perfect because it signals the beginning of Rapunzel’s rebellion. It is not long before Rapunzel
is contradicting her mother’s claims of perfection. Rapunzel begins to list the imperfections. She wishes her mother “didn’t drool ... would cut her nails ... didn’t have those pointy teeth” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). These statements are significant because they foreshadow Rapunzel’s imminent rebellion.

The Witch again offers her advice on child rearing to the audience. She teaches that “children need protection just the way they need affection or they wonder and they wander and they run from your little world” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). Essentially, she is sharing her belief that letting someone think for herself will make her leave the little world. In short, Sondheim uses this song to allow the audience to see into the Witch’s mind. We now know that the Witch did not lock Rapunzel in a tower because she was mean. Instead, the Witch locked Rapunzel in a tower because she was scared. In the end, Rapunzel and the Witch both have found reasons why their world is lacking, but come to the conclusion “otherwise ... nevertheless ... our little world is perfect” (Sondheim “Our Little World”). Through their conclusions, we can see that both mother and daughter love each other.

**Act 2: Scene 2**

The focus shifts when, “The Baker steps into Little Red Ridinghood’s path” (Lapine and Sondheim 31). “Embarrassed” (Lapine and Sondheim 31), she admits to him, “I ate all the sweets, *and* half the loaf of bread” (Lapine and Sondheim 31). Here, we see another example of food and eating representing sex. Little Red Ridinghood has just come from her sexually charged episode with the Wolf. Because she has not yet given herself to the Wolf, she is feeling sexually frustrated. Thus, she is using food as a substitute for sex.

Later, when the Baker “dashes away with [Little Red Ridinghood’s] cape under his arm, Little Red Ridinghood stands numb for moment, then lets out a bloodcurdling scream, followed by hysterical weeping” (Lapine and Sondheim 32). Little Red Ridinghood reacts in this manner because, although she is sexually frustrated, she is not yet ready to give up her cape, which, symbolizes her virginity, to the Baker. The Baker “sheepishly [returns with the] cape [and places] it on Little Red Ridinghood’s shoulders” (Lapine and Sondheim 32). The use of the word “sheepishly” (Lapine and Sondheim 32) to describe the Baker parallels the use of “sheepishly” to
describe Little Red Ridinghood, which occurred on page 7. By using sheepishly a second time, Sondheim is reminding his audience of Little Red Ridinghood’s sexual desires and is posing the questions of whether or not the Baker is really a wolf. Little Red Ridinghood answers this question by telling the Baker, “I’d rather a wolf than you, any day” (Lapine and Sondheim 32).

Thus, Little Red Ridinghood states her desire for a grown man, not an innocent baker.

In the exchange between Little Red Ridinghood and the Baker, there is further development of the teaching children theme. After he has stolen the cape and then given it back, the Baker explains himself by saying, “I just wanted to make certain that you really loved this cape. Now you go to your granny’s – and you be careful that no wolf comes your way” (Lapine and Sondheim 32). That is, he is trying to teach her about the importance of her childhood.

Having let the cape slip away, the Baker realizes that he must utilize a different strategy if he is to collect the items the Witch requested. The words of his Wife come back to him as he sings to himself a reprise of “Maybe They’re Magic.” During the reprise, the Baker begins to grow up and adjust his views of right and wrong from strictly black and white to shades of gray. He reaches the conclusion that, “A cloak is what you make it so you take it” (Lapine and Sondheim 32). In addition to right and wrong, the Baker has learned a lesson about opportunity from his Wife. Like his Wife, he rationalizes his decision. He feels that the cloak will be more important to him than it is to Little Red Ridinghood, since she is already on the verge of womanhood. As he exits, the Baker finishes his song “with resolve” (Lapine and Sondheim 32). The word “resolve” (Lapine and Sondheim 32) is used to contrast the word “sheepishly”, which previously described the Baker. Before, the Baker was described as sheepish because he was unwilling to do whatever it took to fulfill the Witch’s requests. Now, he has resolve because he has redefined his views of right and wrong, and, like his Wife, he feels the end will justify the means.

Now Little Red Ridinghood is at Granny’s cottage. She remarks to herself, “How uneasy I feel. Perhaps it’s all the sweets” (Lapine and Sondheim 33). Here, the word “sweets” (Lapine and Sondheim 33) means both candy and obedience. At this moment, Little Red Ridinghood realizes that all her life she had been obedient to her mother. All of the obedience has made her uneasy and it is now that she starts to realize she must take control of her own life. Consequently, she enters the cottage and has sex with the Wolf, who has been waiting for her. The Narrator
delicately recounts this event, saying, "Well, it was a full day of eating for both" (Lapine and Sondheim 33). Again, food and sex are paralleled. Little Red Ridinghood has spent all day eating in anticipation of her liaison with the Wolf. The Wolf then ate her up. The Baker is the first to discover the pair's indiscretion. He spots a piece of Little Red Ridinghood's cape on the bed. This "red cloth" (Lapine and Sondheim 34) is equivalent to the blood that is spilled on bed sheets when a virgin engages in sexual intercourse for the first time.

Sondheim utilizes the fairy tale motif of punishment during the rescue of Granny and Little Red Ridinghood. "Granny emerges from [the] Wolf wheezing, Kill the devil! Take that knife and cut his evil head off! Let's see the demon sliced into a thousand bits. Better yet, let the animal die a painful, agonizing, hideous death" (Lapine and Sondheim 34). In short, Granny wants the Wolf to be punished.

**Act One: Scene 2**

"I Know Things Now"

The song begins with Little Red Ridinghood reminding us of her mother's advice, "Mother said, 'straight ahead,' not to delay or be misled. I should have heeded her advice ... but he seemed so nice" (Lapine and Sondheim 34). Little Red Ridinghood's mother's definition of right is to go "straight ahead" (Lapine and Sondheim 34) on the path of life. Like the Witch Little Red Ridinghood's mother is extremely protective of her daughter and leaves Little Red Ridinghood very few opportunities to make mistakes. The Witch locked her daughter in a tower so she wouldn't be misled. Little Red Ridinghood's mother insists that her daughter follow "straight ahead" (Lapine and Sondheim 34) so she is not misled. Little Red Ridinghood's mother's advice also reminds of the teaching children theme since she is trying to teach her daughter right versus wrong.

Parallels between Rapuzel and Little Red Ridinghood continue throughout the song. In "Our Little World" the Witch warned, "Children need protection just the way they need affection or they wonder and they wander and they run from your little world" (Sondheim, "Our Little World"). The Witch's prediction came true in the case of Little Red Ridinghood when Little Red Ridinghood allowed the Wolf to show her "things many beautiful things that [she] hadn't thought
to explore” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). The “beautiful things” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) were off Little Red Ridinghood’s path beyond her narrow view of the world much like Rapunzel who admitted, “Our little world is all I have to see” (Sondheim, “Our Little World”). Both Little Red Ridinghood and Rapunzel have limited frame of reference because their mother’s have tried to control their experiences.

In this song the audience becomes aware that Little Red Ridinghood’s views are expanding. First she tells us the Wolf “seemed so nice” (Lapine and Sondheim 34). The world seemed implies that Little Red Ridinghood has her own view of the Wolf. For the first time, she is not relying on her mother’s advice and is forming opinions for herself. Later she admits the Wolf made her “feel excited” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). In other words, Little Red Ridinghood was aroused by the Wolf. In this instance her views are expanding to include her sexual identity and feelings.

Little Red Ridinghood describes her encounter with the Wolf by saying, “and he swallowed me down, down a dark slimy path, where lie secrets that I never want to know” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). The “dark slimy path” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) can be looked at in several ways. First, there is the traditional interpretation where the path would be the Wolf’s esophagus. Then, there is the sexual interpretation. In this interpretation, the act of swallowing would be the act of penile penetration and the path would be Little Red Ridinghood’s vagina. Finally, there is the interpretation which deals with Little Red Ridinghood’s maturation. In this case, the path can be looked at as the birth canal. Therefore, Little Red Ridinghood is experiencing a rebirth of sorts as she moves from childhood to womanhood.

The notion of maturity is further developed when Little Red Ridinghood tell us, “We wait in the dark until someone sets us free, and we’re brought into the light, and we’re back at the start” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). The “dark” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) describes both the Wolf’s stomach and Little Red Ridinghood’s innocence. The act of being set free refers to the Baker rescuing Little Red Ridinghood and Granny in addition to Little Red Ridinghood beginning to think for herself. The “light” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) depicts for the light Granny’s cottage and Little Red Ridinghood’s new found sexual knowledge. “The start” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) represents that, physically, Little Red Ridinghood is in the same location she was now that she has
been rescued from the Wolf. It also signals the return of the A section of the song.

Again Sondheim uses music to emphasize the meaning of the lyrics. The entire song is written in G pentatonic. Pentatonic scales are often used in children’s songs because they are easy to sing and fall naturally within a child’s voice. Thus, it is ironic that Sondheim uses the key of G pentatonic. Essentially, Little Red Ridinghood is singing a child’s song but she is singing about very adult subject matters.

This song is written in ternary form with an introduction and coda. According to the Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music, ternary form is, “a common musical form consisting of three distinct and self-contained sections, the third being a repeat ... of the first, while the second forms a noticeable contrast to the first (and third): ABA.” Little Red Ridinghood’s words, like the music, go in a circle. The first A section begins with the words, “and he showed me things” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). Throughout the first A section and the B section Little Red Ridinghood tells her story. During the B section the music grows frantic and Little Red Ridinghood’s speech takes on a childlike tone. Here Sondheim uses the music to parallel Little Red Ridinghood’s feelings of excitement and fear. The excitement is reflected in the steady acceleration of the tempo and the fear is reflected in nervous string glissandos and the ascending pitches of the melody. When the A section returns, the music is the same and the lyrics are similar, which contrasts Little Red Ridinghood’s sudden maturity. Thus, Sondheim uses the music and lyrics to contrast what has happened to Little Red Ridinghood. They have stayed the same while she has changed.

Toward the end of the song Little Red Ridinghood tells us, “and though scary is exciting, nice is different than good” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). Through her encounter with the Wolf what was scary has become exciting for Little Red Ridinghood. She was scared to have sex with him, but she learned that it made her feel good. Through this encounter she also learned that she does not have to be good to be nice. Good suggests someone who is “not spoiled or ruined” in short, someone who is a virgin. Nice, on the other hand, suggests someone who is “pleasing and agreeable in nature.” Little Red Ridinghood has learned that she does not have to be a virgin to be a nice person.

At the conclusion of the song, Little Red Ridinghood tells us, “Now I know: don’t be scared. Granny is right, just be prepared. Isn’t it nice to know a lot! ... and a little bit not
Little Red Ridinghood feels that she can now have sexual urges without feeling scared she knows, “don’t be scared” (Lapine and Sondheim 36). Here she also rejects her mother’s advice for that of her Granny. Her mother did not want Little Red Ridinghood to have sex. Granny, on the other hand, does not frown upon having sex (after all she was eaten by the Wolf too) she just wants Little Red Ridinghood to “be prepared” (Lapine and Sondheim 36), or, in other words, use birth control. In her final statement, Little Red Ridinghood realizes that her newfound knowledge has come at a price. Even though she has entered into womanhood, she has a bit of child still inside her. By admitting that it is “a little bit not ... nice to know a lot” (Lapine and Sondheim 36), Little Red Ridinghood is admitting that she realizes she can never fully return to her childhood.

Act 1: Scene 2

Now the focus shifts to Jack and his Mother. After Jack’s Mother learns that he has traded Milky-White for beans, she sends him to “bed without supper” (Lapine and Sondheim 36). Here Sondheim again incorporates the fairy tale motif of punishment.

**Act 1: Scene 2**

**“A Very Nice Prince”**

We hear “fanfares in the distance” (Lapine and Sondheim 37). These, of course, are the repetitions of the fanfare motif, which we know signals royalty. In fact, Sondheim extends the motif and bases the melody for the song on the fanfare motif. Again, Sondheim is connecting words and music.

We learn that Cinderella’s Prince is running through the woods looking for Cinderella. While Cinderella is trying to avoid the Prince, she stumbles upon the Wife. The Wife remarks, “If a Prince were looking for me, I certainly wouldn’t hide” (Lapine and Sondheim 37). Here, we learn that the Wife has a tendency to want what she can’t have. Cinderella shares this trait with the Wife. When the Wife “proud[ly]” (Lapine and Sondheim 37) tells Cinderella of her husband, Cinderella replies “impressed” (Lapine and Sondheim 37). Here we learn that although the Wife may have wishes of a prince, she is still in love with her husband and that Cinderella is impressed...
by the Baker rather than the Prince. Still, the Wife would rather discuss the Prince. Here she again represents the audience. The Wife is fascinated by royalty, much like many common people. The Wife asks, “Is he charming? They say that he’s charming” (Lapine and Sondheim 38). Here, Sondheim alludes to the idea of Prince Charming. This again connects the audience to the story through the Wife, as many people think of fairy tale heroes as “Prince Charming.” Cinderella’s focus, though, is on the Festival, which “made a nice change” (Lapine and Sondheim 38). Unlike the traditional story, here we learn that Cinderella had no real interest in the Prince. Essentially, she just wanted to go to the ball to get away from her life at home. This idea is perpetuated further when Cinderella says, “He has charm for a Prince, I guess...” (Lapine and Sondheim 39). Here, we again see her ambivalence toward the prince.

As we hear the chimes of midnight, “Cinderella exits” (Lapine and Sondheim 39), and the “Wife starts off after Cinderella; Milky-White lets out a ‘Moo!’ and takes off in another direction; [the] Wife stops, torn between Milky-White and Cinderella” (Lapine and Sondheim 39). The Wife is suffering the consequences of being an ordinary person inside of a fairy tale. She must make the decision between an ordinary life, Milky-White, or her wishes of royalty, Cinderella. In the end, she decides to go after Milky-White.

**Act 1: Scene 2**

**“One Midnight Gone”**

After the first midnight ends, each character offers a piece of wisdom to the audience. Traditionally, many fairy tales end with a moral. Through this song, Sondheim incorporates this traditional fairy tale device.

The Mysterious Man tells us, “No knot unties itself...” (Lapine and Sondheim 40). Knot is used to symbolize a story or tale. Because the Mysterious Man is one of the common people within the fairy tale, it is his responsibility to help tell the story. In short, no story can tell itself.

The Witch warns, “Sometimes the things you most wish for are not to be touched...” (Lapine and Sondheim 40). Here, the Witch speaks of several things. First are the items the Baker and his Wife are collecting for the potion. In order for the potion to work, the Witch cannot touch any of the items. The Witch is also speaking about the rapunzel she grew in her garden.
Even though the Baker's mother really wanted the rapunzel, his entire family would have been better off if his father had not touched it. Next, Rapunzel, the Witch has locked her daughter away so she cannot touch the outside world, which is what she wishes for most. Finally, the beans. As we will soon learn, the Baker would have been better off to leave the beans he found in his father's hunting jacket at home.

The Princes believe, "The harder to get, the better to have" (Lapine and Sondheim 40). Essentially, the Princes are only interested in the pursuit. They both like to chase after women merely for the challenge.

Jack announces, "The difference between a cow and a bean is a bean can begin an adventure..." (Lapine and Sondheim 40). Jack's moral develops the theme of opportunity. Milky-White offered little opportunity for Jack. On the other hand, we will soon learn that the beans will open many doors for the young lad.

Little Red Ridinghood maintains, "The prettier the flower, the farther from the path..." (Lapine and Sondheim 40). She feels one must be willing to question her beliefs and stray from the path. Her moral also speaks of opportunity. It is impossible to find the prettiest flower if you do not find opportunity to stray from the path. Furthermore, Little Red Ridinghood has come to terms with her sexuality. Even though she strayed from the path to have sex with the Wolf, she feels that she is now "prettier" (Lapine and Sondheim 40) as a result of her encounter with the Wolf.

Cinderella's Father flaps, "The closer to the family, the closer to the wine" (Lapine and Sondheim 41). Here, we learn Cinderella's Father needs to be drunk in order to deal with his family. In short, the closer in proximity his family is to him, the closer the wine is to his stomach.

Cinderella reports, "Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor..." (Lapine and Sondheim 41). This of course, speaks of the theme of opportunity. Life is short, and every moment must be taken advantage of.

The Wife suggests, "You may know what you need, but to get what you want, better see that you keep what you have" (Lapine and Sondheim 41). The Wife knows that she needs security. The security comes from her husband. What she wants is something new. She longs for the Prince. What she must be sure she keeps is justification for her rights and wrongs. We
have already seen the Wife adjust her view of what was right when she got the cow from Jack. She feels that although her views can be adjusted, they must always have justification.

**Act 1: Scene 3**

*“Giants in the Sky”*

“Jack appears suddenly from the trees, carrying an oversized money sack” (Lapine and Sondheim 42). This song is based on the bean motif. Sondheim is again paralleling music with meaning. Since Jack is singing of his adventures at the top of the beanstalk, it makes sense that his song would be based on the bean motif because the beanstalk he is singing of grew out of a bean.

Much of Jack’s song parallels Little Red Ridinghood’s “I Know Things Now.” Jack says, “When you’re way up high ... You’re free to do whatever pleases you, exploring things you’d never dare ‘cause you don’t care” (Lapine and Sondheim 43). This parallels Little Red Ridinghood’s statement that she “had been so careful [she] never had cared” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). Later, Jack says, “And you’re stomach stone” (Lapine and Sondheim 43), which parallels Little Red Ridinghood’s story in that she fills the Wolf’s stomach with stones. Jack tells us of the world he “never thought to explore” (Lapine and Sondheim 44), which goes in conjunction with the “many beautiful things, that [Little Red Ridinghood] hadn’t thought to explore” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). Jack wishes he “could live in between” (Lapine and Sondheim 44) the sky and his Mother’s house. Again, a connection is drawn between Little Red Ridinghood and Jack. They both are becoming adults, but part of them wants to remain a child.

Like Little Red Ridinghood, Jack matures into adulthood when he has his first sexual experience. He tells us the Giant “gives [him] food” (Lapine and Sondheim 43). Again, food is used to symbolize sex. In addition, the Giant drew Jack “close to her giant breast, and [he knows] things now that [he] never knew before, not till the sky (Lapine and Sondheim 43). The Giant’s breasts represent her womanhood. Since she gave her womanhood to Jack, one can imply that they had sex. Jack also leaves the sky with new knowledge. This knowledge is sexual knowledge that he did not have before he climbed the beanstalk.

**Act Two: Scene Three**
The Wife tells her husband Milky White “ran away” (Lapine and Sondheim 45). The Baker and his Wife then get into an argument which is reminiscent of children on a playground.

BAKER: I should have know better than to have entrusted her to you.
WIFE: She might just as easily have run from you!
BAKER: But she didn’t!
WIFE: BUT SHE MIGHT HAVE!
BAKER: BUT SHE DIDN’T!!! (45)

Here the Witch serves to get the story back on track. She tells the Baker and his Wife, “WHO CARES! THE COW IS GONE! GET IT BACK! GET IT BACK” (Lapine and Sondheim 45)! Like the Mysterious Man, the Witch also functions as a narrator within the story. Both she and the Mysterious Man are attempting to right their past wrongs through the Baker and his Wife. The Witch is attempting to restore the beauty she lost before she allowed the Mysterious Man to steal her beans. Since she has a stake in the success of the Baker and his Wife it is critical that she also has the power to help steer the story in the right direction. Thus, like the Mysterious Man, the Witch “appears from nowhere” (Lapine and Sondheim 45), when the story goes awry. This scene also foreshadows the Witch’s eventual rise as the primary narrator in Act Two.

After the Baker and his Wife reconcile, the Baker vows to “make things right...no more hunting about in the woods for strange objects. No more witches and dimwitted boys and hungry little girls” (Lapine and Sondheim 46). The Baker’s vow foreshadows the song, “No More,” which he will sing in the second act. By using this bit of foreshadowing, Sondheim is hinting at the development of the Baker’s character. In traditional fairy tales, characters were static, and, therefore did not change. This is one way in which Sondheim departs from the traditional fairy tale format. His characters all go through personal changes. This aspect of Sondheim’s style will be seen further in Act Two.

**Act One: Scene Three**

“Agony”

Cinderella’s Prince begins the song by asking his brother, “Did I abuse her or show her disdain? Why does she run from me” (Lapine and Sondheim 47)? In short, Cinderella’s Prince
Wolf.

The Wife has been watching the brothers meeting. When they are through, “she begins to follow the Princes” (Lapine and Sondheim 49). The Wife is torn between two worlds. On one hand, she has a dream to be with a Prince; on the other hand, she has a commitment to her husband. In short, the Wife must reexamine her definitions of right and wrong before she can proceed further into the woods. Thus, Sondheim is developing the right versus wrong theme.

Act One: Scene Three

Jack’s Mother and the Wife meet in the woods. Jack’s Mother is looking for her son, and mourns, “You be careful with your children...” (Lapine and Sondheim 50). This advice parallels the Witch’s warning that “Nothing so distressing though as when they keep you guessing” (Sondheim, “Our Little World”). In addition, Jack’s Mother’s advice speaks to the theme of teaching children.

The “Mysterious Man reappears and ... [the] Witch surprises him” (Lapine and Sondheim 50). The Witch questions, “What are you doing” (Lapine and Sondheim 50)? The Mysterious Man assures her, “I am here to see your wish is granted” (Lapine and Sondheim 50). In short, the Mysterious Man wants to right his wrongs. By making sure the Witch’s wish is granted, he can be sure that the beauty the Witch lost when he stole her beans is restored. The Witch, on the other hand, does not want the Mysterious Man’s help and tells him, “Keep off my path” (Lapine and Sondheim 50)! Like the rest of the characters, the Witch must form her own definitions of right and wrong. By banishing the Mysterious Man from her path, she is deciding that what is right for her does not include help from men.

Meanwhile, the Wife has gone to Rapunzel’s tower to collect her hair. She “yanks [the] hair three times” (Lapine and Sondheim 51). This is another occurrence of the number three motif. After collecting the hair, the Wife meets Cinderella. The Wife asks Cinderella for one of her slippers. Cinderella “giggles” (Lapine and Sondheim 51) in response. Cinderella’s giggles suggest that she is innocent. We have already seen that Cinderella is not sure of what she wants from her Prince. Her giggles help us understand that the reason for her indecision is her innocence. This idea is perpetuated further when Cinderella explains to the Wife, “I have no
experience with Princes and castles and gowns” (Lapine and Sondheim 52).

The Wife retorts, “Nonsense, every girl dreams –” (Lapine and Sondheim 52). The Wife’s thoughts are interrupted by a “fanfare in the distance” (Lapine and Sondheim 52), another use of the musical fanfare motif which signals that royalty is coming. The thought that the Wife did not get to finish was that every girl dreams of falling in love with Prince Charming and living happily ever after. Thus, we again see the Wife inserting the views of the audience. She is testifying to the effect that fairy tales have on popular culture.

Act 1, Scene 3

“It Takes Two”

Leading into the song, the Baker admits, “Well ... perhaps it will take two of us to get this child” (Lapine and Sondheim 54). Here we see another example of Sondheim’s use of humor. The Baker is admitting that he needs his Wife’s help to gather the items they need to reverse the curse. The irony comes in that it always does take two people to have a child.

It is during this song that the Wife begins to discover the prince within her husband. She describes her husband as “passionate, charming, considerate, clever –” (Lapine and Sondheim 55). This description parallels Cinderella’s Prince’s description of himself in “Agony.” He describes himself as “sensitive, clever, well-mannered, considerate, passionate, charming” (Lapine and Sondheim 58). By using the same words to describe her husband, we see that the Wife is beginning to think of her husband as a prince.

This song serves as a coming-of-age for the Baker in that he is “becoming aware of us as a pair of us, each accepting a share of what’s there” (Lapine and Sondheim 55). The coming-of-age is accentuated when the Baker says, “If I dare” (Lapine and Sondheim 55). Sondheim uses the word dare to parallel Jack’s coming-of-age, “Giants in the Sky,” and Little Red Ridinghood’s coming-of-age, “I Know Things Now.” Jack talks of “exploring things you’d never dare” (Lapine and Sondheim 43), and Little Red Ridinghood explains, “They were off my path, so I never had dared” (Lapine and Sondheim 35). Thus, the word dare ties the three coming-of-age songs together.

Along with the Baker’s coming-of-age, he also begins to redefine his own ideas of right
and wrong. The Baker breaks his promise to Jack that he would sell his cow, saying, "Now, I never said I would sell!" (Lapine and Sondheim 56). This is an example of the broken promise fairy tale motif. By breaking his promise to Jack, the Baker is demonstrating the shift in his views of right and wrong. Earlier in the show, he was angry at his Wife for trading the beans for the cow, but now he believes, like his Wife, that the "if the end is right it justifies the beans" (Lapine and Sondheim 31)!

Act One: Scene 4
"The Second Midnight"

"Again, the characters appear one by one, as night changes into dawn" (Lapine and Sondheim 57). Cinderella remarks, "Wanting a ball is not wanting a Prince..." (Lapine and Sondheim 57). In short, Cinderella just wanted to get out of her house and feel beautiful. As we have discovered, Cinderella is unsure of what she wants out of a relationship; therefore it makes sense that while she may have wanted a ball she still does not know whether or not she wants a Prince.

The Stepmother explains, "You can never love somebody’s else’s child—" (Lapine and Sondheim 57). The Witch loves Rapunzel who, by her explanation is not her child. If the Stepmother is right in her assessment, we have further proof that Rapunzel really is the Witch’s biological child who was conceived when the Mysterious Man raped the Witch.

Granny remarks, "The greatest prize can often lie at the end of the thorniest path..." (Lapine and Sondheim 58). In short, Granny is saying that you often have to undergo a test to reach the prize. Again, Sondheim makes use of a traditional fairy tale motif, the test.

Act One: Scene 5

The Baker and his Wife go on a search for a new cow after the untimely death of Milky White. The Baker, "loosing patience" (Lapine and Sondheim 58), tells his wife to "steal it" (Lapine and Sondheim 58). The Baker now has completely different views of right and wrong than he did when he began his journey into the woods. Before the Baker was appalled that his Wife tricked Jack into selling his cow for beans. Now, he is willing to go one step further to
obtain the cow, and steal it.

**Act One: Scene 5**

**“Stay With Me”**

While the Baker is searching for a cow, "the witch discovered [Rapunzel’s] affections for the Prince before he could spirit her away" (Lapine and Sondheim 59). As punishment the Witch "cuts Rapunzel’s hair" (61). Thus, the fairy tale motif of punishment comes into play again.

The Witch tells Rapunzel, "Children should listen" (Lapine and Sondheim 59). She is trying to teach her daughter. This is further development of the teaching children theme.

The music used for this song is based upon both the bean motif and the fanfare motif. The melody of the song is based upon the bean motif, which reminds us of Rapunzel’s beginnings in the Witch’s garden and thus symbolizes the Witch’s desire for Rapunzel to remain a child. The accompaniment is the fanfare motif set in muted trumpets. The fanfare motif symbolizes royalty and in particular, Rapunzel’s Prince, thus symbolizing that the world is now calling for Rapunzel and she can no longer remain a child.

During the song, the Witch states, “Princes wait there in the world, it’s true. Princes, yes, but wolves and humans, too” (Lapine and Sondheim 60). According to the Witch’s definition, a Prince is neither a wolf of a human. Thus, princes are part human and part wolf. This lesson we have already learned through Cinderella’s Prince, who is also the Wolf.

Following the Witch’s protest, the Mysterious Man enters with the Baker and asks him, “Haven’t I left you alone long enough” (Lapine and Sondheim 61)? With this question, the Mysterious Man hints at the fact that he is the Baker’s father. He suggests that he has left the Baker alone for a long time, perhaps since childhood. With this question, we also see that the Mysterious Man and the Witch has similar desires — they both want their children to be with them. Also, both the Witch and the Mysterious Man are attempting to right their previous wrongs. The Witch is trying to protect her daughter from the world that hurt her. The Mysterious Man is making himself available to his son since he abandoned him before.

Next, Little Red Ridinghood enters and “swerves around, brandishing a knife” (Lapine and Sondheim 61). The knife she carries shows us that she has followed her Grandmother’s advice to
“Cinderella hobbles onstage, wearing but one shoe” (Lapine and Sondheim 62) and sings, “He’s a very smart Prince, he’s a Prince who prepares” (Lapine and Sondheim 62). For the first time, Cinderella has nice things to say about the Prince. Previously, she could think of little to say when questioned by the Baker’s Wife about him. Now, we can see that she is stating to notice the Prince and perhaps starting to have feelings for him.

The music for the song is based on the fanfare motif. The fanfare motif symbolizes royalty. Since, Cinderella is singing about royalty, this is appropriate.

Cinderella’s song like Little Red Ridinghood’s “I Know Things Now,” is a coming-of-age song. A parallel can be seen between Cinderella and Little Red Ridinghood when Cinderella admits, “To arrive at a Ball is exciting and all – once you’re there, though, it’s scary” (Lapine and Sondheim 63). The words “exciting” (Lapine and Sondheim 63) and “scary” (Lapine and Sondheim 63) parallel Little Red Ridinghood’s statement that she was “excited and scared” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) when she was with the Wolf.

Also like Little Red Ridinghood, Cinderella is beginning to form her own idea of right and wrong. She questions, “So then which do you pick: where you’re safe, out of sight, and yourself, but where everything’s wrong? Or where everything’s right and you know that you’ll never belong” (Lapine and Sondheim 63)? Here we see that she is beginning to form her own definition of right and wrong. She is questioning the life that she has with her family, knowing that it is where “everything’s wrong” (Lapine and Sondheim 63).

Even though Cinderella is beginning to form a definition of right and wrong her definition is not yet concrete. Her final decision regarding the Prince is “not to decide” (Lapine and Sondheim 64). Here we see both the themes of ambivalence and right versus wrong being developed. In addition by making the decision to “leave him a clue: for example, a shoe. And then see what he’ll do” (Lapine and Sondheim 64), Cinderella is testing the Prince’s intent. The test is a common fairy tale motif.

**Act One: Scene Five**

The “Steward bounds onstage” (Lapine and Sondheim 65). He questions the Wife about Cinderella. When she doesn’t give him a satisfactory answer, he warns her, “Lying will cost you
your life” (Lapine and Sondheim 65)! This comment foreshadows the Wife’s death in Act Two.

Cinderella’s Prince gets angry at the Steward because he went “off in search without [him]” (Lapine and Sondheim 65). The Prince’s anger is ironic. By definition a Steward is, “one who manages another’s property” (Webster’s Dictionary, 366). During Cinderella’s time, women were thought to be the property of their men. Thus, it would make sense that the Steward would be expected to look for Cinderella. Perhaps though, the Prince is something of a feminist. He is angry at the Steward because he doesn’t view Cinderella as his property, and, therefore, feels the Steward was out of line when he went in search of her.

At the end of Scene Five, after the Baker and his Wife have gathered all of the items to reverse the curse, the Mysterious Man announces, “All is repaired” (Lapine and Sondheim 70). Immediately after his announcement, “he dies” (Lapine and Sondheim 70). The Mysterious Man’s purpose in the show was to finish his story, a story that started when he abandoned his son. In order to finish his story, he had to right his wrongs, which he did by helping the Baker and his Wife to collect the necessary items to reverse the curse. Since the items are now collected, the Mysterious Man no longer has a purpose. He story is finished and, therefore, the only thing left for him is death.

After the Mysterious Man’s death, the Witch is “transformed into a beautiful woman” (Lapine and Sondheim 70). Here we see two examples of fairy tale motifs. First, the Witch has become a “beautiful woman” (Lapine and Sondheim 70), which illustrates the beautiful maiden motif. In order to achieve this state, the Witch was “transformed” (Lapine and Sondheim 70), thus illustrating the transformation motif.

**Act One: Scene Six**

When Cinderella’s Prince finds his bride, Cinderella’s Father remarks, “I always wanted a son” (Lapine and Sondheim 72)! Here we see Cinderella’s Father’s selfish and sexist attitudes. He neglects to congratulate his daughter, opting instead to butter up the Prince. Also, Cinderella’s Father is not happy for his daughter, but concerned about what he is going to gain from her relationship with the Prince.

We learn that while Rapunzel was in the desert she bore twins. We cannot learn of the
twins until after the curse has been reversed. Rapunzel and the Baker are siblings; therefore, until the curse was reversed Rapunzel was also unable to have children.

**Act One: Scene Six**

**“Ever After”**

The final song of the act begins with triumphant music as the cast proudly enters the stage. The music reflects the characters’ pride at having gone into the woods and survived their journey. The Narrator tells us, “And it came to pass, all that seemed wrong was now right, the kingdoms were filled with joy, and those who deserved to were certain to live a long and happy life” (Lapine and Sondheim 74). Here the Narrator is foreshadowing that those who do not deserve to live will die in the Second Act. Also, the Narrator suggests that only that which “seemed wrong” (Lapine and Sondheim 74) is now right. In other words, the Narrator is hinting that there were other events in Act One that were not deemed wrong and punished, but could be considered wrong depending on your point of view. In short, Sondheim uses the Narrator’s short speech to further develop the theme of right versus wrong as it applies to Act One. During Act One, many characters spent time musing on what “seemed wrong” (Lapine and Sondheim 74) to them.

During this song, Sondheim uses fragmented lyrics to create multiple meanings for the audience. For example, consider the following lyrics:

COMPANY: We were frightened--
NARRATOR: And confusions--
COMPANY: But we hid it--
NARRATOR: And the paths would often swerve.
COMPANY: We did not (Lapine and Sondheim 75).

One could view the Company’s lyrics in a continuous fashion which would result in, “We were frightened...but we hid it...we did not” (Lapine and Sondheim 75). This would suggest that the characters were scared on their journey into the woods. Or, one could view the Narrator’s and Company’s lines as belong together which would result in “and the paths would often swerve. We did not” (Lapine and Sondheim 75). This would suggested that although many characters made decisions that altered their personal definitions of right and wrong, they have not been
fundamentally changed by their journey into the woods.

Many of the characters lament their misfortune and misjudgment during the song. For example, Florinda admits, “But we were blind” (Lapine and Sondheim 76). In this short confession, Sondheim accomplishes many things. First, he again makes use of the fairy tale motif of punishment. At their stepsister’s wedding, “Pigeons swooped down upon [Florinda and Lucinda] and poked out their eyes and punished them with blindness” (Lapine and Sondheim 74). Hence, Florinda and Lucinda were punished for their vanity. Also, Sondheim incorporates the motif of a helper animal. The birds that poked out the sisters’ eyes were helping to punish them. Also, in the confession, Florinda admitted that she and her sister were wrong to treat Cinderella poorly. In short, they were blind and couldn’t see how nasty they were being.

The full Company sings, “You have to act! When you know your wish, if you want your wish, you can have your wish, but you can’t just wish – No, to get your wish you, go into the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 77). Here the theme of opportunity is developed further as the Company realizes that action must be taken in order to achieve results. Also, the motif of wild wood is used and expanded to develop this theme along with the theme of right versus wrong. The woods are looked at by the cast as a place for personal growth, a place where they can get their wishes. In order to obtain these wishes the characters had to make decisions about right and wrong. In short, the woods are a place for both opportunity and the development of right and wrong.

The song ends with the Company listing their reasons for going into the woods. In this list, we can see Sondheim’s clever use of double meaning. The first reason is, “to lift the spell” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). This reason applies to the Witch, whose mother cast a spell on her when she lost the beans. It also applies to the Baker and his Wife, who had to lift the spell the Witch cast on them. In addition this reason applies to the Mysterious Man who worked as a narrator within the story in order to help the Baker and his Wife lift the spell.

The second reason is, “to loose the longing” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). First, the Witch wanted to loose the longing she had to be beautiful like before. The Baker and his Wife wanted to loose the longing they had to have a child. The Princes were longing for their unattainable women. Little Red Riding Hood was longing to become a woman. Lastly, Rapunzel was longing to see the
outside world.

The third reason is, “to have the child” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). The Baker and his Wife, of course, wanted to have a child of their own. The Witch wanted her child, Rapunzel, to stay a child. The Wolf wanted to “have the child” (Lapine and Sondheim 78) in a sexual way. The Mysterious Man did everything he could to help the Baker and his Wife have a child. Also, years after he abandoned his son, he decided he wanted to have him in his life once again.

The fourth reason is, “to wed the Prince” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). The most obvious characters who had this motive are the women the Princes want, Rapunzel and Cinderella. Also, Florinda and Lucinda went to the Festival wanting to attract the Prince’s attention. Finally, the Baker’s Wife fantasized about being married to a Prince.

The fifth reason is, “to get the money” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). Jack’s Mother wanted Jack to go into the woods to get money by selling Milky-White. Also, the stepsisters wanted to get money by marrying the Prince. Cinderella’s Stepmother wanted her daughters to marry the Prince so she would have more money.

The sixth reason is, “to save the house” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). Jack’s Mother hoped that by sending her son into the wood to sell Milky White, they would have enough money to keep their house. Jack had this hope as well. The Baker, his Wife, and the Mysterious Man wanted to save their biological house. In short, they wanted to reverse the curse so their lineage could be continued.

The seventh reason is, “to kill the wolf” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). The Witch kept her daughter locked up in the woods in order to protect her from the outside world and men. The Witch saw men as wolves after her experience with the Mysterious Man. In short, the Witch wanted to protect her daughter from the wolves. Little Red Riding Hood wanted to “kill the wolf” (Lapine and Sondheim 78) in a different manner. She went into the woods in order to have sex with the wolf.

The eighth reason is, “to find the father” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). First, the Baker went into the woods to reverse the curse that was cast on his family as a result of his father’s wrongdoings. In order to do so he had to rely on the help of the Mysterious Man (his father) and find the part of his father that was inside of him. Jack does not have a father, he went into the
woods to sell his cow. In short, he was doing the work of his father for his mother.

The ninth reason is "to conquer the kingdom" (Lapine and Sondheim 78). First, the Princes want to conquer the maiden kingdom. They go in pursuit of women in order to have their way. Also, Jack goes up the beanstalk to conquer the kingdom of the Giants. Rapunzel betrays her mother in order to have a chance to conquer the kingdom that is outside of her tower.

The tenth, and final reason is, "to go to the Festival" (Lapine and Sondheim 78). This reason applies to Cinderella, her stepsisters, and her Stepmother. All four wish to go into the woods to attend the Prince’s Festival. This reason also applies to the Baker’s Wife who shares with Cinderella her wish to attend the Festival.

The act ends when a “giant beanstalk emerges from the ground and stretches to the heavens; the characters are oblivious to its presence” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). The characters and the audience are used to the story ending at “happy ever after” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). This explains why the characters remain oblivious to the beanstalk. They do not expect the story to continue, which is reflected in their actions.

**Act Two: Scene One**

“Prologue: So Happy”

The second act begins in typical fairy tale manner. The Narrator walks onstage and begins with the familiar quote, “Once upon a time” (Lapine and Sondheim 83). Again, Sondheim throws the audience for a loop by using a sharp unexpected chord to punctuate the Narrator’s traditional opening. Thus, Sondheim is setting the stage and preparing the audience to expect the unexpected. This chord serves another function. As the chord is sounded, the light come up onstage, revealing “three structures.” This is Sondheim’s first use of a fairy tale motif, the number three. The chord opens the Narrator’s book, waking the fairy tale characters up and making them accessible to the audience.

One at a time, the lights come up on each character as they tell us of their new wishes. Traditional fairy tales end with “and they lived happily ever after.” Although Sondheim ended the first act, “and happy ever after” (Lapine and Sondheim 78), he challenges this notion by giving the characters additional wishes in Act 2. Thus, he is conveying the idea that happiness doesn’t last
The music turns sweet as the Stepmother and stepsisters sing, “We’re so happy you’re so happy! Just as long as you stay happy, we’ll stay happy” (Lapine and Sondheim 86)! Sondheim uses the light and sweet music to poke fun at the Stepmother and stepsisters. Even though the lyrics suggest that they are happy, the exaggerated musical style hints at insincerity. Also, these lyrics are humorous in another way. During Act 1, Cinderella was at the beck and call of her stepfamily. Now, they are willing to do anything to keep her happy.

The focus shifts to the Baker and his Wife, who are contemplating their lack of living space. The Baker does not want to move. He declares, “This was my father’s house, and now it will be my son’s” (Lapine and Sondheim 87). In his words, we can see the Baker has pride in his family. He respects what his father has left him and wants pass that on to his son. Still, he is not very confident in his child-rearing skills. When his Wife gives him the baby to hold, he “carefully passes [the] baby back to his Wife” (Lapine and Sondheim 87) and says, “I will care for him ... when he’s older” (Lapine and Sondheim 88). In essence, the Baker is following in his father’s footsteps. His father abandoned him when he was young, and came back into his life when he was older. The Baker now wishes to do the same with his son.

“The song is interrupted by a loud rumbling noise followed by an enormous crash” (88), and we learn that the Witch’s garden was destroyed. It is interesting that the Witch’s garden was destroyed because the garden represented her femininity. Her garden thrived while she had her power and her daughter, Rapunzel; however, now that they are gone, the Witch has nothing left.

We learn that a giant is responsible for destroying the Witch’s garden. Jack wants to go help find the giant. His mother scolds, “You’ll do no such thing” (Lapine and Sondheim 90)! She is trying to teach her son to stay out of trouble. Thus, the theme of teaching children is further developed. Jack protests, “But Mother, I’m a man now” (Lapine and Sondheim 91). Although Jack had his coming-of-age with the Giant in the sky, he is still struggling to grow up. Finally, Jack decided he is “going to find that giant anyway” (Lapine and Sondheim 3)! Jack is rebelling from his Mother. In other words, Jack is deciding for himself what is right, and thus, the theme of right versus wrong is further developed.

Like Jack, the Baker also lost much of his innocence during Act 1. When Little Red
Ridinghood comes to the Baker’s house and discovers it in shambles, she asks, “What happened to your house” (Lapine and Sondheim 92)? The Baker’s Wife replies, “We’ve had a baking accident” (Lapine and Sondheim 92). The Baker finds the notion of a baking accident absurd, yet, during Act 1 he believed he “had lost his mother and father in a baking accident” (Lapine and Sondheim 12). His current disbelief shows he has lost innocence since the beginning of the show.

The journey motif is brought up when the Baker sings, “Into the Woods, it’s always when you think at last you’re through, and then into the woods you go again to take another journey” (93). The characters must take another journey into the woods. So, Sondheim again incorporates a fairy tale motif into the show.

Although many of the lyrics parallel the lyrics from the prologue to Act 1, the music is different. Sondheim writes darker and more ominous music for this prologue. The first journey the characters took into the woods was a familiar one. Their stories were stories we had heard before. This journey, on the other hand, is not familiar. We have not heard it before, and therefore, it is more frightening and that is reflected in the music. This idea is continued with the Baker’s lyric, “To find a future...” (Lapine and Sondheim 94). The Baker realizes that the characters have to find a new story, one which goes beyond the traditional fairy tale.

**Act 2, Scene 2**

“Rapunzel enters, screaming” (Lapine and Sondheim 95). She tells her mother, “Because of the way you treated me, I’ll never, never be happy” (Lapine and Sondheim 95)! Rapunzel lacks the ability to relate to other people because she did not have contact with other people while she was growing up. This inability to relate to the outside world will lead to Rapunzel’s eventual suicide when she “runs toward the giant” (Lapine and Sondheim 105) and is killed. The Witch defends her actions by saying, “I was just trying to be a good mother” (Lapine and Sondheim 95). She then begs Rapunzel to stay with her and warns, “There’s a giant running about” (Lapine and Sondheim 95) this is a further development of the teaching children theme.

**Act 2, Scene 2**

“Agony”
“Rapunzel’s Prince enters; Cinderella’s Prince enter from another direction” (Lapine and Sondheim 95). Rapunzel’s Prince discovers that his brother is “investigating news of a giant” (Lapine and Sondheim 96). He is appalled by this, saying, “That is business for your steward – or less” (Lapine and Sondheim 96). Before we saw Cinderella’s Prince get angry at his Steward when he went looking for Cinderella without him. Now, Cinderella’s Prince is doing the work of a Steward. From these actions we can see that Cinderella’s Prince identifies with his servant. This then explains why he is attracted to Cinderella and why he will later be attracted to the Baker’s Wife. Cinderella’s Prince is attracted to their provincial nature.

The brothers sing of their newfound love interests. Here the motif of the beautiful maiden is used as we learn that Cinderella’s Prince is in love with Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel’s Prince is in love with Snow White. Also, the motif of enchanted sleep is used since both of these beautiful maidens are in deep sleeps.

The brothers have to overcome their hidden fears in order to obtain their beauties. Cinderella’s Prince admits he has a “thing about blood” (Lapine and Sondheim 97) which explains why he turned, “ashen” (Lapine and Sondheim 72) when he poured blood from the Stepsisters’ shoes during Act One. Rapunzel’s Prince thinks, “dwarfs are very upsetting” (Lapine and Sondheim 98). Here, we again see an example of Sondheim’s unique sense of humor. It makes sense that Rapunzel’s Prince would be scared of dwarfs because to dwarf something is to diminish it. He is scared of looking like less of a man next to the dwarfs. Also, his fear is ironic because the royal family is supposed to protect the kingdom from the Giant that has descended upon them. If Rapunzel’s Prince is scared of a dwarf, how is he going to fight off a giant?

The Prince’s fears along with “the tasks unachievable, mountains unscalable” (Lapine and Sondheim 98), are tests that they will have to pass in order to win their newfound loves. The test is a motif that is commonly found in fairy tales. Thus, Sondheim again incorporates a traditional fairy tale motif.

Act Two: Scene Two

The brother’s exit and the Baker, his Wife, and Little Red Ridinghood “enter from another part of the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 99). The group is lost because “now there is no path”
(Lapine and Sondheim 99). During Act One, the path symbolized a character's definition of right or wrong. Some paths were straight, and some were curved; now there are no paths. Consequently, the characters must strive to redefine right and wrong in this unfamiliar place. They must tell a story that hasn't been told before. They are confused by this task and feel that "the path has strayed from [them]" (Lapine and Sondheim 99). Act Two does not follow the same rules that Act One did. There are no rules now because the characters do not have to stay within in the confines of their traditional stories. It is up to them to make their own rules. Just when things are starting to look bleak, Little Red Ridinghood sees, "in the distance, three oak trees" (Lapine and Sondheim 99). Three is a traditional fairy tale motif. It is this tradition that makes the characters' path recognizable to them once again. They needed a traditional frame of reference in order to find their path.

"Suddenly the ground begins to shake. A frightening and increasingly loud crunching noise approaches. The huge shadow of a giant envelops the stage" (Lapine and Sondheim 100). It is then we learn, "the giant's a woman" (Lapine and Sondheim 100)! The Witch is amazed by the giant's gender, perhaps because she has lost all of her power. The Witch was once a powerful woman, but those days have ended and she is therefore in amazement of the powerful woman in front of her. Overall, women will prove to be powerful in Act Two. Again, we will see traditional views shattered as the women start to take charge. Most fairy tales reflect a chauvinistic viewpoint. Since Act Two shatters many of the traditional fairy tale notions, it makes sense that a feminist view will prevail.

The Giant wants "the lad who climbed the beanstalk" (Lapine and Sondheim 100). This presents a moral dilemma for the Company. They must decide either to betray Jack to protect themselves, or to save Jack at the risk of losing their lives. The Narrator further explains this dilemma by saying, "These were not people familiar with making choices – their past experiences in the woods had in no way prepared them to deal with a force this great" (Lapine and Sondheim 101). In traditional fairy tales, the characters are static, or, in other words, they do not develop. At the end of the story they are morally the same person they were at the beginning. We saw in Act One that Sondheim chose not to have static characters. During the first act all reconstructed their personal definitions of right and wrong. Unfortunately, the characters were still expecting the
story to end at “happy ever after” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). Therefore the “force” (Lapine and Sondheim 101) the Narrator is speaking of is not the Giant, but rather the moral dilemma the characters are faced with. Although they have begun to expand their ideas of right and wrong they are not ready for this decision.

Still, they must make a decision, so they decide to give the Narrator to the Giant and pretend he is Jack. This decision is reached because the Narrator is “always on the outside” (Lapine and Sondheim 102). The Narrator tries to save himself by arguing that they “need an objective observer to pass the story along” (Lapine and Sondheim 102). His argument alludes to the oral tradition of fairy tales. If there is no one to tell the story the story will die, or, in the Narrator’s words, they will “never know how [their] story ends” (Lapine and Sondheim 102). Unfortunately, for the Narrator, the characters have already begun to break with tradition and therefore decide to tell the story themselves.

The Giant is not fooled by the Narrator and continues her search for Jack. In addition to blaming Jack for her husband’s death, she blames Jack’s Mother, saying, “He was your responsibility. Now I must punish him for his wrongs” (Lapine and Sondheim 104). The Giant’s argument incorporates the fairy tale motif of punishment. Also, the theme of teaching children is further developed. Both the Giant and Jack’s Mother have tried to teach Jack. His Mother taught him during his childhood and the Giant taught him how to be a man.

The Steward feels that Jack’s Mother is provoking the Giant; consequently he “comes behind her and slams her over the head with his staff” (Lapine and Sondheim 104). When questioned about his actions he explains, “I was thinking of the greater good. That’s my job” (Lapine and Sondheim 105). Here the Steward denies responsibility and offers his definition of right and wrong, further developing the theme.

**Act Two: Scene Two**

**“Lament”**

After Rapunzel commits suicide, the Witch mourns the loss of her daughter and wonders why she “couldn’t ... stay content, safe behind walls” (Lapine and Sondheim 105). The “walls” (Lapine and Sondheim 105) refer to the walls of Rapunzel’s tower. In addition, the “walls”
(Lapine and Sondheim 105) refer to Rapunzel’s virginity and more directly her hymen, which her Prince overcomes when he climbs her hair to have sex with her. The Witch admits that she “could not ... stay content, safe behind walls” (Lapine and Sondheim 105). The Witch let the Baker’s father climb over her wall when he raped her, much in the same way that Rapunzel let the Prince have her virginity.

At the end of her song, the Witch explains, “Children can only grow from something you love to something you lose...” (Lapine and Sondheim 106). The Witch didn’t know how to let go of Rapunzel and let her become a woman. This eventually led to Rapunzel’s suicide. Sondheim uses the Witch to sharply contrast the Baker’s father. Unlike the Witch, the Baker’s father did not know how to hold on to his son. He ran away from his child. By drawing this contrast, Sondheim develops the theme of teaching children in a different direction. He touches on the idea that the actions, not just the words, of a parent influence what a child will become. In Rapunzel’s case, her mother’s actions molded her into a woman who could not cope with the outside world. In the Baker’s case, on the other hand, his father’s actions left him unable to bond with and take care of his son.

Act Two: Scene Two

We learn that the royal family is “off to a hidden kingdom” (Lapine and Sondheim 106). They are trying to escape the wrath of the Giant. Here, Sondheim draws a parallel to the Baker and his father. The Baker is leaving the care of his son up to his Wife until “he’s older” (Lapine and Sondheim 88) thus, running away from his son. The Baker’s father ran away from his son when he was young. In fairy tales, characters often lack problem solving abilities or decision making skills. Sondheim, forces his characters to act and make decisions, a task they are not prepared for, hence, it is reasonable that the characters would run away from the situation.

In response to the royal family’s departure, Little Red Ridinghood exclaims, “I hope the giant steps on them all” (Lapine and Sondheim 106). The Wife scolds her, which furthers the theme of teaching children. The Witch responds to the Wife by saying, “You were thinking the same thing” (Lapine and Sondheim 106). Here, there are hints that the Witch will become a narrator of sorts for what is left of the story. The Witch knows what the Baker’s Wife was
thinking, which suggests that she is somewhat of an outside observer.

Later, the Witch questions Little Red Ridinghood asking, "How many wolves have you carved up" (Lapine and Sondheim 106)? Here we see the Witch trying to teach Little Red Ridinghood the difference between right and wrong. Little Red Ridinghood feels that, "a wolf’s not the same [as a person]" (Lapine and Sondheim 107). The Witch tells her to "Ask a wolf’s mother" (Lapine and Sondheim 107)! In short, Little Red Ridinghood thinks that it is right to kill animals, but wrong to kill people. The Witch, on the other hand, feels that killing is wrong no matter what. Thus, the themes of teaching children and right versus wrong are further developed.

The Baker and his Wife plan to search in different directions for Jack. The Baker feels uncomfortable with this plan, worrying, "What if one of us gets lost" (Lapine and Sondheim 107)? The Baker’s concern foreshadows his Wife’s eventual unfaithfulness. While the Wife is in the woods she loses her path and has sex with Cinderella’s Prince. In short, the Wife does get lost. At the present moment, though, the Wife doesn’t want to hear about her husband’s concerns. She screams, "But what if! BUT WHAT IF! Will only a giant’s foot stop your arguing" (Lapine and Sondheim 107). Here, we again see a woman taking charge of the story. Also, the Baker’s Wife foreshadows her own death. Essentially, it will take a "giant’s foot" (Lapine and Sondheim 107) to stop her husband’s arguing. Unfortunately, the foot will kill her, leaving her husband no one to argue with.

**Act Two: Scene Two**

"Any Moment"

"We follow the Wife as she crosses paths with Cinderella’s Prince" (Lapine and Sondheim 108). The Prince questions her husband’s motives, asking, "He would let you roam alone in the woods" (Lapine and Sondheim 108)? The Wife answers, "No, actually, is was my choice" (Lapine and Sondheim 108). Here, we learn two important things about the Wife. First, she has a clear cut definition of right versus wrong. She felt it was acceptable to leave her husband. Second, the Wife, unlike many traditional fairy tale characters, has the ability to make decisions. She actively made the decision to stray from her husband.

The Prince “kisses her” (Lapine and Sondheim 108). In response, the Wife exclaims, “We
can’t do this! You have a Princess ... And I have a ... baker” (Lapine and Sondheim 109). The Wife’s views on her position in society are reflected in Sondheim’s use of capitalization. “Princess” (Lapine and Sondheim 109) is capitalized, reflecting her uniqueness and important position in life. On the other hand, “baker” (Lapine and Sondheim 109) is not capitalized, indicating his provincial nature and less important position in life. Remember, Sondheim is using the Baker and his Wife to reflect the views of his audience within the story. Given our society’s current fascination with royalty, it is not hard to imagine that one would find a Princess more exciting than a Baker.

Still, the Prince asks her to “let your hesitations be hushed. Any moment, big or small, is a moment, after all. Seize the moment, skies may fall any moment” (Lapine and Sondheim 109). Here, the Prince speaks towards the theme of opportunity. He is trying to convince the Wife that their time could be cut short due to a plethora of circumstances. Therefore, she should give in to his seductions. To further persuade her, the Prince argues, “Right and wrong don’t matter in the woods, only feelings” (Lapine and Sondheim 109). Here, we see the Prince’s ideas on the theme of right versus wrong. His morals are only important to him when the time is right. When his hormones take over, however, he is willing to abandon those morals.

Act 2, Scene 2

“The Prince scoops up the Wife and carries her into a glade; elsewhere, the Baker enters and encounters Cinderella at her mother’s grave; she is weeping” (Lapine and Sondheim 109). During Cinderella and the Baker’s brief encounter, Sondheim uses irony to highlight their misfortune. First, Cinderella tells the Baker, “My wishes have just been crushed” (Lapine and Sondheim 110). Cinderella’s mother was the one who granted her wishes. Since her mother’s grave is now destroyed, Cinderella no longer has a means to obtain her wishes. In addition, her husband has just cheated on her, crushing her hope of “happy ever after” (Lapine and Sondheim 78). The Baker says, “There’s been no sign of the Prince. No doubt he’s off seducing some young maiden” (Lapine and Sondheim 110). Here again, we see Sondheim’s use of irony, in that the Prince really is “seducing some young maiden” (Lapine and Sondheim 110), and that young maiden is the Baker’s Wife. In short, Sondheim uses irony and plays upon Cinderella and the
Baker’s innocence to emphasize their misfortune.

**Act 2, Scene 2**

“Moments in the Woods”

With this song, Sondheim makes light of stereotypical gender responses after sexual stimulation. After they have had sex, the Prince leaves the Baker’s Wife, telling her their encounter “was just a moment in the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 111). Meanwhile, the “Wife sits, stunned” (Lapine and Sondheim 111) and analyzes what has happened. Men and women handle the aftermath of sex differently. Stereotypically, men roll over and go to sleep while the women lying next to them lie awake and wonder what it all means.

The most important question she asks herself is, “Was it wrong” (Lapine and Sondheim 111)? Here, we see the Wife again redefining her notion of right versus wrong. Previously, she felt that “if the end is right, it justifies the beans” (Lapine and Sondheim 31)! Now however, there is no justification for her actions. She has hurt her husband and herself. Just as soon as she revises her definitions of right and wrong, she wakes herself by singing, “Wake up! Stop dreaming” (Lapine and Sondheim 111). Sondheim uses the fairy tale motif of the enchanted sleep to emphasize the Baker’s Wife’s current predicament with defining right and wrong. Now, she has decided “No one lives in the woods. There are vows, there are ties, there are needs, there are standards, there are shouldn’ts and shoulds” (Lapine and Sondheim 112). In short, she has decided that there must be justification for a person’s actions. One cannot live just for himself, he must have responsibility to others.

No sooner have those words passed through her lips, than she decides, “Why not both instead? There’s the answer if you’re clever: Have a child for warmth, and a baker for bread and a Prince for whatever —” (Lapine and Sondheim 112). Essentially, she is now trying to have her cake and eat it too. She wants what is right, her child and husband, and also what is wrong, the Prince. Finally, she asks herself, “Was that him? Yes, it was. Was that me? No, it wasn’t, just a trick of the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 112). Hence, she reaches the conclusion that her liaison with the Prince was within his moral framework, but not within hers. With this realization, proclaims, “Let the moment go ... Don’t forget it for a moment, though ... Now I understand —
and it’s time to leave the woods” (Lapine and Sondheim 113). Unfortunately for the Wife, moral confusion has taken its toll on her sense of direction. As she is searching for the way back to meet her husband, she is killed by the Giant. Like her moral path, which took many twists and turns, the path back to her husband also became convoluted. The Baker’s Wife tried to have what was right and what was wrong. She wanted to live in-between two paths. Unfortunately, that path led to the Giant.

**Act Two: Scene Two**

The Witch is the one who breaks the bad news to the group. She announces that the Baker’s Wife is dead and tells everyone that Jack “was sobbing over her like she was his own mother” (Lapine and Sondheim 114). The Witch’s description of Jack foreshadows Jack’s eventual reaction when he learns of his own mother’s death. Although we already know Jack’s Mother was “struck a deadly blow by the Prince’s Steward” (Lapine and Sondheim 129), he has not yet learned this information. Thus, Sondheim foreshadows Jack’s reaction in the Witch’s description of Jack when he found the Baker’s dead Wife.

**Act Two: Scene Two**

“Your Fault”

During this song Sondheim uses music to relate to meaning. During the song Jack, the Baker, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and the Witch attempt to sort out who is to blame for the group’s current predicament. As the group argues, they become more frantic. When the characters are arguing, they talk faster and faster as their voices move into their upper register. Sondheim shows the group’s progression from calm to frantic in his music. As the group’s arguments pick up in intensity, the music accelerates and climbs in pitch. Thus, Sondheim imitates the group’s speech patterns in his music.

Sondheim also uses his music to parallel the circular motion of the group’s logic. As the group argues, their accusation move in a circular fashion, moving them no closer to placing the blame then they were at the start. The music also moves in a circular fashion using repeated motives to imitate the group’s argument.
The group’s argument becomes more violent and frantic as they desperately attempt to place the blame. Each member of the group taunts the other members trying to get them to confess to being responsible for the Giant’s arrival. Sondheim emphasizes this teasing in the violin part. While the group taunts each other, the violin plays a high taunting countermelody. This countermelody is similar to the common childhood “na-na-na-boo-boo” chant. Hence, Sondheim uses the violin countermelody to emphasize the taunting nature of the groups argument.

Sondheim not only uses music to parallel the dynamics of the group’s argument but, he also uses lyrics. For example, the Witch sings, “It’s his father’s fault that the curse got placed and the place got cursed in the first place” (Lapine and Sondheim 116)! Here, Sondheim inverts the words “curse” (Lapine and Sondheim 116) and “placed” (Lapine and Sondheim 116) from one line to the next. Like the groups argument, which goes in circles, the lyrics of the song also move in a cyclical fashion. Thus, Sondheim uses the lyrics to parallel the circular nature of the group’s argument.

Throughout the song, each character’s goal is to focus the blame onto somebody else. In this new situation with the Giant, blame is something each character understands. The characters view right and wrong as a simple question of who is to blame. The person who receives the blame is wrong, and everybody else is right. Thus, Sondheim reexamines the theme of right versus wrong using element of blame.

The group finally points its finger at the Witch, proclaiming, “You’re responsible! You’re the one to blame! It’s your fault” (Lapine and Sondheim 120)! By placing the blame on the Witch, they have made her responsible for their current situation. Essentially, the group has forced the Witch into the role of narrator. Before the Narrator was killed by the Giant, he was the one responsible for the characters. Now that the Witch has been given responsibility, she also acts as narrator.

**Act Two: Scene Two**

**“The Last Midnight”**

The music from “Your Fault” flows directly into the beginning of this song. This musical momentum parallels the Witch’s message in her song. The Witch warns, “It’s the last midnight.
It’s the last wish. It’s the last midnight, soon it will be boom – squish” (Lapine and Sondheim 120)! Essentially, the Witch is saying that time is running out, so if the characters are going to escape their predicament, this is the moment. The music parallels this idea by continuing without a break. This is not the time for the characters to rest, and, therefore, the music cannot rest either.

The Witch asks, “Told a little lie, stole a little gold, broke a little vow ... had to get your Prince, had to get your cow” (Lapine and Sondheim 120). Each of the Witch’s accusations is directed toward specific members of the company. “Told a little lie” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) is aimed at the Baker, his Wife, and Jack. The Baker lied to Jack when he convinced him to trade Milky White for beans. The Wife encouraged her husband to tell this lie. Jack lied to his Mother when he promised her he wouldn’t “leave [his] surroundings” (Lapine and Sondheim 93). “Stole a little gold” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) is directed toward Jack, the Mysterious Man, and the Baker. Jack, of course, stole the Giant’s gold. The Mysterious Man stole the same gold from Jack. The Baker inadvertently stole Jack’s gold after Jack gave it to him as a down payment on Milky White. The audience for “broke a little vow” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) is the Princes and the Baker’s Wife. All three broke their marriage vows when they committed adultery. “Had to get your Prince” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) is an accusation for Rapunzel, the Baker’s Wife, Cinderella, and her Stepsisters. Rapunzel traded her mother’s trust for her Prince. The Baker’s Wife, as previously discussed, broke her marriage vows to get Cinderella’s Prince. Cinderella used her Prince as a means of escape from her provincial life. The Stepsisters mutilated their bodies in order to have a chance with Cinderella’s Prince. “Had to get your cow” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) is aimed at Jack, the Baker, and his Wife. Jack tried desperately to retrieve Milky White from the Baker’s possession. The Baker and his Wife finagled Jack out of his cow by giving him allegedly magic beans. Essentially, during this section of the song, the Witch asks the company to reexamine its morals, or to revise its definition of right versus wrong by reminding them of all the wrongs they had committed throughout the course of the show.

Throughout the show the word “nice” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) is used by the characters, in reference to themselves, as they realize that they don’t always have to be good to be right. For example, Cinderella oscillates between nice and good as she sings “nice, good, good, nice” (Lapine and Sondheim 120). Having landed on nice, Cinderella pulls her stepsister’s hair,
demonstrating that she could be within her definition of right while not being a good stepsister. Furthermore, Little Red Ridinghood proclaims, “Nice is different than good,” (Lapine and Sondheim 35) after she has had sex with the Wolf. She discovers that she can act on her sexual urges and still be nice. Although the characters began to discover that they could be nice without being good during Act One, the Witch draws their attention to the fact that since Act Two has started they have gone back to being ambivalent. She continues her accusations with, “You’re so nice. You’re not good, you’re not bad, you’re just nice” (Lapine and Sondheim 121). Essentially, she feels that, although they are now nice, they have lost sight of the good and the bad. In other words, she notices that their moral growth has come to a halt. They are “just nice” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) and nothing more.

The Witch then describes herself. She sings, “I’m not good, I’m not nice, I’m just right” (Lapine and Sondheim 120). The Witch, is now acting in the role of the Narrator. Therefore, the Witch is the ultimate authority on right versus wrong in the show. She is omniscient, and whatever she says goes. Essentially, she is exercising her right to call the shots.

The Witch further describes herself by singing, “I’m the hitch ... I’m the witch...like [the Baker’s Father]” (Lapine and Sondheim 121). A hitch raises or moves something with a jerk. Therefore, the Witch is a hitch because she moves the story along with a jerk. The Witch stepped into the role of narrator when she suggested that, “We can always give her the boy” (Lapine and Sondheim 120) in reference to Jack. Her suggestion was the hitch that got the story moving again. As the Witch suggests the Baker’s Father is also a hitch. He moved the story along in Act One by jumping out in the woods and startling people into action. The Witch is also a hitch in another sense. She attempts to raise the moral code of the company by taking the blame for their situation and forcing them to examine their actions.

In one last attempt to jerk the story along, the Witch “starts scattering her beans all around” (Lapine and Sondheim 121). She then tells the group, “You can tend the garden, it’s yours” (Lapine and Sondheim 122). The Witch command has two different meanings. First, is the literal meaning. The group will have to take responsibility for the beanstalks that sprout from the Witch’s beans, as well as the angry Giants that descend from them. In typical Sondheim fashion there is a figurative meaning to “garden” (Lapine and Sondheim 122). In this sense the garden refers to the
story that all the characters are living. When the Witch leaves them, they will have to tell the story for themselves.

At the end of the song the Witch questions, “All right, Mother, when? Lost the beans again” (Lapine and Sondheim 122)? Previously when the Witch lost the beans her mother turned her into a ugly hag. Thus, we see another example of the punishment motif in that the Witch is begging for her mother’s inevitable punishment. It is interesting that the Witch says she lost the beans when, in fact, she threw them away willingly. According to the Witch she has lost the beans before, which is indicated with her use of the word “again” (Lapine and Sondheim 122). Therefore, it is possible that when the Witch lost her beans to the Baker’s Father she really gave them willingly. In other words, the Baker’s Father did not rape the Witch, but they had consentual sex.

Act Two: Scene Two

The Witch disappears at the end of “The Last Midnight” leaving the other characters alone to ponder their decisions. For example, Jack admits that “maybe [he] shouldn’t have stolen from the giant” (Lapine and Sondheim 122). Through their reflections, we can see that the characters are beginning to accept their share of the blame for their current situation. In other words, the characters are again redefining right and wrong as they admit that their previous decisions were wrong.

Act Two: Scene Two

“No More”

The Baker, having learned of his Wife’s death, grows “despondent” (Lapine and Sondheim 123) and decides to leave his child with Cinderella so he can run into the woods to escape his grief. When questioned, “You would leave your child” (Lapine and Sondheim 123)? The Baker responds “My child will be happier in the arms of a Princess” (Lapine and Sondheim 123). Here we again see a taste of Sondheim’s dark sense of humor. The Baker’s response is ironic because his Wife ran off with Cinderella’s Prince. In short, his Wife was happier in the arms of a Prince and the Baker feels as though his child would be happier in the arms of royalty as well.
As the Baker runs off, he is “startled by the Mysterious Man” (Lapine and Sondheim 123). Although the Mysterious Man died at the end of Act One he must now return to the story. During Act One, the Mysterious Man was acting as the narrator within the story. During the beginning of Act Two, the Witch took on this role. Now, with the Witch’s disappearance the Mysterious Man once again must tell the story. The Mysterious Man’s return is important for another reason as well. Fairy tales were originally passed from generation to generation orally. Thus, a father would pass stories to his son. At the end of Act One, the Mysterious Man and his son, the Baker, we reunited, thus continuing the story of the Baker’s family. Now, the Baker has abandoned his child and his family’s story is in jeopardy. Thus, the Mysterious Man returns. He must convince his son to go back to tell his child their story.

Before the Mysterious Man can convince his son to return, he must first confess his sins. The Mysterious Man tells his son he, “strayed into the [Witch’s] garden to give your mother a gift. And I foolishly took some of those beans for myself” (Lapine and Sondheim 123). In short, the Mysterious Man is confessing his infidelity. The “beans” (Lapine and Sondheim 123), the Mysterious Man took from the Witch were no ordinary beans. They were her virginity.

The Baker is not quick to take his father’s advice. He begs, “No more tests” (Lapine and Sondheim 123). The test is a traditional fairy tale motif. Sondheim uses this motif to show the Baker’s frustration with his current situation. By rejecting the fairy tale motif, the Baker is rejecting the fairy tale life, or saying that he wants out.

The Mysterious Man again tries to convince his son to return to the story by making a reference to a moral he sung during “The First Midnight” – “no knot unties itself” (Lapine and Sondheim 40). The knot the Mysterious Man is speaking of symbolizes the story he is telling. During “The First Midnight,” he reminds us that storytelling is an active art form. During this song he again reminds his son of this concept by telling him, “Trouble is, son, the farther you run, the more you feel undefined for what you have left undone and, more, what you’ve left behind” (124). What the Baker has “left undone” (Lapine and Sondheim 124) is his family’s story.

The song continues as the Baker struggles to make a decision about where to go. His thoughts teeter between going further into the woods or returning to the group. These two options are summed up in the penultimate lines of the song, “all the children ... all the giants...” (Lapine
and Sondheim 125). In short, the Baker is torn between returning to the group so his story can be passed on to “the children” (Lapine and Sondheim 125), or running deeper into the woods to avoid “the giants” (Lapine and Sondheim 125).

The Baker makes his decision in the final words of the song, “no more” (Lapine and Sondheim 125). With these words the Baker realizes that, although there are giants, there is more story to tell. Essentially, he is saying no to the giant who is trying to end the story and resolving to discover more of the story.

**Act Two: Scene Two**

The Baker returns to the group and announces, “We must have a plan before the giant returns” (Lapine and Sondheim 125). The characters demonstrate their growth throughout the story by constructing a plan which incorporates elements from their previous experience. The birds come again to help Cinderella. Thus, the motif of the helper animal is used again, as it was in Cinderella’s story when the birds, “[picked] at the lentils and [dropped] them into the pot” (Lapine and Sondheim 8). The birds agree to “attack [the Giant] and peck out her eyes till she’s blind” (Lapine and Sondheim 126), much as they did when they “swooped down upon [Cinderella’s Stepsisters] and pecked out their eyes” (Lapine and Sondheim 74). The second part of the plan involves smearing “the ground with pitch” (Lapine and Sondheim 126) in order to prevent the giant’s escape. This plan is similar to Cinderella’s Prince’s plan when he was trying to prevent her from escaping the palace and “spread pitch on the stairs” (Lapine and Sondheim 62). The final phase of the plan involves Jack striking the Giant from behind to kill her. This part of the plan came from Jack’s Mother’s untimely death when “she was struck a deadly blow by the Prince’s Steward” (Lapine and Sondheim 129). Through the construction of this plan, we can see that Sondheim’s character, unlike traditional fairy tale characters, are dynamic in that they change and learn throughout the story.

Before the plan is utilized, Cinderella must hear the confessions of her Prince as he tells her that, “There remains a part of me that continually needs more [than you]” (Lapine and Sondheim 127). Thus, the Prince admits to his affair with the Baker’s Wife and with Sleeping Beauty. In his confession, the Prince further the theme of teaching children when he explains to Cinderella, “I
was raised to be charming, not sincere” (Lapine and Sondheim 127). In other words, Cinderella’s Prince blames him unfaithfulness on his upbringing. As a result he doesn’t see anything wrong with him actions which speaks toward the right versus wrong theme. Cinderella takes the news surprisingly well and then goes on to explain her subdued reaction by saying, “My father’s house was a nightmare. Your house was a dream. Now I want something in-between” (Lapine and Sondheim 128). Cinderella has pondered the ideas of right and wrong throughout the show and come to the conclusion, like the Baker’s Wife, that “just remembering you’ve had an ‘and,’ when you’re back to ‘or,’ make the ‘or’ mean more than it did before” (Lapine and Sondheim 113). In short, Cinderella has found a balance between right and wrong in her life.

**Act 2: Scene 2**

“No One Is Alone”

Cinderella and Little Red Ridinghood discuss whether it is morally wrong to kill the Giant. Little Red Ridinghood thinks it is wrong to kill the Giant because, “The Giant’s a person” (Lapine and Sondheim 128). Here, we see that Little Red Ridinghood has undergone moral development throughout the show. Before, she was ready and willing to kill as many wolves as possible. Now, she shows remorse for what is about to happen to the Giant. Thus, the theme of right versus wrong is further developed as we see Little Red Ridinghood’s ideas of right and wrong mature.

The Baker has the unfortunate duty of telling Jack that his mother “was struck a deadly blow by the Prince’s Steward” (Lapine and Sondheim 129). Jack makes a vow to avenge his mother, “After we slay the Giant, I will slay [the Steward]” (Lapine and Sondheim 129). In response to Jack’s vow of vengeance, the Baker warns, “You’ll do nothing of the kind” (Lapine and Sondheim 120)! Here, we see a parallel between the Baker and Jack’s Mother. Previously, when Jack vowed to kill the Giant, his Mother responded by saying, “You’ll do no such thing” (Lapine and Sondheim 90)! With this parallel, Sondheim shows that the Baker is taking over for Jack’s Mother. Jack holds firm in his decision, saying the Steward “should be punished” (Lapine and Sondheim 129). This is another example of the punishment motif. The Baker feels that it is not Jack’s responsibility to punish the Steward. When Jack questions him, he is unable to explain
his reasoning, but says, "Stop asking me questions I can't answer" (Lapine and Sondheim 129). With this outburst we discover that the Baker is not quite ready to tell his story. He does not have the right answers for Jack, and the person telling the story must have all the answers.

Act 2: Scene 2

"Finale: Children Will Listen"

As the finale music starts, "The characters enter, give their morals and remain onstage" (Lapine and Sondheim 133). Through the recitation of these morals, we can see how the characters have changed throughout the show. Jack’s Mother admits, “The slotted spoon can catch the potato...” (Lapine and Sondheim 133), showing that she has realized Jack is smarter than she originally thought. The Mysterious Man also has a newfound appreciation for his son, saying, “Every knot was once straight rope...” (Lapine and Sondheim 133). Essentially, the Mysterious Man has realized that every story, or knot, must start somewhere, and although his son is not quite ready for the responsibility, he will somehow rise to the occasion. Finally, Granny reminds us of the opportunity theme by saying, “The knife that is sharp today may be dull by tomorrow...” (Lapine and Sondheim 134). The characters’ morals demonstrate their growth throughout the show.

As the song continues, the Baker questions how he can be a father “with no one to mother [his] child” (Lapine and Sondheim 135). His Wife appears and tells him, “Just calm the child” (Lapine and Sondheim 135). We know that his Wife is dead, so her presence on stage indicates that she lives on in the Baker, or as she explains it, “No one leaves for good” (Lapine and Sondheim 135). The Baker will always have his memories of his wife. It is these memories that give him the courage to whisper to his son, “Once upon a time ... in a far-off kingdom ... lived a young maiden ... a sad young lad ... and a childless Baker ... with his Wife” (Lapine and Sondheim 136). The Baker uses the same words his father did at the beginning of the show to begin to tell his story to his son.

As the Baker is telling his story, the Witch sings “Children Will Listen.” The song, as a whole, speaks toward the theme of teaching children. It also shows that the Witch has finally learned that children will listen to what you tell them. Furthermore, the song demonstrates
Sondheim’s unique sense of humor as it serves to question why we tell children the disturbing stories of Cinderella, Jack, Little Red Ridinghood, and Rapunzel in the first place.

In the final moments of the show, the company gathers onstage and reminds us, “You have to listen. You can’t just act, you have to think” (Lapine and Sondheim 137). Here, we see that the company has learned to think for themselves, an ability they did not have at the beginning of the show. We see the growth of the characters again when they sing, “Into the woods you go again, you have to every now and then” (Lapine and Sondheim 137). Here, they realize that they cannot stay the same. Life is dynamic, not static. Also while they were in the woods, they learned that although, “They way is dark, [and] the light is dim, ... Now there’s you, me, her and him” (Lapine and Sondheim 137). Essentially, they must rely on each other.

The show ends the way it started, again symbolizing that life is circular and the chance for growth never ends. Cinderella sings, “I wish...” (Lapine and Sondheim 138), followed by the same chord that functioned to wake the characters up at the beginning of the show. Thus, we can rest assured that Cinderella’s story, along with the stories of her friends, will continue.
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