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Snow White opens in theaters Friday, March 21.While it’s technically the latest in Disney’s never-ending string of live-action remakes, Snow White is more adaptation than mere nostalgic mimicry. Director Marc Webb doesn’t just re-create (to varying degrees of success) the basic outline and designs of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs – he also gives that landmark 1937 release a fresh, Broadway-like spin. In the process, the new Snow White fleshes out both its story and its main character, a more well-defined Disney heroine played by a remarkable Rachel Zegler. During an original opening song highlighting the cast of characters and storybook setting, we meet a young version of the princess accompanying her regal parents as they spread food and joy across their kingdom. This is a Snow White who cherishes kindness above all else, an outlook that’s challenged following her mother’s death and her father’s marriage to the otherwise unnamed Evil Queen (Gal Gadot). The monarch’s magic-mirror-aided obsession with being “the fairest one of all” takes on a different meaning here, pivoting from solely a question of physical beauty to one of compassion and charity as well.For a while, the Queen’s unforgiving form of justice gets her the answer she wants, until Snow White’s generosity toward a hungry, handsome bandit leader named Jonathan (Andrew Burnap) causes the magic mirror to change its tune. Most of us know where the story goes from there: The Queen sends her Huntsman (Ansu Kabia) to kill Snow White, Snow White flees into the woods, and takes shelter with Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Bashful, Sneezy, Dopey, and Doc. What’s new are the goings on back at the castle, where the Queen enacts an iron-fisted rule over her subjects. Chief among those impacted is the cynical, Robin Hood-like Jonathan: No flimsily written prince, he gives Snow White the opportunity to have a real romantic dynamic with the man destined to save her.It all makes for a more fully realized tale that can justify a 109-minute runtime. Additional musical numbers help even the pacing, too, as do the rearranging and lengthening of songs first written for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. It allows Snow White to feel more like an ensemble piece, though the results can feel awkward at times. The expanded “Heigh-Ho” makes room for individual introductions to the Dwarfs – but only about half of them. Another downside of this augmented songbook: Not one, but two Evil Queen solos for Gadot to belt in the flat, monotone register that haunted social-media timelines at the beginning of COVID-19 lockdown. At least the Wonder Woman actress manages to bring an appropriate flamboyance to the Queen’s body language and movements. Gadot makes her feel like an imposing, gleefully sinister figure, even if her singing and dialogue never measure up to the character’s operatic sensibilities. Zegler, on the other hand, digs great, soulful depths, crafting a version of Snow White who retains the graceful motions of her animated counterpart, but with a renewed sense of bravery. Few of Disney’s live-action remakes have been worthwhile, but by centering the fight for kindness in the face of adversity, Snow White channels the very best of them: Kenneth Branagh’s 2015 take on Cinderella.Too bad so much of it is an eyesore. While there’s some cartoonish charm to the CGI animals, the preemptively derided Dwarfs never climb their way out of the uncanny valley, and the human characters are saddled with costumes that would look cheap and tacky parading down the thoroughfare of the Magic Kingdom. A general drabness hurts the distinctions Webb draws between the Queen’s reign and what came before it: Her theft of the throne from Snow White’s father brings dark clouds and a gloomier atmosphere, but it doesn’t look all that different from the marginally brighter, earlier scenes. On the plus side, Webb peps things up with a dizzying depiction of the Queen’s plans coming to fruition and the expressionistic psychedelia of Snow White’s flight into the woods.Zegler digs great, soulful depths as Snow White.As much as the Dwarfs take getting used to, they become a meaningful and integral part of Snow White’s story, even if things start to feel crowded when Jonathan’s troupe of bandits enters the fray. The supporting cast essentially doubles – without enough time to devote to any one of them – as they plan to oppose the Queen. The presence of a human character with dwarfism, the bandit Quigg (George Appleby), seemingly addresses criticisms lodged against Snow White, though the dual existence of fantasy “Dwarfs” and real people with dwarfism is more than a little odd.Fortunately, Zegler’s Snow White is rich and well-rounded enough to keep things afloat. She embodies the character’s gentleness with sincerity, maintaining an awareness of why each act of kindness matters, and where it will take the story. As the world around her grows increasingly grim, the thoughtfulness and self-reflection of her performance becomes more important – it shows that this is Snow White reacting to her situation, not a default setting. Even the climax rests on Snow White’s appeals to people’s better selves.For all the things it can't quite get right, the movie never does wrong by its Snow White. She remains the focal point of a simple, straightforward story for kids, while also demonstrating a refreshing lack of worry about staying faithful to the original movie. The result is a fairytale that feels more thematically and musically liberated than Disney’s other live-action experiments. In 2022, Peter Dinklage criticized Disney for the new Snow White film having a backward depiction of dwarfs in it. The company responded by saying they are consulting the dwarfism community for a perfect depiction of the seven dwarfs. A couple of years later, we got the film's trailer with no real actors for the dwarfs, who are magical creatures now. Disney thought of giving this a twist and used CGI to make the characters appear in the film. They said they would be taking "a different approach" "to avoid reinforcing stereotypes." CGI is their different approach to this and now we have seven imaginary characters given that no actor in the film's cast is portraying any dwarf. Rachel Zegler, who plays the titular Snow White, said she sang a song, Whistle While You Work, to literally nothing, and it was "so much fun." But as we will see in the film, she will be accompanied by the CGI-based magical creatures in the film. Rachel Zegler's Snow White is the first film to do this CGI has been around for years, and the tales of Snow White for decades. But the Rachel Zegler film will be the first one to pull something like that. Before this, we have always seen the seven dwarfs being portrayed by actors. Though sometimes it needed some VFX makeover, but then there were always actors. In the first adaptation of the story, which was a 1937 animated film, we saw Doc (Roy Atwell), Grumpy (Pinto Colvig), Happy (Otis Harlan), Sleepy (Pinto Colvig), Bashful (Scotty Mattraw), Sneezy (Billy Gilbert), and Dopey (Eddie Collins) being voiced by the actors. There were always humans behind these characters working to bring them to life. That tradition has remained in the later adaptations of the original Brothers Grimm story. In the 2012 film, Mirror Mirror, where Julia Roberts played the Evil Queen (Gal Gadot is portraying the character in the 2025 Disney film), saw dwarfs' names being changed but real actors portrayed them. We even have a couple of live-action German films based on the same story called 7 Dwarves – Men Alone in the Woods (2004) and 7 Dwarves: The Forest Is Not Enough (2007). And, yes, you guessed it right, we had real actors behind the characters. Rachel Zegler's film isn't the only movie based on the story coming this year. There's another one where Brett Cooper is playing the Snow White. Though there are no details on the cast, it is likely to cast real actors to play the dwarfs. How did the dwarfism community respond to this? The news that Disney is using CGI to present dwarfs in Snow White has hit hard with people having dwarfism. Among them is a bodybuilder with the same condition who spoke to the Daily Mail and expressed that this can be damaging to the careers of those with the same condition in the industry. He said, "They wouldn’t use CGI for a tall character, so why do they have to use it for dwarfs?"The last time dwarfs were featured in Hollywood, they weren't dwarfs but actors of average height. In the 2012 film, Snow White & the Huntsman, the dwarfs were actors with average height who were depicted small digitally. That cast included actors like Ian McShane, Nick Frost, Brian Gleeson, and more. Also Read: Who is the villain in Snow White 2025? Quick Links Edited by Priscillah Mueni The upcoming release of Disney’s live action remake of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, currently scheduled for March 2025, has been surrounded by controversy – so much so that the film’s trailer has received over 1 million dislikes on YouTube. In particular, many fans have taken umbrage with the fact that computer-generated imagery (CGI) will be used for the characters of the seven dwarfs, now renamed the “miners”, rather than having them played by dwarf actors. To my mind, unless changes are made, it would be better not to release a live action remake of Snow White in the first place. My doctoral research has shown that it’s common for people with dwarfism to experience mockery influenced by the representation of dwarfism in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. But if the film is to go ahead, CGI is a better choice than to cast real people with dwarfism. Fans lamenting on social media the fact that they will no longer be able to see a film featuring “real dwarfs” ignore the parallels with the Victorian freak show. Frequently their disappointment is masked as supposed concern for the welfare of “actors” with dwarfism who will lose the “opportunity” to play these characters. But people with dwarfism who play these characters are rarely seen as serious actors. Alice Lambert, an actress with dwarfism, was interviewed for a chapter in my new book, Dwarfism Arts and Advocacy (2024). In it, she recalls that during her time in pantomime, people “would come to the stage door after the show, but I realised that they just wanted to meet ‘a dwarf’ … you are not being represented as a performer, but rather your dwarfism is being paraded for the amusement of others”. The trailer for Disney’s live action remake of Snow White. My research has also found that many people still believe that people with dwarfism only work in the entertainment industry. It is not unusual for people to ask someone with dwarfism if they work in pantomime, particularly as one of the seven dwarfs. I have personally lost count of the amount of people who snigger and ask me if I am “Grumpy” or “Happy” (names of two of the dwarf characters) or if I know where Snow White is. If people cannot tell the difference between fiction and reality, then fictional representations need to change to minimise abuse. Of those people with dwarfism who are actors, many have long refused to play roles that are considered derogatory, including the seven dwarfs. That is because people with dwarfism are capable of so much more. Worldwide, there are more than 250,000 people with dwarfism. People with dwarfism include geneticist and psychiatrist Judith Badner, lawyer Paul Steven Miller and astrophysicist William A Wheaten. Many of the fans expressing disappointment that the dwarfs will now be CGI fail to realise how the role impacts people with dwarfism in public. For example, in 2012 German lawyer Silke Schönfleisch-Backofen, who has dwarfism, successfully sued a man after he started laughing and singing Hi Ho, the song the dwarfs sing in the original Disney film, at her in court. If people cannot tell the difference between fiction and reality, then fictional representations need to change to minimise abuse. Instead of reproducing outdated attitudes, films – and the tales that inspire them – can change with the times to produce stories that are inclusive of everyone. Looking for something good? Cut through the noise with a carefully curated selection of the latest releases, live events and exhibitions, straight to your inbox every fortnight, on Fridays. Sign up here. 109min - English, Spanish OFFER 109min - English, Greek, French, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Finnish, Hungarian, Danish, German, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Swedish, Turkish, Czech, Korean, Slovakian OFFER £1.99 / month Cast & crewUser reviewsTriviaFAQShow ratings distributionOur rating mechanism has detected unusual voting activity on this title.These big screen releases can now be watched from the comfort of your couch.See the listSign in to rate and Watchlist for personalized recommendationsSign inFreshen up your Watchlist with the latest roster of streaming movies and TV shows coming to Disney+, featuring old favorites and top-notch newcomers.See the listSuggest an edit or add missing contentYou have no recently viewed pages Disney's Snow White live-action remake has faced a lot of issues since before its release. Most of them were related to the changes the studio decided to make to the 1937 animated film. The fans of the original were not happy with the casting choices or the creative decisions it made related to its central characters. One of them was to shorten its name. The original film was named Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, but the latest adaptation chose to go with only the first half of the title. This decision was reportedly made because of the objections raised about the characters with dwarfism. The Game of Thrones star Peter Dinklage pointed out his frustrations in February 2022, when the film was in its initial creative stages. Dinklage said, “Literally no offense to anything, but I was sort of taken aback. They were very proud to cast a Latino actress as Snow White, but you’re still telling the story of ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.’ Take a step back and look at what you’re doing there. It makes no sense to me. You’re progressive in one way, but you’re still making that fucking backward story about seven dwarfs living in a cave together. Have I done nothing to advance the cause from my soapbox? I guess I’m not loud enough.” After that, the studio went through a series of creative changes, according to some reports and some rumors. Some note that Disney decided to hire only one person with dwarfism among seven human characters. Eventually, they went with the decision to bring all these characters to life with CGI animation. A still from Snow White (Image via YouTube/Disney) In the new movie, they were said to be magical beings who possess magical abilities. So, considering all these creative changes, Disney reportedly decided to drop the last part of its original title and call their live-action remake Snow White. The change in the title aligns with Snow White's focus on the princess The 1937 film was animated and made in an era when things may not have led to passionate or required discussions related to concerns against the socially vulnerable groups. However, over a century later, Marc Webb's remake decided to change some of the original film's elements and show them in a new light. One of these changes was related to the titular character, played by Rachel Zegler. Despite the severe backlash to her casting, the critics were pleased with her central performance. Apart from that, her character was shown to have much more agency over her life than in the previous iterations. The ending doesn't show the prince waking her up from a slumber. Instead, it shows her taking back the reins of the kingdom that are rightfully hers. Unlike the Evil Queen, Snow White wins with her compassion for the people in the land where they live. That's why she gets crowned as the queen in the final moments, replacing the Evil Queen. So, the title change may have helped the film focus more on Snow's tale and fleshing out her arc in a more dignified manner. Also read: “Wanted to tell a story that’s honest”: Lilo & Stitch director breaks silence on the backlash received by the live-action remake Quick Links Edited by Sroban Ghosh Disney’s “Snow White” reboot is leaving a legacy it certainly doesn’t want, becoming the company’s worst-performing wide-release live-action remake in almost 10 years. The 2025 remake of the original 1937 movie opened March 21 in the US and Canada, and has struggled, earning barely $200 million worldwide. The film’s page on IMDB.com calls the movie “officially a flop,” and says its $205.5 million earnings are “miles behind its massive $410 million total cost,” including marketing, production, and other items. The site calls the film’s disappointing performance “a financial blow which few expected to be this severe, especially with the losses already estimated at over $115 million, per Collider.” “Pete’s Dragon,” a 2016 Disney remake of the 1977 film, came away with $143.7 million, $61.8 million less than “Snow White.” The “Snow White” remake was not without its controversies, which perhaps contributed to the film’s poor reception. Over three years before the film’s release, one A-list actor with dwarfism had Walt Disney Studios reframe how it portrayed the classic seven dwarfs characters. “Game of Thrones” star Peter Dinklage called out the studio for even considering taking a stab at portraying magical dwarfs in the modern era. Rachel Zegler reads a book on the set of “Snow White,” from an Instagram post on March 20, 2025. Instagram/@rachelzelger Speaking on comedian Marc Maron’s podcast in 2022, Dinklage stated, “You’re progressive in one way, but then you’re still making that f—-g backwards story about seven dwarfs living in a cave together. What the f— are you doing, man?” Disney then addressed the complaint and said the company would take a “different approach” to the seven dwarfs. Rachel Zegler, the film’s lead actress, faced backlash on social media for comments she made that were critical of the 1937 version of “Snow White.” “I mean, you know, the original cartoon came out in 1937 and very evidently so,” Zegler said during Disney’s D23 Expo in 2022. “There’s a big focus on her love story with a guy who literally stalks her. Weird! Weird. So we didn’t do that this time.” Gal Gadot and Rachel Zegler in a scene from the movie. ©Walt Disney Co./Courtesy Everett Collection The seven dwarves from the 2025 movie. ©Walt Disney Co./Courtesy Everett Collection Due to the controversy over the dwarfs and Zegler’s comments on the original movie, Disney announced in late 2023 it would delay the release for “Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs” by a full year. It was originally slated to be released in March 2024. Zegler was also vocal about her anti-Israel views. In an August 2024 X post talking about the official trailer for “Snow White,” the actress wrote, “And always remember, free Palestine.” She also lashed out at people who voted for President Donald Trump, saying in an Instagram post, “May Trump supporters and Trump voters and Trump himself never know peace,” adding, “F— Donald Trump.” Rachel Zegler, the film’s lead actress, faced backlash on social media for comments she made that were critical of the 1937 version of “Snow White.” ©Walt Disney Co./Courtesy Everett Collection She later apologized, saying in part that “Hatred and anger have caused us to move further and further away from peace and understanding.” Disney also scaled back the Hollywood premiere event for “Snow White.” Variety reported “the studio won’t be rolling out a robust red carpet like it usually does,” and that the dozens of media outlets customarily present wouldn’t be. Instead, coverage consisted of house crew members and photographers. Zegler was also vocal about her anti-Israel views. ©Walt Disney Co./Courtesy Everett Collection Fox News Digital reached out to Disney for comment on “Snow White’s” box office numbers, but did not immediately receive a response. Fox News’ Gabriel Hays contributed to this report. Skip to content Consent Preferences Synopsis "Disney's Snow White," a live-action musical reimagining of the classic 1937 film, opens exclusively in theaters March 21, 2025. Starring Rachel Zegler ("West Side Story") in the title role and Gal Gadot ("Wonder Woman") as her Stepmother, the Evil Queen, the magical music adventure journeys back to the timeless story with beloved characters Bashful, Doc, Dopey, Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, and Sneezy. Director Marc Webb Producer Marc Platt, Jared LeBoff Screenwriter Erin Cressida Wilson Distributor Walt Disney Pictures Production Co Walt Disney Pictures, Marc Platt Productions Rating PG (Some Peril|Brief Rude Humor|Thematic Elements|Violence) Genre Kids & Family, Fantasy, Adventure, Drama Original Language English Release Date (Theaters) Mar 21, 2025, Wide Release Date (Streaming) May 13, 2025 Box Office (Gross USA) $87.2M Runtime 1h 49m Sound Mix Dolby Digital, DTS, Dolby Atmos Aspect Ratio Digital 2.39:1 Let’s start with something you might not know: the version of Snow White most of us grew up with—apple, dwarfs, glass coffin and all—has much older and darker roots than Disney ever let on. The story, like many classic fairytales, comes from a long tradition of myths, legends, and folktales that people in Germany (and across Europe) passed down for centuries, long before anyone thought to write them down. And these stories? They weren’t originally meant for kids. They were more like the Netflix dramas of the time—full of jealousy, danger, death, magic, and the occasional moral gut-punch. The World Before the Brothers Grimm Back in the day—like, pre-1800s kind of day—people didn’t really separate stories into neat categories like “myth” or “folklore.” You had tales about gods (myths), stories of old heroes who may or may not have actually lived (legends), and the more everyday, mysterious stuff that people just believed in—like forest spirits, witches, cursed places and enchanted animals (folklore). These were passed around in villages, by the fire, at the market, over generations. Some were cautionary, others explained why the world was the way it was. But they were all part of how people made sense of things. A lot of these stories had very specific local roots. That’s why you’ll hear about haunted trees in one forest, or a girl who vanished into a mountain in another. But what’s wild is that the core of these stories—the themes—are super universal. Different versions of Cinderella, for example, show up in places as far apart as India, China and Ireland. So how did these tales go from local gossip to something we all know? See also: BFFs Through the Ages: History’s Most Iconic Female Friendships Enter: The Brothers Grimm Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were two German academics who lived in the early 1800s. During a time when Germany wasn’t yet a unified country and Napoleon was marching across Europe, the Grimms believed that if they could collect and preserve these old folk stories, they’d be saving a kind of cultural soul—something that all Germans, no matter what region they came from, could share. They weren’t the only ones doing this, but they were the most influential. They started asking around—especially women—who were known for being the keepers of oral stories. One of their biggest sources was a woman named Dorothea Viehmann, who came from a family of French Huguenots but lived in Hesse, Germany. Her stories were so good—cohesive, vivid, consistent—that the Grimms ended up using a lot of them. But here’s the twist: the first versions of the Grimms’ Children’s and Household Tales were not kid-friendly. We’re talking cannibalism, torture, burning shoes, death by red-hot iron. The stories were raw and intense—closer to what you’d hear in a tavern than in a nursery. Over time, the Grimms edited the stories, softening the violence, making them more moral, and adding Christian overtones. They even started swapping out evil mothers for evil stepmothers, probably because the idea of a cruel mother felt too disturbing for the growing middle-class readership. So… What Is the Original Snow White Story? Snow White as we know her first appeared in the Grimms’ collection in 1812. But pieces of her story had already existed in German folklore for a long time—there’s even an earlier literary version from 1782 called Richilde, which focuses more on the evil queen’s vanity and the magic mirror. Forget the musical animals and tidy woodland cottages for a second. The original Snow White—as told by the Brothers Grimm in 1812—is darker, stranger, and way more intense than most people remember. It starts, as all good fairytales do, in winter. A queen is sitting by a window, sewing. She pricks her finger, and three drops of blood fall onto the snow on her ebony windowsill. The sight is so striking—red on white on black—that she whispers a wish: “I want a child with skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony.” And eventually, she gets her wish. She names the baby Snow White. But the queen dies soon after. A new queen takes her place—a beautiful but deeply vain woman with a magic mirror that tells her she’s the fairest of them all… until one day, it doesn’t. The mirror names Snow White instead. Enraged, the queen sends a huntsman to kill the girl and bring back her lungs and liver as proof. The huntsman can’t do it—Snow White is just a child—so he lets her go, and brings back the organs of a wild animal instead. The queen cooks and eats them, thinking they’re Snow White’s. (Yeah. We’re definitely not in Disney anymore.) Meanwhile, Snow White flees deep into the forest and finds a tiny cottage, where she meets seven dwarfs. They agree to let her stay if she cooks and cleans and doesn’t open the door to anyone. She agrees. But the queen figures out she’s still alive. And here’s where it gets extra folkloric. She tries to kill Snow White three times: First, with a tight corset that cuts off her air. Then, with a poisoned comb. And finally, with a poisoned apple—one half harmless, one half deadly. The third time works. Snow White falls, seemingly dead. The dwarfs can’t bear to bury her, so they place her in a glass coffin in the forest, where she lies for a long time—unchanging, preserved. Eventually, a prince comes by, sees her, and instantly falls in love with her (despite, you know, her being dead). He asks the dwarfs if he can take her with him. As his servants carry the coffin away, they stumble—dislodging the piece of poisoned apple from her throat. She wakes up. The prince proposes on the spot. Snow White says yes. And the queen? She’s invited to the wedding, not knowing whose it is. When she arrives and sees Snow White alive, she’s forced to dance in red-hot iron shoes until she dies. Grim, right? But also… iconic. Every image is packed with symbolism: blood on snow, enchanted mirrors, poisoned fruit, death and rebirth. It’s a story about envy, survival, innocence, and the long, strange journey from childhood to power. See also: Elon Musk’s Family History: His Bloodline is Much More Disturbing Than You Think Was Snow White a Real Person? Here’s where it gets even juicier. In 1994, a German historian named Eckhard Sander suggested that Snow White might have been based on a real woman: Margarete von Waldeck, a countess born in 1533. At 16, Margarete was sent away by her stepmother (yes, really) to live in Brussels, where she fell in love with a prince—who would later become Philip II of Spain. Her parents weren’t exactly thrilled; the match was politically inconvenient. And then? She mysteriously died at 21. Poisoned. And the dwarfs? This is dark: Margarete’s father owned copper mines where children worked in horrific conditions. The surviving kids were often stunted, deformed, and referred to as “poor dwarfs.” Even the poisoned apple might be grounded in real events—a man in the region was once arrested for handing out poisoned apples to children who stole from his orchard. Like… fairy tale plot twist? Confirmed. Another contender is Maria Sophia von Erthal, born in 1729 in Lohr, Bavaria. Her story also includes a not-so-nice stepmother and a family castle with—you guessed it—a talking mirror. Not magical, but an acoustical novelty that could project sound, crafted by a local mirror factory. There’s more: just outside Lohr is a mining town called Bieber, set among seven hills. The tunnels were so small that only very short workers could fit—many of them wore bright, hooded clothing. Sounds familiar, right? Even the glass coffin might connect to the region’s famous glassworks, and the poison? Deadly nightshade grows wild in the area. So maybe Snow White is part Margarete, part Maria Sophia. Or maybe she’s a little bit of every girl whose story got folded into the folklore along the way. That’s what folktales do—they blend truth, legend, and imagination until you can’t tell where one ends and the other begins. What’s Hiding Beneath the Story: The Symbolism of Snow White Fairytales are never just what they seem. You can read Snow White as a simple story about good triumphing over evil, but once you peel back the layers, it’s a web of symbolism—coded messages about human nature, growing up, danger, purity, and power. Here’s a closer look at what some of these elements might really mean: The Poisoned Apple: Sweet on the Outside, Deadly at the Core The apple is one of the oldest symbols in mythology and religious imagery—think back to Eve in the Garden of Eden or Apple of Discord. In Snow White, the poisoned apple is the final trap, and it’s not just any poison—it’s hidden inside beauty. That’s the key. It represents temptation, but also deception. Something can look shiny, perfect, delicious—but it may carry danger deep inside. It’s the classic “too good to be true” moment. Some scholars argue it’s about growing up: that bittersweet moment when innocence meets danger and you can’t un-eat the apple. Once you’ve tasted betrayal or desire, you can’t go back —again remember Eve in the Garden of Eden or Apple of Discord. Historian Maria Tatar, who has written extensively on the Grimms and fairytales, suggests the poisoned apple marks the boundary between childhood and adulthood—between naive trust and the knowledge that not everything is what it seems. See also: Who is U.S. Rep. Al Green, the Democrat Removed from Trump’s Address to Congress? The Seven Dwarfs: The Many Sides of Us In the Disney version, the dwarfs are named—Sleepy, Dopey, Grumpy, Doc, and so on—but in the Grimm version, they’re anonymous. Even so, the number seven is deeply symbolic. It’s the number of completeness in many traditions—seven days of the week, seven deadly sins, seven virtues. In that sense, the dwarfs can be seen as representing different facets of the human psyche, or even different emotional responses to hardship: joy, fear, anger, detachment, etc. They also serve a practical role: they give Snow White shelter, protection, and a sort of surrogate family. But they’re also liminal figures—not quite children, not quite adults, not quite magical, not quite human. In Jungian psychology, they could even be seen as archetypes—fragments of the Self that support transformation. Snow White has to move through their world before she can find her own. The Glass Coffin: A Pause Between Death and Life The image of Snow White lying in a glass coffin in the middle of the forest is one of the most haunting parts of the story. She’s not dead, exactly—but she’s not alive either. It’s this strange in-between space. The glass coffin is a symbol of suspended time. It preserves her purity, yes, but also traps her. She becomes an object—looked at but untouched. It’s often interpreted as a critique of how female beauty is idealized and frozen in time. The story doesn’t end until the prince comes and breaks that stasis. Some literary critics (like Jack Zipes and Marina Warner) point out that this part of the story reflects a kind of ritual death and rebirth—a symbolic transformation that has to happen before Snow White can truly become a woman, with autonomy and power. See also: Trump’s English-Only Order Sparks Outrage: A Step Toward Exclusion Red as Blood, White as Snow, Black as Ebony: The Colors of the Soul One of the first lines in the Grimm version is iconic: the queen pricks her finger and sees three colors—red, white, and black. These aren’t random. These are symbolic anchors that show up again and again in European folklore. Red: Life, blood, desire, passion. White: Innocence, purity, virginity—but also stillness, snow, coldness. Black: Death, mystery, evil, the unconscious. Together, these three colors map out the entire emotional landscape of the story. Snow White herself embodies all three—she is the innocent girl (white), who faces danger and death (black), but ultimately reclaims life and passion (red). It’s a symbolic transformation from child to adult, light to dark and back again. What It Means for Us Now We don’t always walk around analyzing color palettes or dreaming of poisoned apples, but these symbols still speak to us. They show up in art, books, movies, even our language. (Don’t take the bait. She’s playing the innocent. Beauty is only skin deep.) Folktales give us a symbolic vocabulary—a way to talk about things that are hard to say outright. Temptation. Betrayal. Transformation. Fear of death. Longing for love. All the heavy, human stuff that we’re constantly circling around. And the reason Snow White still hits so hard? Because it doesn’t explain those feelings away. It shows them. It gives us the poisoned apple and the glass coffin and says: Here. Make of it what you will. Why We Tell These Stories: Folktales as Cultural Memory If you think about it, folktales are one of the oldest tools we have for understanding the world. Long before we had schools, science, or therapy, we had stories. They were how people passed on knowledge, warned each other about danger, tried to explain death and love and fear and joy—and how they made sense of what couldn’t be controlled. Folktales are kind of like the collective diary of a community. You can read a story and immediately get a feel for what a society valued—or feared. In a time when famine was real and kids didn’t always make it to adulthood, it makes sense that so many stories are about hunger, survival, abandonment. Or why forests were scary, magical places—because in medieval Europe, they were. They were full of wolves, bandits, the unknown. So stories didn’t just entertain—they helped people prepare. They also reinforced social values. Think of how many fairytales reward kindness, cleverness, or humility—and punish greed or cruelty. These weren’t random. They were ways of shaping behavior in a world where religion and custom often ruled daily life. And they weren’t just for kids either. Folktales were shared around fires, in markets, at weddings, funerals, over harvests. They helped people bond, reflect, laugh, and sometimes, even grieve. In times of instability—war, poverty, migration—stories became a form of resilience. Something you could carry with you, something no one could take. A portable piece of identity. That’s what made them powerful. See also: Daily Mail’s Invasive Tactics: Paparazzi Ambush Michelle Trachtenberg’s Family Hours After Her Death Why We Keep Telling the Same Stories In the end, Snow White—like so many folktales—is more than just an old story with a poisoned apple and a prince. It’s a mirror of the world that made it. A little fragment of memory passed from mouth to mouth, reshaped by the people who needed it most. Once it was told in hushed voices by firelight. Now it’s played out on screens, rewritten in books, reimagined through animation, art, film, TikToks, memes. And still—it survives. That’s the thing about folktales. They were never meant to stay the same. They evolve because we evolve. The same way oral tradition once adapted to the needs of a community—offering comfort, warnings, laughter, or identity—our modern retellings do something similar. They stretch the stories to speak to our time. Sometimes we give the princess more agency. Sometimes we question the prince. Sometimes the stepmother isn’t evil, just misunderstood. And every version tells us something about who we are now. But the core stays. The fear, the beauty, the hunger, the danger, the hope—it’s all still there, dressed up in new clothes. Because we still need stories that help us make sense of the world. We still need myths and magic and moral questions and dark forests and unlikely heroes. Folktales are proof that memory doesn’t just live in history books. It lives in stories. And as long as we keep telling them—around tables, in classrooms, through poems and movies and bedtime whispers—they’ll keep growing with us. So no, we may never know who Snow White really was. But the fact that we’re still asking means the story is alive. And in its own way, so is she. Cropped "Snow White" poster featuring Gal Gadot and Rachel Zegler.Disney Enterprises, Inc. Rachel Zegler and Gal Gadot’s Snow White — Disney’s embattled live-action remake of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs — is done playing in theaters. What is the breakdown of the film’s losses? Rated PG, Snow White was released in theaters on March 21, following more than three years of controversies, including but not limited to Zegler’s criticism of the 1937 animated classic and politically divisive social media posts. Forbes2025 Tony Awards Red Carpet Photos: George Clooney, Keanu Reeves, Cynthia Erivo And MoreBy Tim Lammers In addition, Peter Dinklage, the acclaimed Game of Thrones star born with a form of dwarfism, criticized the idea of Disney casting little people as the famed seven dwarfs from the famed Brothers Grimm tale during a 2022 interview with podcaster Marc Maron. Ultimately, Disney went the CGI route with the characters. Snow White stumbled out of the gate on its first weekend in theaters, earning $42.2 million domestically, a disastrous number considering the film’s $269.4 million production budget before prints and advertising. The princess movie’s business dropped 66% in its second weekend in theaters — losing its box office crown to Jason Statham’s $40 million crime thriller A Working Man — and business rapidly dwindled from there.Forbes2025 Tony Awards: Full Winners ListBy Tim Lammers Now, roughly two and a half months after Snow White made its debut on the big screen, the film has finally completed its theatrical run. As indicated by The Numbers’ weekly theater count list, Snow White’s last day in theaters was Thursday, June 5. According to the box office tracker, the film earned $347 on Thursday from 25 North American theaters to bring its final domestic tally to $87,203,963. Coupled with the film’s international ticket sales of $118,341,472, Snow White’s worldwide box office gross comes to $205,545,435 against the $269.4 million production budget before prints and advertising costs.Rachel Zegler in "Snow White."Disney Enterprises, Inc. ‘Snow White’ No Doubt Lost Money, But How Much? Given the huge gap between the film’s theatrical gross of $205.5 million and its production budget of $269.4 million, there’s no arguing that Snow White ended its theatrical run deep in the red. The question that remains, however, is how much those losses were. To begin with, the production needs to split its ticket sales with theater owners, which generally is a 50-50 split. On top of that, the film has marketing expenses, as well as residual payments and other expenses.ForbesVampire Thriller ‘Sinners’ Already Stakes Top Spot On Streaming ChartsBy Tim Lammers In a post-mortem analysis by Deadline on March 31 — a mere 10 days after Snow White’s release in theaters — the Hollywood trade publication crunched the numbers by forecasting that the film would finish with a worldwide box office gross of $225 million. Operating from that number, Deadline projected the film would eventually “clear $295 million in revenues” from Snow White, which included “$101 million in global film rentals, $62 million in worldwide home entertainment, $130 million in streaming and TV revenues, and $2 million from merchandise.”ForbesHow Much Screen Time Does Keanu Reeves’ John Wick Have In ‘Ballerina’?By Tim Lammers Then, however, came the film’s expenses, which Deadline estimated were $410 million for the production. In addition to the film’s nearly $270 million price tag, Deadline noted that Disney spent $111 on global marketing costs and “$29 million in residuals and other expenses.” As such, Deadline concluded that Disney would lose $115 million on Snow White. However, since the March 31 analysis was based on a projection of a $225 million worldwide theatrical gross, the worldwide tally of $205.5 million as of June 5 means the studio will lose even more.ForbesWhen Is ‘John Wick’ Spinoff ‘Ballerina’ Coming To Streaming?By Tim Lammers If there’s any silver lining for Disney, the failure of Snow White is being followed by the success of the live-action version of Lilo & Stitch, which since its May 23 release has grossed $637 million globally against a $100 million production budget before prints and advertising, per The Numbers. Better yet, the film is eyeing its third consecutive weekend at No. 1 at the domestic box office and is no doubt in the running to become the highest-grossing film of the summer if not all of 2025. Snow White, meanwhile, will make its transition to streaming on Disney+ on Tuesday, where the studio no doubt hopes the film will finally find an audience.ForbesWhen Is Wes Anderson’s ‘The Phoenician Scheme’ Coming To Streaming?By Tim Lammers Of all the Disney animated classics to have been given the live-action treatment, few are more beloved than 1937’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, a landmark feature that opened the door to a whole vault of canonical fairy tales ideally suited to the form. That, in turn, led to original stories, building the studio a vast, field-leading toon library and a legacy beloved the world over. If Snow White arrives accompanied by an echo chamber of overblown online controversies, that has zero bearing on the pleasures of this 21st century update. Even those with knives out for the movie might have to admit it’s no poisoned apple. Having turned this particular form of brand extension and IP strip-mining into a subgenre unto itself, Disney’s live-action remake boom — which has ballooned into a full-scale explosion in the past decade — has been a mixed bag. Some are such products of the digital toolbox that “live-action” feels like false advertising; some flatten the quaint charms of tales hailing from less cynical times; some struggle to measure up to the unique magic that only great animation can yield. Snow White doesn’t quite crack the top-tier, with Cinderella and Pete’s Dragon and the 1994 version of The Jungle Book. But it lands solidly in the upper end of the spectrum, alongside movies like Mulan, Beauty and the Beast and Cruella. That puts it a long way from such soulless efforts as Dumbo, Pinocchio or either of the recent Alice in Wonderland movies. Or, ugh, The Lion King. The fuss surrounding the movie started with the casting of “not white enough” Rachel Zegler in the title role. Its flames were fanned by the opinionated star’s dismissive comments on the 1937 original, then again by her hostile reaction to Trump’s re-election (for which she subsequently apologized) and her pro-Palestine stance. The public was quick to cook up a feuding diva narrative when Israeli co-star Gal Gadot, who served the mandatory two years in the IDF, spoke out against antisemitism and advocated for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza. But none of that background noise matters in Marc Webb’s vibrant retelling, from a smart script by Erin Cressida Wilson that reshapes a story about a princess dreaming of her knight in shining armor into one in which she finds the courage to be a leader, capable of following in her noble father’s footsteps. That desire is expressed with passionate feeling in “Waiting on a Wish,” the standout of the new songs by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. If that sounds like the standard female-empowerment template that’s almost obligatory in contemporary fairy-tale retreads, it more or less is. But the incandescent Zegler sells it with conviction and heart. And there are worse messages to be putting out into the world via family films right now than celebrating the virtues of kindness and fairness over cruel despotism. The one controversy that does intrude mildly on the experience of watching Snow White is the tricky decision of how to handle the “seven dwarfs” in a world where representation standards have evolved considerably. One can appreciate the challenge to the filmmakers of remaining true to a key element of the 1812 Brothers Grimm fairy tale without offending the dwarfism community. But although the talented voice cast gives the characters humor and distinctive personalities, their CGI renderings are, well, a bit creepy, and less photorealistic than many of the cute woodland creatures that flock around Snow White. However, that questionable choice does not diminish the movie’s rewards; the dwarfs’ sweet interactions with Snow White, and the growing affection and loyalty even of crotchety Grumpy (Martin Klebba), soon make you forget the visual distraction. Wilson dispenses with the backstory in swift fashion. Snow White was born into a kingdom on the edge of a forest, where happiness flourishes under the benevolent King (Hadley Fraser) and Queen (Lorena Andrea). Following the queen’s death, Snow White’s father remarries; her stepmother (Gadot) soon gets the king out of the way under mysterious circumstances, establishing her reign of fear over the kingdom. The Evil Queen downgrades Snow White to maid duties. But when her magical mirror informs her that her detested stepdaughter is “the fairest one of all,” the icy narcissist orders her Huntsman (Ansu Kabia) to take the young woman deep into the woods, kill her and bring back her heart. The mask that speaks from within the mirror (with the sonorous voice of Patrick Page) is one of many homages to the animated original. Wilson’s screenplay sticks to enough of the traditional plot to honor the lineage, while including sufficient departures to let Snow White stand on its own. Perhaps the most significant of them is changing the prince figure into Jonathan (Andrew Burnap), a commoner who leads a group of woodland bandits. Unlike in 1937, family-movie romances more often now start on a playfully adversarial note, which is the case when Jonathan sings amusingly of Snow White’s “Princess Problems,” while he and his band are busy just trying to survive. But once word reaches the Evil Queen that

Grimm wrote in their fairy tale’s most famous line (“die Schönste im ganzen Land” in their German), but in the pedestrian sense your mother used when she said, ‘‘Life isn’t fair” after you complained that your fifth-grade teacher was picking on you.Everything about the new Snow White bespeaks a pervasive failure of imagination. The CGI effects cannot match the prodigious and meticulous visual creativity of the 1937 animation. In that cartoon, Snow White falls asleep in the forest after she runs from the wicked queen’s burly assassin, and awakens to find dozens of delightfully hand-animated woodland creatures peering curiously at her—squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, raccoons, skunks, a doe-and-fawn duo, a comic turtle, and singing birds galore. Compare that famous scene to the paltry animal offerings on display in the remake: a couple of squirrels, a bird or two, and just one lousy deer, none of whom have any personality or charm. The ticky-tack and garishly hued costumes (compare the blues of Snow White’s 1937 and 2025 bodices) look as though they were ordered from Amazon. Jonathan and his bandit sidekicks look as though they were told to show up on the set in their everyday pants and hoodies and then each issued a pair of medieval boots. The songs, by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (La La Land, 2016), are uniformly forgettable, while the 1937 tunes by Frank Churchill and Larry Morey are still sung and hummed to this day (covers of the Churchill-Morey “Whistle While You Work” and “Heigh-Ho” from the original are the only memorable musical pieces in the entire remake). Even the continuity is poor: Zegler’s makeup looks completely different from scene to scene. This etiolated and banal landscape is enough to make you wonder what happened to Western culture during the 88 years between 1937 and 2025.II.The story of Snow White that the brothers Grimm claimed to have retold in their 19th-century collections of German folk tales is a repository of at least three powerful archetypal elements. First, the deadly jealousy of a mother watching her own beauty fade while her daughter blooms (in the Grimms’ original version of the tale, published in 1812, the wicked queen is Snow White’s biological mother, not her stepmother). Second, the protagonist’s coming-of-age journey into the magical forest. Third, the resurrection as snow-white winter melts into fecund spring with the arrival of the prince-bridegroom.In some ways, the story resembles the Greek myth of the nymph Chione (her name apparently connected to the word “chiōn [χιών],” which is ancient Greek for “snow”), as narrated in Ovid’s Metamorphoses. According to Ovid, Chione was so beautiful that, by the age of fourteen, she had already attracted a thousand suitors. The god Mercury, struck by lust, caused her to fall into a deep sleep, during which he raped her. Later that day, she was raped again by the god Apollo, who gained access to her chamber by disguising herself as an old woman. She then bore twins, one by each god, but she made the mistake of boasting about her beauty in front of the goddess Diana. In a fit of jealousy, Diana killed Chione by shooting an arrow into her tongue.Although it is unlikely that the myth of Chione was a direct source of the Grimm fairy tale, there are tantalising parallels in the deathlike sleep, the murderous female rival, the crone disguise used to gain the victim’s confidence (in the Grimm tale, the queen fits herself out as an old peddler-woman). But the most powerful shared theme of all is that of the central character herself: the lovely virgin girl just entering nubility (early teens in traditional cultures, because that is when girls become ready for marriage), who can wield power over men for good or ill by the sheer force of her innocence, her virtue, and her physical radiance.In her 1986 book, Women in Greek Myth, the classicist Mary Lefkowitz discusses the parthenoi (maidens) who populate ancient Greek storytelling. As Lefkowitz points out, these young women either lose their autonomy by becoming wives or mothers, or they die like Antigone, and Iphigenia—or Chione. But during their brief maidenhood they become memorable. In the Odyssey, the young princess Nausicaa cows the worldly and war-hardened Odysseus into gentleness and gentlemanliness when he washes up shipwrecked and naked on the shore of her father’s realm. “[M]ay the gods give you what your heart longs for, a husband and home,” Odysseus tells her.In the Grimms’ fairy tale, Snow White is only seven years old when her beauty starts to outshine that of the queen, as the mirror on the wall informs us. She is obviously a few years older than that—of wedding age—when she flees into the forest to be befriended by the dwarfs and found by the prince, but the point of the story (and the point of many of the Grimms’ tales) is that her bewitching youth is more potent than all of the queen’s magic. She is “Little Snow-White” (Schneewittchen in the Grimms’ German). She is kind and virtuous, but like Chione, she is not perfect: her flaw is a weakness for pretty things, which leads her to ignore the dwarfs’ warning that she not let anyone into the house while they are gone. In the Grimms’ story, the queen as peddler-woman tempts Snow White three times on three different days. First, she offers Snow White a set of bodice laces so tight that they stop her breathing, then a comb for her hair that poisons her, and finally, the lethal apple. The dwarfs come home and are able to release her from the bodice-laces and the comb so as to save her life, but they cannot find the piece of apple lodged in her throat.The brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, revised their famous collection of tales several times between their first edition in 1812 and what is regarded as their definitive edition in 1857. Some scholars have argued that they simply invented the Snow White story, borrowing thematic elements from the tales of Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, and Sleeping Beauty that also involve beautiful maidens, jealous family, and young children in the forest. The brothers maintained, however, that they had collected all of their folktales, including Snow White, from oral informants, and that these stories had been handed down in Germany for generations and mutated over time. Many of the Grimms’ stories are so bloody in content and cruel in consequences that they feel authentic. In the Grimms’ Cinderella story, for example, the stepsisters hack off parts of their feet as they try to fit themselves into Cinderella’s slipper. These tales reflect the harsh and precarious world in which nearly everyone in the West lived until the end of World War II, where the fallout from even the smallest mishap or mistake could be humiliation, penury, hunger, and death. The brothers Grimm knew that well. Their father, a well-off district magistrate in the city of Steinau, had died of pneumonia in 1796 when Jacob was eleven and Wilhelm was ten, and the family was plunged into abject poverty. Miraculously, both brothers managed to get through university and carve out academic careers dedicated to the German language and its literature.The Grimms’ Snow White (I’m following the 1857 version) is so violent and remorseless that it is hard for people nowadays to believe that it was ever intended for children. When the wicked queen orders the huntsman to take Snow White into the woods and stab her in the heart, she tells him to bring back Snow White’s lungs and liver as proof. Moved by pity, the huntsman spares the young girl and kills a wild boar so as to pass off its organs as hers. “The cook had to boil them with salt, and the wicked woman ate them,” the Grimms recount. The queen’s punishment for her evil deeds is even more sadistic, and it takes place at Snow White’s wedding: “Then they put a pair of iron shoes into burning coals. They were brought forth with tongs and placed before her. She was forced to step into the red-hot shoes and dance until she fell down dead.”And yet, when I read those words myself at the age of eight or nine, in an unexpurgated edition of the tales that an aunt had sent me and my sisters, I got a thrill of satisfaction. Justice had been done. In my child’s imagination, only the most painful and prolonged forms of retribution struck me as condign, and I didn’t feel the slightest bit sorry for the evil queen or care what the Supreme Court might have thought of her cruel and unusual punishment. As the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim writes in The Uses of Enchantment (1976):Since the fairy tale promises the type of triumph the child wishes for, it is psychologically convincing as no “realistic” tale can be. And because it pledges that the kingdom will be his, the child is willing to believe the rest of what the fairy story teaches: that one must leave home to find one’s kingdom; that it cannot be gained immediately; that risks must be taken, trials submitted to; that it cannot be done all by oneself, but that one needs helpers; and that to secure their aid, one must meet some of their demands. Just because the ultimate promise coincides with the child’s wishes for revenge and a glorious existence, the fairy tale enriches the child’s fantasy beyond compare.III.Even during the 1930s, however, this sort of savagery was too much for most people, and Walt Disney softened his adaptation of the story considerably. The liver and lungs were replaced by the queen’s demand that the huntsman simply bring back Snow White’s heart in a box (and it’s an organ that we in the audience never see). Disney also eliminated the queen’s first two attempts to murder Snow White with deadly objects, keeping only the poisoned apple. And the queen herself is killed by tumbling off a cliff instead of dancing to her demise in the red-hot shoes. In the Grimms’ tale, Snow White returns to life when one of the prince’s servants, carrying the glass coffin in which the dwarfs have displayed her corpse, stumbles and dislodges the piece of apple from her throat. The Disney 1937 version replaces this fortuity with something more romantically digestible: the prince’s kiss of “true love” that brings her back from death. (And for those still fretting about consent, it’s actually Snow White who bestows the first kiss in the 1937 movie, blown via a dove that she sends to the prince’s lips when he rides up to the castle after he overhears her singing.) Still, the animated version, with its vividly depicted black magic and the stepmother’s disguise as the most hideous of hags, with a grape-size wart perched on the bridge of her nose, terrified many small children back then—as did the wicked witch Margaret Hamilton played in The Wizard of Oz two years later.However, Walt Disney balanced the story’s horror and dread with the perfectionist flair for visual whimsy and humour that had already become his trademark. This was what transformed it into the highest-grossing animated film of all time in constant dollars. He had spent the preceding decade practising, so to speak, with his “Silly Symphonies,” animated shorts set to musical pieces that often retell Aesop’s fables and other stories. I had never seen the 1937 film in its entirety until I rented it to compare it to the new version. I spent hours running it over and over just to marvel at the details: the obsessive care that Disney’s crew of animators in Burbank had taken to recreate the Teutonic kitsch—beer steins, mechanical clocks, ponderous carved furniture—that fills the dwarfs’ cottage, for example.And it was Disney who endowed each of the dwarfs with a distinct personality; in the Grimms’ story, they are seven ciphers, their number chosen because seven, like three, is a magical one in the world of fairy tales. The 1937 dwarfs are pure Disney confections. Their body types—hugely enlarged heads, ears, noses, and feet—are not modelled on humans with dwarfism, but on Mickey Mouse. Dopey’s ground-dragging overcoat anticipates the cloak Mickey wears as the sorcerer’s apprentice in 1940’s Fantasia. And although the dwarfs look like Germanic caricatures, they speak like all-American hillbillies. “She’s mighty purty,” says Sneezy when the dwarfs discover Snow White asleep in their bedroom. Their famous yodelling song is more Jimmy Rodgers than Alpine.Left to right: Dopey, Happy, Sneezy, Grumpy, Doc, Bashful, and Sleepy.But at the centre of the movie is Snow White herself. Her character has been called bland—“a bit of a bore” in the estimation of Roger Ebert’s retrospective assessment of the film in 2001—and this is true, in a sense. The Disney animators were weakest at depicting human faces, and Snow White looks like Betty Boop, with her heavily lashed, nearly circular eyes and cherry mouth. She is “not a character who acts but one whose mere existence inspires others to act,” Ebert writes. But not only does Disney surround Snow White with creatures in constant motion—the dwarfs, the forest critters in nearly every frame—but she is also in constant motion herself, as is her billowing yellow skirt. That iconic garment nearly has a personality of its own. It dips and swings and swirls, filling the frame as Snow White dances—or sings or washes dishes or bakes a gooseberry pie for Grumpy—with meticulously rendered physical grace that must have taken months for her animators to perfect.Walt Disney envisioned his Snow White as no older than fourteen. The otherwise unknown singer, Andrea Caselotti, whom he hired as her voice, felt obliged to pretend that she was sixteen at her audition, not eighteen as was her real age. Disney had wanted a performer who could sound like a child when speaking but who had the classical training (Caselotti’s parents were music teachers) to render Churchill and Morey’s operatic love songs. Neither Caselotti nor any of the other voice-actors was credited onscreen, and she had to sneak in uninvited to the film’s December 1937 premiere. It was a once-in-a-lifetime job for her (her only credited performance was in a 1945 short). She was paid only US$970 for the role, about US$20,000 in today’s dollars, and Disney was so impressed with the uniqueness of her silvery soprano voice that he effectively barred her from further roles. In her obituary for the Independent in 1997, BBC radio writer Brian Sibley declares: “[H]er singing was exquisite and her rendition of the dialogue was full of naivete, gentleness and compassion.” The supporting characters in the 1937 film were triumphs of technology and visual and audial artistry, but it was Snow White herself who made the movie incandescent.The makers of the new Snow White tortured their narrative in multiple ways, but their coup de grâce was precisely their destruction of its lead character and the mythic elements surrounding her. Much of the blame for the film’s dismal box-office performance has been laid at the feet of Rachel Zegler herself. It was certainly not prudent to announce her hope that Trump voters “never know peace” (that was half her potential audience) or to deride Disney’s 1937 classic, which Sergei Eisenstein once called the greatest movie ever made. But Zegler is only 24, and she has spent all of her late adolescence and early adulthood in Hollywood, where her head has undoubtedly been crammed with the preposterous progressive cliches of California celebrity-dom for years on end. She deserves some slack.A far greater problem was caused by the limitations of Zegler’s acting talent and personal charisma. Some critics complained that it was ridiculous to cast a Latina with dark-skinned indigenous ancestry as a Northern European princess whose “skin white as snow” is her defining characteristic, at least in the Grimms’ fairy tale and the 1937 cartoon. Yet in 2022’s Blonde, the Cuban-born brunette Ana de Armas was able to achieve an eerily accurate portrayal of the creamy-skinned Marilyn Monroe, whom de Armas facially resembles in no way. Other critics have pointed out that Gadot, a former Miss Israel and Miss Universe, is better-looking than Zegler, even though she was 38 when the film was shot—leading many audience members to wonder whether the new Snow White was really “the fairest of them all,” as the mirror on the wall claimed.Zegler is perfectly attractive although not gorgeous—and a skilled actress could have used the sheer radiance of her youth to pull off an illusion of beauty that would have mesmerised the audience. But this is exactly what the makers of the new Snow White refused to let her do. They ruthlessly de-feminised this most feminine of Disney’s creations. Rachel Zegler has thick and luxurious hair, but they stuffed her head into a stiff chin-length wig with an unflattering centre parting that looks nothing like the 1937 Snow White’s mass of black curls. The 1937 Snow White’s dress featured girlish puffed sleeves showing off bare arms that contributed to her body’s fluidity of motion. The new Snow White’s arms are sheathed in long electric-blue sleeves that look like metallic tubes and make her dress look like a suit of armour. She is impenetrable. She needs nobody. And without its central figure—the young and vulnerable maiden who longs for (and finds) a husband and home, and who triumphs over death with love—there is no story of Snow White, nor any other story for that matter. There is only the dreary ideological fable with its wearying message of liberation and empowerment placed front and centre for the edification of aspiring little girlbosses everywhere. This seems to be about the best that Disney, and the rest of Hollywood, can do these days.