

6 Life Lessons To Be Learned From The Best Female Villains Of Childhood



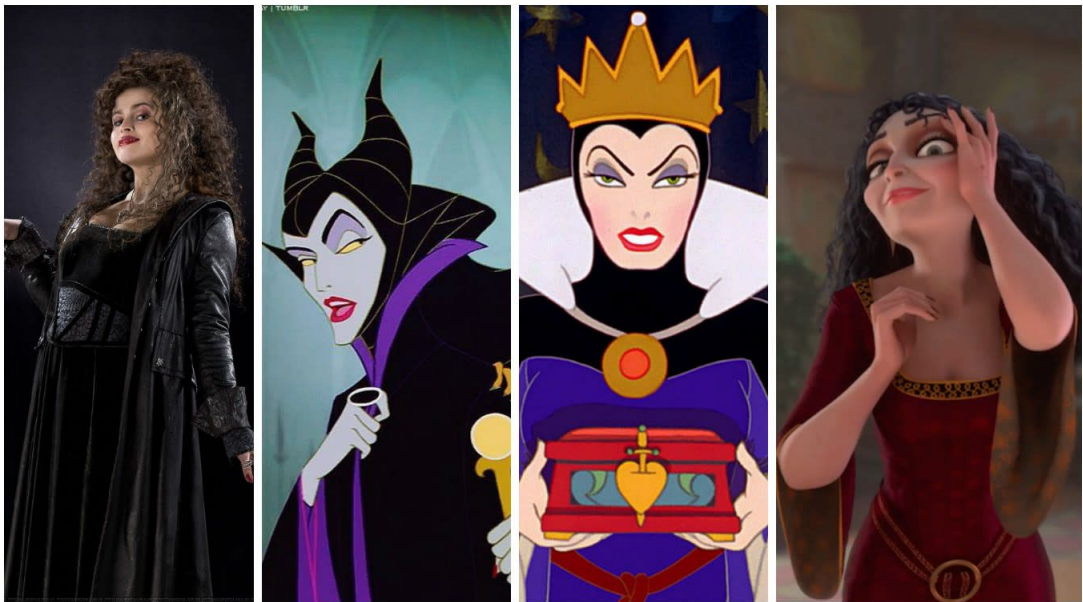
The world of children's entertainment is full of heroes, each inspiring in their own way, teaching us lessons from a young age to shape and mold us. How to reach for the stars, imagine more for ourselves, stand up to bullies, be the underdog, overcome adversity, handle responsibility, and all the rest of it. But if you're like me, the heroes were cool and the heroines cute, but the villains, they were the ones to watch.



Alice and the Queen of Hearts

Villains are the fascinating and multi-faceted characters of those children's stories and none were more fearful, intimidating, powerful or bold as the female villains. They got the better outfits, the more interesting dialogue (such wit!) and on almost every level they seemed more intelligent than those they went up against. With their empowering confidence, here are just a few of the life lessons learned from the female villains of our youth.

1. Take Pride In Your Appearance



Bellatrix, Maleficent, Evil Queen, Gothel

While many a heroine was given a great makeover scene in my favorite films (and I LOVED a makeover montage) the leading loathsome lady was bound to be impeccable. They had the best outfits, not to mention accessories.

Examples:

- Maleficent's headpiece in *Sleeping Beauty* is iconic, immediately distinguishing her from any other villain.
- [Bellatrix Lestrange's bodice](#) is clearly indicative of her own person style.
- Maybe a bit too motivated by petty insecurity, *Snow White's* Evil Queen certainly should have embraced her flawless eyebrows and Joan Crawford cheekbones.
- Mother Gothel from *Tangled* could have avoided some heartache if she'd owned her silver Cher-like curls.



Appearances are important, let's be honest. You dress for the job you want, right? And body image be damned. Ursula understood the significance of owning her skin and Poison Ivy knew how to use her looks to lure in her prey for a poisonous kiss. I don't advocate for malicious seduction, but these ladies knew that appearances could be used as an advantageous device, as a spice used to enhance the rest of your natural talents and charisma.

2. Know Your Gifts, Know Your Passions



Madam Mim, Jadis the White Witch, Trunchbull

I admit, this is certainly a lesson often bestowed by the heroine of the film, but it almost always applies to the villain, as well. You know, those female villains who are simply good at their craft, even if their craft is devious.

Examples:

- Jadis The White Witch ([The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe](#)) wouldn't be able to ensnare an entire world under a 100-year winter without mad magic skills.
- Agatha Trunchbull (*Matilda*) didn't become headmistress of Matilda's school overnight.
- Madam Mim (*The Sword in the Stone*) gave Merlin a run for his money when they engaged in a duel of magic.

In retrospect, one might even say the main contrast between the strength of the hero versus that of the villain of any story may just be a difference in self-understanding. We generally see the former about to begin her journey, and the other after she has been on it and is trying to preserve whatever she holds dear with the skills she's built up.

3. Lean In, Work Hard, Make Demands



Mama Fratelli, Cruella de Vil, Queen of Hearts

The number one motivating factor for villains tends to be a general desire for power, and I think a great disservice has been done making that appear to be such a bad thing. Especially when the heroines had basic aspirations such as wifehood, motherhood, princess-hood, and, occasionally, to be a warrior. Even the girls who rejected the idea of being subjected to dated tropes of female subjugation rarely took charge the way the villainesses of our childhood movies did.

Examples:

- Cruella De Vil is obviously maniacal and obsessive in her search for Dalmatian puppies to make her coats, but she doesn't back down in her evil business venture.
- Mama Fratelli in *The Goonies* commands her sons' loyalty and schemes her way to fortune, understanding a [lucrative venture \(adventure?\)](#) when she sees it.
- You know the Queen of Hearts (*Alice in Wonderland*) never let anyone negotiate with her about the royal decree, "Off with their heads!"

Villainesses certainly never sit around idly wishing or singing for help to find them. They use their brains, utilize their skills, make demands and pursue their destinies full speed.

4. Always Have A Plan



The Grand High Witch, Yzma

While these wicked women often assert themselves more than the hero they face, it isn't always simple intimidation tactics at play. The best female villains have an intricate and detailed game plan. As any girl who grew up imagining intricate storylines for her dolls to live out, or who made lists, or organized her *Tiger Beat* posters according to the place of each teen crush in her heart, we were drawn to the organized female villain.



Maleficent is one badass woman

Examples:

- The Grand High Witch (*The Witches*) not only organizes an international conference of witches, she schemes up a plan to infuse candy with a potion that will turn children into mice. Global-scale savagery.
- Yzma in *The Emperor's New Groove* has a simple goal, attain the throne, but she plays off the weakness and ego of the Emperor to get there, going out of her way to finish the job her boneheaded lackey couldn't do.

- Maleficent schemes up a several year plan out of (mostly) sheer will to survive. When a prophecy states some chick is going to kill you, take her out.

Life never goes according to plan. But if you learned anything from the villainesses, it was to plan ahead, have a backup plan, and be flexible when it all goes awry.

5. It's OK To Be Complex



Harley Quinn, The Witch of the Waste, Lady Tremaine

Villains almost always have layers vastly beyond that of the hero. The wonderful thing about a female villain is that those layers are complemented with emotion. These ladies feel feelings we girls understand: anger, sorrow, resentment, jealousy. There is more to us than simply always niceness and gratitude.

Examples:

- [The Witch of the Waste in Howl's Moving Castle](#) can be ridiculous, but she's driven by insecurity and a broken heart.
- Harley Quinn (*Batman: The Animated Series*) is no role model for female empowerment, but [her obsession and love](#) for a bad man is universal.
- *Cinderella's* Lady Tremaine is not much of a stepmother, but she grapples with her place as a widow and the fate of children she possibly never wanted.

These ladies have damaged pasts, hurt feelings, and grief over those lost to them. Their complexity may fuel their depravity, but to this girl it made them more human.

6. Last But Not Least, Let That Laughter Out

There's no laugh like a villainess' laugh. Sure, it's often in the face of someone else's suffering, but these chicks know how to find the enjoyment in being their best self and living out their dreams — until the hero dashes them out. But still, take the time to enjoy those little moments.



So here's to the villainesses. The ones who not only propelled the narrative of the film with their cunning and evil plans that pushed the hero to action, but who also empowered impressionable girls everywhere.

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