



## **The Reflection of Liberal Feminism Values in the Characterization of Merida in Brave Movie**

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### **Abstract**

This study analyzed the reflection of liberal feminism values in the characterization of Merida in the movie Brave. Feminism, particularly liberal feminism, emphasized individual freedom, equal rights, and personal autonomy, making it relevant to Merida's character, who opposes traditional norms and refuse an arranged marriage. This research employs the liberal feminism theory proposed by Tong (2008) to identify the values of equality and liberty in Merida's character. The analysis also used Boggs and Petrie's (2018) theory of characterization, focusing on four aspects: appearance, dialogue, external actions, and the reactions of other characters. Data were collected using observation and note-taking techniques by watching the movie and reading the script. The findings were analyzed qualitatively by identifying scenes and dialogues that portray liberal feminist values. The results show that Merida represents liberal feminism through her resistance to patriarchal traditions, her fight for autonomy, and her assertion of individual rights. This research expected to contribute theoretically to studies in literature and gender, especially in exploring feminist themes in film, and practically to help readers recognize and understand the importance of equality and freedom in society.

**Keywords:** *liberal feminism, characterization, merida, brave movie, equality*

### **Abstrak**

Studi ini menganalisis refleksi nilai-nilai feminisme liberal dalam karakterisasi Merida dalam film Brave. Feminisme liberal, menekankan kebebasan individu, hak yang sama, dan otonomi pribadi, sehingga relevan dengan karakter Merida, yang menentang norma-norma tradisional dan menolak perjodohan. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori feminisme liberal yang dikemukakan oleh Tong (2008) untuk mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai kesetaraan dan kebebasan dalam karakter Merida. Analisis ini juga menggunakan teori karakterisasi Boggs dan Petrie (2018), dengan fokus pada empat aspek: penampilan, dialog, tindakan eksternal, dan reaksi karakter lain. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan teknik observasi dan pencatatan dengan menonton film dan membaca naskah. Temuan dianalisis secara kualitatif dengan mengidentifikasi adegan dan dialog yang menggambarkan nilai-nilai feminisme liberal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Merida merepresentasikan feminisme liberal melalui perlawanannya terhadap tradisi patriarki, perjuangannya untuk otonomi, dan penegasannya terhadap hak-hak individu. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi secara teoritis terhadap kajian sastra dan gender, khususnya dalam mengeksplorasi tema-tema feminisme dalam film, dan secara praktis dapat membantu pembaca untuk mengenali dan memahami pentingnya kesetaraan dan kebebasan dalam masyarakat.

**Kata kunci:** *feminisme liberal, karakterisasi, merida, film brave, kesetaraan*

## **Introduction**

Feminism is an intriguing topic to explore because it addresses gender imbalance between men and women. Women are often perceived as weak individuals. However, they should have the same opportunities as men in professional, social, political, and educational advancement. As Lorber (2001:1) states, "Feminism was a social movement whose goal is to improve women's status." Throughout history, in various times and places, both men and women have acknowledged women's capabilities and attempted to elevate their social position. However, feminism emerged as a formal movement in the 19th century in Europe and America. Feminism developed over decades in societies where men were portrayed as assertive, dominant, determined, and self-directed, while women were depicted as affectionate, passive, emotional, and friendly. Lorber (2002:10) explains that "women were valued as much as men and free to live their lives according to their human potential." Feminist values emphasize the responsibility of women for their choices and actions, as well as their right to work and participate in social life on equal terms with men. Thus, feminism is fundamentally about equality, leadership, and freedom. Anggawasita (2010) stated that feminist character represents feminism values by being an independent, educated, decisive, and obstinate woman. Feminist character portrayed as a brave, strong, and intelligent woman (Pratiwi, 2016). There are also many branches of feminism, as recognized by scholars and activists, including Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, and several others.

Marxist feminism focuses on the ways in which women's oppression is rooted in capitalist economic structures. According to this view, the exploitation of women stems from their role in unpaid domestic labor and their limited access to property and economic resources. Marxist feminists argue that true gender equality can only be achieved through the dismantling of capitalist systems that perpetuate class and gender hierarchies. Meanwhile, liberal feminism emphasizes individual rights and legal reforms as a means to achieve equality. This branch advocates for women's access to education, employment, and political participation under the assumption that men and women are fundamentally equal in their capacity for reason and autonomy. Liberal feminists work within the existing social and political structures to secure equal opportunities and remove discriminatory laws and practices. Radical feminism, on the other hand, views patriarchy as the most fundamental form of oppression, deeply embedded in all aspects of society, including family, religion, media, and culture. Radical feminists seek to dismantle patriarchal systems and challenge traditional gender roles, aiming for a complete transformation of societal structures rather than gradual reform. Despite their differences in focus and strategy, all these branches of feminism share a common ultimate goal: to achieve equal rights, freedom, and dignity for all women.

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equal terms with men. Thus, feminism is fundamentally about equality, leadership, and freedom.

This study focus on Merida's point of view because her character is a Scottish princess and the daughter of Queen Elinor and King Fergus, who lives in a kingdom steeped in tradition. As the firstborn, Merida is expected to follow royal customs, including an arranged marriage to one of the sons of the allied clan leaders. However, Merida refuses to accept this fate and challenges the ancient tradition by declaring that she will compete for her own hand in marriage. Her defiance leads to conflict with her mother, Queen Elinor, who embodies the values of order, tradition, and obedience. This study is particularly interested in analyzing the concept of equality. Equality means that women are created with the same status, power, and rationality as men. Women can be leaders and should not always be under men's control, as they possess the same rights and capabilities. Freedom, in this context, refers to the ability to make independent life choices, including political freedoms. Many literary works, including books, novels, and movies, draw inspiration from feminism as a central theme. Disney, a well-known production company, has traditionally focused on royal princess stories but has recently incorporated feminist themes into its narratives, as seen in films like *Brave*.

The writer chooses *Brave* because Princess Merida is an inspiring character she fights to change her fate. Some believe that fate is beyond human control, but this movie suggests that destiny lies within us, and we must be brave enough to shape it. *Brave* tells the story of Princess Merida, daughter of Queen Elinor and King Fergus, who disrupts an ancient holy custom followed by the Lords of the Earth. Her actions unintentionally unleash chaos and anger within the kingdom. Seeking a solution, Merida turns to a wise old woman, who grants her a wish with unforeseen consequences.

Liberal feminism emphasizes individual rights, equality, justice, and equal opportunities. Merida embodies strength and courage, fighting for her freedom. She asserts her right to choose her own path and refuses to marry against her will. Every human being is born with equal rights and should have the same opportunities to shape their future. Therefore, liberal feminism aims to establish equality between men and women, allowing them to be independent, cooperative, and free to make their own decisions. Based on this discussion, this study focuses on analyzing how the values of liberal feminism are reflected in Merida's characterization in the movie *Brave*.

## **Method**

In this study, the data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method based on the theories of liberal feminism and characterization. The analysis began by watching and listening to the movie *Brave* carefully to understand the storyline, characters, and specific scenes that reflect feminist themes. Particular attention was paid to the scenes and dialogues that indicate resistance to traditional gender roles or express values such as freedom, autonomy, and equality. The theory of liberal feminism proposed by Tong (2008) was used to identify the specific aspects of liberal feminism—namely, equal rights, equal liberty, and equal education—reflected in

Merida's character. Once these aspects were identified, the study applied the theory of characterization developed by Boggs and Petrie (2018) to analyze how these feminist values were portrayed in Merida's characterization. This involved examining Merida's appearance, dialogue, external actions, and the reactions of other characters toward her. Through this process, the study aimed to reveal how the values of liberal feminism are reflected in the way Merida is depicted throughout the movie, both visually and narratively.

## Result and Discussion

This study focuses on the representation of liberal feminism values in the characterization of Merida in *Brave*, analyzing how her character reflects the core aspects of liberal feminist ideology, particularly equal liberty and equal right, as conceptualized by Tong (2008). These values are examined through the lens of film characterization, including dialogue, appearance, action, and the reactions of other characters, based on Boggs & Petrie (2018).

Table 1. The Types of Liberal Feminism in Merida's Character From *Brave* Movie

Types of Liberal Feminism	Occurrence	Percentage
Equal Liberty	15	79%
Equal Right	4	21%
	19	100%

The table 1 presents the types of liberal feminism in Merida's character from *Brave* movie, focusing on Equal Liberty and Equal Right. Equal Liberty, emphasizing personal freedom from societal constraints, appears 15 times (79%), highlighting Merida's autonomy and defiance of traditional gender roles. Equal Right, advocating for equal legal and social rights, occurs 4 times (21%), shown in her rejection of an arranged marriage. With 19 total occurrences, the study emphasizes how film characters can illustrate feminism, challenge patriarchy, and promote gender equality.

Table 2.Types of Characterization in Merida's Representation

Types of Characterization	Occurrence	Percentage
Dialog	10	53%
External Action	5	26%
Appearance	2	11%
Reaction of Other Characters	2	10%
	19	100%

From Table 2, it can be seen that the most dominant method of characterization used to reflect Merida's feminist traits is through dialogue (53%). This indicates that Merida's spoken words and verbal resistance play a crucial role in expressing her autonomy and personal values. External actions account for 26% of the data, showing how Merida's physical expressions—such as slamming doors or riding alone—are also powerful symbols of her resistance. Appearance and reactions of other characters both contributed 11% and 10% respectively, emphasizing how visual portrayal and social response help shape the audience's understanding of Merida's feminist identity.

These findings support the notion that feminist values in film can be effectively communicated not only through content but also through cinematic techniques, character development, and narrative structure.

### Equal Liberty

Each individual is free to do what she or he wants to do and takes the most suitable for herself or himself. Hay, (2013:12) state that "liberty should give individuals freedoms such as freedom from the unwanted interferences of others, freedom to live the life of one's choosing, and freedom to choose one's own conception of the good". In liberal feminism, women struggle for liberty because they do not have freedom to choose their life and do whatever they wanted. The struggle of woman to get equal liberty can reveal through Merida character in Brave movie because she fights for her own path because she does not want her mother controlled her own life.



**Figures 1. Merida forced to smile.**

Merida : *I can never get away with anything! I'm the princess! I'm the example! I've got duties, responsibilities, expectations... My whole life is planned out! Preparing for the day I'd become, well, my mother. She is in charge of every single day of my life.*

The data above was taken when Merida, the fiery-haired princess, was sitting in the grand dining hall, nibbling on an apple she had picked earlier. The room was vast, filled with ornate decorations, yet it felt suffocating to her. The heavy double doors creaked open, revealing her mother, Queen Elinor, standing tall with a graceful demeanor. Elinor's eyes, filled with regal authority, subtly reminded Merida of her duties. Without a word, Merida straightened her posture, placed the apple aside, and began walking toward the table with forced elegance, as her mother had taught her. She knew the drill: sit next to King Fergus, maintain a ladylike demeanor, and most importantly, smile. The weight of her princess duties, expectations, and lack of control over her own life pressed on her. It was then, unable to hold back her frustration, that Merida voiced her true feelings.

The liberal feminism performed by Merida was classified as **Equal Liberty**. Recent studies on liberal feminism highlight the ongoing struggle of women against patriarchal structures that dictate their roles based on societal norms rather than personal desires (Smith, 2020). Merida's frustration embodies this feminist struggle, as she resists the limitations imposed upon her and seeks to define her own path. *"My whole life is planned out! Preparing for the day I'd become, well, my mother. She is in charge of every single day of my life"*. Her dialogue portrays the constraints placed on women in traditional settings and aligns with the feminist principle of challenging restrictive gender roles to achieve true equality.

Merida was **characterized through the characterization of dialogue**. Merida described that Princess got duties, responsibilities, expectations, and her whole life has planned out. Merida's dialogue in this scene—*"My whole life is planned out! Preparing for the day I'd become, well, my mother. She is in charge of every single day of my life."*—clearly reflects the core conflict of Liberal Feminism. According to Lorber (2001), liberal feminism emphasizes gender equality by advocating for women's autonomy and the right to make independent choices. However, in Merida's case, her role as a princess constrains her autonomy, forcing her to conform to traditional expectations set by her mother and society. From a characterization perspective, this moment exemplifies direct characterization through dialogue. According to Roberts (1946), direct characterization occurs when a character's personality is explicitly revealed through their speech, actions, or the narrator's description. In this scene, Merida's dialogue directly conveys her frustration, highlighting her resentment towards the rigid expectations placed upon her.

This analysis demonstrates that Merida's struggle in this scene aligns with the principles of Liberal Feminism, particularly the fight for autonomy and resistance to patriarchal control. From a characterization standpoint, her dialogue explicitly defines her as a character who challenges societal constraints. By portraying Merida's rejection of traditional expectations, Brave presents a feminist empowerment through personal agency. critique of patriarchal norms and highlights the importance of women's empowerment through personal agency.



**Figures 2. A Day when Merida was being herself.**

Merida : *But every once in a while there's a day when I don't have to be a princess. No lessons, no expectations, a day when anything can happen! Day, I can change my fate!*

The data above was taken when Merida stood by the edge of a vast field, her horse ready and waiting. For once, the day was hers. There were no lessons to attend, no expectations to fulfill, and no royal duties to meet. She mounted her horse, the wind tousling her hair as she galloped across the open land. The sound of the horse's hooves pounding against the earth filled her with an exhilarating sense of freedom. She stopped at her usual spot, the archery range, and took a deep breath before drawing her bow. For that moment, Merida was no longer bound by the constraints of her royal status. She was simply herself—strong, independent, and free to do whatever she wished. Her heart raced, not from the pressure of performance, but from the pure joy of being in control of her own fate.

Merida was classified as **Equal Liberty**. This scene encapsulates Liberal Feminism's core argument: women should have the freedom to choose their own paths without being confined by societal expectations (Lorber, 2001). Merida's escape from royal obligations represents a rejection of traditional gender norms that dictate a princess's role. Merida expresses her desire for autonomy when she declares, "*But every once in a while, there's a day when I don't have to be a princess. No lessons, no expectations, a day when anything can happen! A day I can change my fate!*" This statement reflects her struggle against prescribed femininity, where noblewomen are expected to be demure, obedient, and disciplined rather than adventurous and independent (Taylor & Watson, 2021). Her desire to change her fate suggests resistance to preordained gender roles, aligning with Liberal Feminism's advocacy for self-determination and personal agency (Smith, 2020). Furthermore, this scene highlights the feminist rejection of societal constraints on women's physicality and self-expression. By galloping on horseback and practicing archery, Merida defies the stereotypical passivity associated with princesses in traditional narratives (Jones & Carter, 2019). Her connection with nature and physical movement contrasts sharply with the controlled, mannered existence expected of her within the castle.



Merida was **characterized through the characterization of dialogue and external action**. Her decision to ride freely across the land and practice archery instead of fulfilling royal duties reflects her deep desire for personal freedom. This scene vividly captures Merida's internal conflict and growth through Roberts' (1946) characterization framework, emphasizing actions, dialogue, and symbolism. The imagery of wind tousling her hair and the rhythmic pounding of hooves reinforces her unrestrained nature. Her statement about not wanting to be a princess and her belief in changing her fate explicitly convey her struggle against imposed expectations. The contrast between "*lessons, expectations*" and "*a day when anything can happen*" highlights her longing for autonomy. Archery, serving as a key metaphor, represents self-determination, precision, and empowerment—unlike courtly etiquette, which is forced upon her, archery is a skill she has chosen. This moment becomes a turning point in her personal and feminist journey, embodying the core principles of Liberal Feminism. Through symbolic actions, evocative dialogue, and strong character development, *Brave* critiques restrictive gender roles. Merida's embrace of freedom—riding, shooting arrows, and declaring her ability to change her fate—marks her rejection of societal constraints and a celebration of female agency.



**Figures 3. Merida was shocked that her parents planned an arranged married for her.**

Merida	: <i>What did I do now?</i>
Elinor	: <i>Your father has something to discuss with you. Fergus?</i>
Fergus	: <i>Merida...</i>
Elinor	: <i>The lords are presenting their sons as suitors for your betrothal!</i>
Merida	: <i>What?</i>
Elinor	: <i>The clans have accepted!</i>
Merida	: <i>Dad!</i>
Fergus	: <i>What? I...you....she....Elinor?</i>
Elinor	: <i>Honestly, Merida. I don't know why are you reacting this way. This year, each clan will present a suitor to compete in the game for your hand.</i>
Merida	: <i>I suppose a princess just does what she's told!</i>



The data above was taken when Merida was walking along the castle corridor when she was called into the royal chamber by her mother. As she entered, the atmosphere was tense. Her parents, King Fergus and Queen Elinor, were already seated, and there was an unspoken expectation in the air. She could tell that something serious was about to be discussed, and as soon as she saw her father's hesitant expression, she braced herself for the news. Merida's heart skipped a beat when she realized what it was an arranged marriage. A wave of frustration surged through her as she listened to her parents' announcement. This was the last thing she wanted being forced into an arranged marriage, her future dictated by the expectations of the clans, rather than her own desires.

Merida was classified as **Equal Liberty**. This scene is a direct challenge to patriarchal traditions, specifically the practice of arranged marriage as a tool for political alliances. Liberal Feminism argues that women should have autonomy over their own lives, including the right to choose their partners (Tong, 2009). Merida's reaction—frustration, disbelief, and resistance—reflects her rejection of gendered expectations that prioritize duty over personal choice (Beauvoir, 1949). This scene strongly develops Merida's rebellious nature, Queen Elinor's enforcement of tradition, and King Fergus's hesitation, highlighting the generational and ideological divide within the royal family. Merida's immediate rejection of the arranged marriage showcases her independent spirit and resistance to societal expectations. Her defiant stance directly challenges the notion that a princess must marry for political stability rather than love. Queen Elinor, as the enforcer of tradition, embodies the conservative ideals that clash with Merida's progressive mindset, reinforcing the central conflict between duty and personal freedom. King Fergus's fragmented speech—“*What? I...you...she...Elinor?*”—reveals his uncertainty, torn between respecting tradition and sympathizing with his daughter's desires. This moment becomes a powerful critique of gendered oppression, particularly the expectation that women must conform to societal roles without agency over their own futures. Merida's resistance aligns with the core principles of Liberal Feminism, advocating for women's autonomy and equality in decision-making. The contrasting reactions of her parents further emphasize the tension between societal pressures and individual freedom, marking this as a crucial turning point in her feminist journey.

Merida was **characterized through characterization of dialogue**. Merida's dialogue, “*I suppose a princess just does what she's told!*”, is a sarcastic critique of the limitations placed on royal women. It underscores the lack of agency she feels in comparison to men, who are rarely subjected to such constraints. This aligns with Liberal Feminism's advocacy for equal opportunities and self-determination (Mill, 1869). Moreover, Queen Elinor's reaction—“*Honestly, Merida, I don't know why you are reacting this way*”—exemplifies internalized patriarchy. Elinor, despite being a queen, upholds traditional gender norms and expects her daughter to comply without question. This reflects Liberal Feminism's argument that women, too, can perpetuate gender inequality when they conform to societal norms rather than challenge them (Friedan, 1963).



Figures 5. Merida played archery.

Merida : *I am Merida, firstborn descendant of clan DunBroch and I'll be shooting for my own hand!*  
Elinor : *What are you doing? Merida!*  
Merida : *Curse this dress!*  
Elinor : *Merida! Stop this! Don't you dare loose another arrow!*  
*Merida! I forbid it! I've just about had enough of you, lass!*  
Merida : *You're the one that wants me to...*  
Elinor : ***You've embarrassed them. You've embarrassed me.***  
Merida : ***I followed the rules!***  
Elinor : *You don't know what you've done!*  
Merida : *I don't care...*  
Elinor : *There'll be fire and swords if it's not set right.*  
Merida : *Just listen!*  
Elinor : *I am the Queen! You listen to me!*  
Merida : *Oh, this is so unfair!*  
Elinor : *Unfair?*  
Merida : ***You're never there for me. This whole marriage is what you want! Do you ever bother to ask what I want? No! You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do, trying to make me feel like you. Well, I'm not going to be like you!***  
Elinor : *Oh, you're acting like a child.*  
Merida : *And you're a beast! That's what you are!*  
Elinor : *Merida!*  
Merida : ***I'll never be like you!***  
Elinor : *No, stop that!*  
Merida : ***I'd rather die than be like you!***  
Elinor : *Merida, you are a princess, I expect you to act like one!*  
*Merida! Merida! Oh, dear! Oh, no. What've I done.*

The data above was taken when the conflict reaches a climactic moment during the archery competition when Merida defies her mother, Queen Elinor, and asserts her autonomy in front of the assembled clans. Merida takes matters into her own hands, both literally and figuratively, by using her archery skills to win the competition and declare her independence. The tension between Merida's desire for freedom and her

mother's insistence on tradition and control comes to a head as Merida expresses her frustration with the expectations placed on her.

Merida was classified as **Equal Liberty**. Merida expressed by cut the cloth that her mother made and her mother has taken her bow archery then burned it. This pivotal moment in the film marks a dramatic assertion of Merida's autonomy. Liberal Feminism, which emphasizes individual rights and freedom of choice, is central to understanding Merida's actions during the archery competition. By saying, "*I am Merida, firstborn descendant of clan DunBroch and I'll be shooting for my own hand!*", Merida declares her independence and rejects the traditional notion that her fate—specifically her marriage—should be decided by others, particularly her mother. This declaration is not just about winning the competition but about taking control of her life and refusing to be bound by societal and familial expectations.

The archery competition becomes the physical manifestation of Merida's desire for freedom and autonomy. Her assertion of control over her own destiny through archery symbolizes her rejection of the roles others want her to play. By choosing to shoot for her own hand, Merida claims ownership of her future and defies the constraints of tradition and societal expectation. This act is a powerful statement of Liberal Feminism, which advocates for women's self-determination, and it marks a significant step in Merida's journey toward self-realization and independence. The tension between Merida and Elinor in this scene illustrates the conflict between the imposition of societal roles and the desire for individual freedom.

Merida was **characterized through characterization of dialogue and through external action**. Merida's actions in the archery competition also mark a major turning point in her character arc, as she begins to fully embrace her independence. Her declaration, "*I'd rather die than be like you!*", represents the culmination of her inner turmoil and frustration with her mother's attempt to control her. This moment of defiance highlights Merida's deep desire to assert her identity and reject the role her mother has tried to impose upon her.

The climactic confrontation between Merida and Elinor, where Merida finally unleashes her feelings of being misunderstood and oppressed, is the culmination of her character evolution. In this exchange, Merida is no longer the obedient daughter, but a young woman fighting for her right to choose her future. Her anger and frustration with Elinor—"*You walk around telling me what to do, what not to do, trying to make me feel like you!*"—express the growing alienation Merida feels from the role her mother wants her to play. Merida's refusal to conform marks the emergence of her authentic self, and her defiance is a statement of empowerment. When Merida states, "*I'll never be like you!*", she is rejecting the traditional expectations of femininity that her mother represents. This moment symbolizes Merida's struggle to carve her own identity, separate from the societal ideals that have been imposed upon her. Her statement, "*I'd rather die than be like you!*", illustrates the depth of her frustration and desire for freedom—it's a rejection of a life where she is forced into a mold that doesn't represent who she truly is.



Figures 6. Merida's Shift in Perspective and Reconciliation with Elinor.

Merida : *And I know now that I need to mend my mistake and mend our Bond, and so, there is the matter of my betrothal. I've decided to do what's right. And....and....and... Break...tradition. My mother...the Queen, feels...in her heart, that I ... that we be free to. ..write our own story. Follow...our .. hearts, and find love in our own time.*

The data above was taken when witness a pivotal moment where Merida comes to terms with the consequences of her actions and begins to recognize the importance of mending her relationship with her mother, Queen Elinor. This moment marks a shift in Merida's perspective as she realizes that her desire for independence does not have to come at the expense of family bonds. She chooses to take responsibility for her actions, acknowledging the importance of tradition but also deciding to break away from it in a way that aligns with her own values.

Merida was classified as **Equal Liberty**. Merida's evolution in thinking reflects a shift from her previous stance of fierce independence to a more nuanced understanding of relationships and responsibility. This scene highlights Feminist Ethics of Care, which emphasizes the importance of care, empathy, and relationality in moral decision-making (Held, 2006). Merida, who has struggled against her mother's control, begins to recognize that care for her family, particularly her mother, is an integral part of her life and her own journey. When Merida says, *"I know now that I need to mend my mistake and mend our bond,"* she acknowledges that her pursuit of independence does not necessarily have to come at the cost of her relationship with Elinor. In contrast to her previous outbursts of frustration and rebellion, this statement signals Merida's recognition of interdependence as an important value in her life. Instead of seeing her relationship with her mother as an obstacle to her autonomy, she now sees it as an essential connection that requires nurturing and repair.

Merida was **characterized through characterization of dialogue**. Merida's speech marks a key moment of growth in her character. She begins by acknowledging the importance of tradition, but her statement—*"break tradition"*—demonstrates her commitment to remake tradition in a way that aligns with her values and vision for her future. She refuses to entirely conform to a tradition that suppresses her freedom but chooses to forge a new path that integrates her desire for love and self-expression within the framework of family and mutual respect. By saying, *"Follow...our...hearts, and find love in our own time,"* Merida reflects a shift towards a more inclusive and empowering understanding of love and marriage. Her declaration of *"finding love in*

*our own time*" suggests that love is not something that should be dictated by tradition or external expectations but something that should emerge naturally and on one's own terms. This statement is a reaffirmation of Merida's feminist identity, as it challenges the conventional notion that women should simply adhere to a prescribed role in romantic relationships and marriage. Instead, it celebrates the right to choose and to seek love on one's own terms, aligned with personal values and desires.

Merida's decision to mend the bond with her mother represents a profound shift in her understanding of freedom and autonomy. Rather than viewing her mother's love and the family tradition as opposing forces to her own independence, she realizes that true autonomy involves navigating relationships with care and mutual respect. Her choice to "*break tradition*" and rewrite her story reflects a feminist approach to personal growth, one that advocates for self-expression, individual agency, and the right to choose while also recognizing the importance of care and family connections. Merida exemplifies a feminist approach identity—one that allows for freedom while still honoring the interconnectedness of relationships. This moment represents a mature feminist awakening, where she moves beyond rigid ideals of independence to a more complex understanding of freedom within relational contexts.

## Equal Right

While *equal liberty* dominated Merida's struggle, *equal rights* also played a crucial role in establishing her equality. Equal right was emphasized to change discriminatory practices against women. To make women equal with man, they should have the same opportunity in education, politics and also the economy field. Decades before, women were not allowed to participate in any social, political, and religious ceremonies in her society and she was under the total control of man. It also revealed in Brave movie how Merida character can be good archery, it shown that woman can also has the same potentials and skills if compared to the man. The proofs as to see Merida character for her right and be seen in the situation below from the movie.



**Figures 7. Merida learns how to play archery for the first time.**

Merida: *Can I shoot an arrow, can I, can I, can I? Please, can I?*

Fergus: *Not with that! Why not use your very own! Happy birthday*

*My wee darling! Now, there's a good girl. Draw all the way back now to your cheek, that's right! Keep both eyes open...and...loose!*

Merida : *I missed.*

Elinor : *Go and fetch it then!*

*A bow, Fergus? She's a lady! Oh!*

The data above was taken when the beginning of the story in *Brave*, a young Merida is full of curiosity and adventure. She is keen to try archery, a skill that her father, Fergus, is eager to teach her. However, her mother, Queen Elinor, is skeptical, questioning the appropriateness of such an activity for a lady. This initial scene sets the stage for exploring the themes of equal rights and gender roles that will unfold throughout the movie.

Merida was classified as **Equal Right**. The scene depicted in Figure 7 where Merida learns archery for the first time sets up an early confrontation with gender roles and the expectations placed upon her as a young woman. Her enthusiasm to engage in archery, a traditionally male-dominated activity, is met with a mixture of encouragement from her father, Fergus, and skepticism from her mother, Queen Elinor, who questions the appropriateness of such an activity for a lady. This dynamic illustrates the conflict between personal agency and societal expectations—a central theme throughout the film. In feminist discourse, this scene speaks directly to the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles that restrict women's freedom to explore interests and develop skills outside prescribed boundaries. Merida's desire to learn archery is a representation of empowerment, as she seeks to engage in an activity that reflects her adventurous spirit and determination to challenge gender norms. On the other hand, her mother's concern that "*a lady*" should not engage in archery highlights the patriarchal social structure that dictates what women are allowed to do, based on rigid gender expectations.

Merida was **characterized through the characterization of dialogue and reactions of other character**. This conflict between Merida and Queen Elinor highlights the tension between individual rights and social conformity. Merida is asserting her agency by challenging the societal norms that tell her what she should or should not do as a woman. Her eagerness to learn archery signifies her resistance to gendered expectations, embracing instead the idea that personal identity and abilities should not be limited by gender. In this scene, the way Merida's parents react to her request to learn archery also underscores the role of family in shaping gender identity. While Fergus encourages Merida to try archery, supporting her adventurous spirit, Elinor represents the more conservative, gender-prescriptive view, where women are expected to adhere to a more traditional and reserved role in society. This division between the two parental figures introduces the film's exploration of internal family dynamics and the influence that family has on gender socialization.

This scene also introduces the idea that gender roles are social constructs that can be challenged and transformed. Merida's actions highlight the need for a society where individual freedom and gender equality are prioritized over prescriptive gender norms. The scene where Merida learns archery is significant in laying the groundwork for the film's broader exploration of gender equality and the challenges of breaking free from societal expectations. It introduces Merida as a character who is determined



to defy gender stereotypes and assert her right to autonomy in choosing her interests and developing her skills, regardless of traditional gender expectations.

Through this scene, the film begins to explore the tension between family values and personal freedom, as Merida faces the challenge of reconciling her curiosity and sense of adventure with the traditional views of femininity embodied by her mother. Merida's desire to engage in archery is a small but important act of feminist resistance, signaling her refusal to accept a world where her gender dictates her interests, and setting the stage for her eventual embrace of self-determination and feminist autonomy.



**Figures 8 Merida finds herself in a tense moment.**

Merida : *The Queen and I put the decision to you, my lords. **Might our young people decided for themselves who they will love?***

Machintos : *Well, since you've obviously made up your minds about this I have one thing to say. This is. ... a grand idea! give us our owsay in choosing our fate! This is. a grand idea! give us our owsay in choosing our fate!*

The data above was taken when Merida finds herself in a tense moment where her family's long-standing tradition of arranged marriages is being challenged. As part of a celebration of her adulthood, Merida is expected to choose a suitor from one of the clan leaders' sons. However, Merida defies the tradition, choosing instead to let the young people decide for themselves whom they will marry. This decision not only challenges the control of the elders but also sends a message of autonomy and personal choice, particularly in matters of love and relationships. At a pivotal moment during the council meeting, Merida declares, "*The Queen and I put the decision to you, my lords. Might our young people decide for themselves who they will love.*"

Merida was classified as **Equal Right**. As Judith Lorber (2001:34) suggests, Liberal Feminism advocates for equal rights and freedom of choice, especially in areas like marriage, where women have traditionally had less autonomy. Merida's decision to challenge the traditional, patriarchal practice of arranged marriages is a clear demonstration of her assertion of personal agency. By putting the decision in the hands of the young people, she rejects the idea that the elders and the ruling class should control the personal lives of individuals, particularly women. In this scene, Merida's declaration, "*The Queen and I put the decision to you, my lords. Might our young people decide for themselves who they will love?*" emphasizes the feminist value of



freedom in choosing a partner. This is a direct challenge to the societal norms that have long dictated marriage as a transaction or duty, often involving patriarchal oversight.

Merida was **characterized through the characterization of dialogue**. In terms of characterization, this scene offers both direct and indirect insights into Merida's personality and her relationship with the tradition of her family. Direct characterization is evident in Merida's bold declaration: "*The Queen and I put the decision to you, my lords.*" This statement directly reveals Merida's courage, independence, and resolve to take control of her own future and defy the expectations imposed on her. It also showcases her leadership and willingness to challenge the authority of the clan leaders, revealing a character who values autonomy over obedience to tradition. In Figure 8 Merida's challenge to the tradition of arranged marriages encapsulates the core principles of Liberal Feminism, such as autonomy, personal choice, and resistance to patriarchal norms. Her bold act of defying family tradition demonstrates her rejection of traditional gender roles that limit women's control over their personal lives. Through direct and indirect characterization, the scene reveals Merida's courage and leadership, while also highlighting the broader societal implications of her decision—empowering the younger generation to take control of their own futures. Merida's actions are emblematic of a feminist stance that advocates for equality and the freedom to choose one's own partner, regardless of societal expectations.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that Merida's character in *Brave* reflects the core values of liberal feminism, particularly equal liberty and equal right. Merida challenges traditional roles by asserting her autonomy against the life prearranged by her mother, embodying the feminist ideals of bravery and self-determination. Her mastery of archery, a traditionally male-dominated skill, reinforces the principle of equal opportunity, showing that women are equally capable. Through Merida's journey, the film promotes the values of freedom, bravery, and equality, encouraging individuals to follow their own path rather than conforming to societal expectations. This study also concludes that the characterization of Merida serves as a powerful representation of how animated film can be a medium for promoting feminist values to a broader audience, especially the younger generation. Through Merida's journey, the movie encourages viewers to question traditional gender roles and highlights the importance of personal choice, self-empowerment, and the rejection of unjust societal expectations. The findings of this study contribute theoretically to feminist literary criticism, particularly in analyzing female characters in film, and practically as a reference for future studies focusing on gender, identity, and media representation. Overall, *Brave* is not just a story about a rebellious princess, but a meaningful narrative about the fight for gender equality and women's right to define their own lives.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore feminist themes in various forms of literature and film, as they provide rich insights into gender dynamics and social structures. Literature not only enhances language proficiency but also helps readers critically examine issues of inequality. Further studies in this area can deepen public

understanding of gender equality and inspire advocacy for fairness and mutual respect across all genders.

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