

Background on Fairytales

I. Brief History

- The 16th century saw the birth of the fairytale with the publication of Francesco Straparola's *Le Piacevoli* (Pleasant Nights)
- In the 1690s women wrote fairy tales as well: Marie-Catherine Jumel de Barneville and Madame de Murat are examples.
- Charles Perrault published his collection of tales in 1697. This included "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Cinderella."
- Major figures in the 19th century were Hans Christian Anderson, Andrew Lang, and Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. The Grimm brothers focused more on children. Hans Christian Anderson focused on creating original stories, such as "The Snow Queen."
- Modern writers have expanded the topics and use of fairy tales. This includes inclusion of Queer tales that revisit the heteronormativity of tales that assumed that to be the only perspective Linda de Hann and Stern Hijland's *King and King* is an example.
- There are also more characters portrayed with challenges (disabilities). Dinah Mulock Craik's *The Little Lambe Prince and His Traveling Cloak* is an late 19th century example. Monica Roe's *Air* is a recent example. These stories address the idea of "ableism," which is the assumption that all disabled individuals desire to be able-bodied. The "social model" is the view that disability can be reinterpreted socially.
- Motion pictures also utilize reinterpretations of fairy tales, such as the movies *Maleficent* or *Cinderella* or *The Little Mermaid*. These movies as well as many modern books and picture books attempt to combat racial stereotypes by placing previously marginalized groups of individuals in heroic roles.

II. Views of Fairy Tales

- According to literary scholar Marina Warner in her book *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of the Fairy Tale*, she qualifies two types of tales:

- **Märchen** – which are more akin to genuine folk tales, which are anonymous and undated.
- **Kunstmärchen** – which are more literary and “arty” and are signed and dated.
- Fairy tales evoke the past and tend to be “one-dimensional” and very matter of fact. For example, a child might be devoured or a witch is burned and no one is surprised.
- There are also symbolic characters and objects, such as stepmothers, princesses, elves, keys, apple, and mirrors that are used to make social and/or psychological statements.
- Critics typically interpret fairy tales in the following ways:
 - **Psychoanalytical** – Usually this is framed from a Sigmund Freud (Freudian) or Carl Jung (Jungian) approach. Both were preeminent psychoanalysts. The Freudian approach stresses individual growth, dream imagery, and family relations. The Jungian approach focuses on the “collective unconscious” and looks for universal archetypes such as symbols, plots, and patterns that are inherent in the human condition.
 - **Sociohistorical** – Jack Zipes, a prominent scholar of children’s literature, spearheads this approach which places a story within its cultural and historical context. For instance, the story of Hansel and Gretel is viewed as radical for its time since it dealt with the very real possibility of child abandonment at the end of the 18th century in Europe, when war, poverty, and hunger were common to many individuals. He also feels that modernized interpretations of some tales divest them of their original importance. One could also view slave narratives within the time they were written, without modern interpretations placed upon them.
 - **Feminist** – This approach concerns itself with stories that have reinforced gender stereotypes, such as the weak damsel in distress, and placed importance on a certain physical type of female beauty. These critics are concerned that children need to see themselves represented more equitably.

III. Fractured Fairy Tales

- Just as movies have reinterpreted classic tales, so have other authors. The rise of the “fractured fairy tale” has allowed authors and illustrators to make playful social commentary. Two classic tales that are fractured are below. These stories and other often rely on “**intertextuality.**” This is when an author (or filmmaker) borrows from a previous story to create a new one.

IV. **Short article on fairy tales** - Also, here is a [link](#) from Psychology Today about the importance of fairy tales.

Extra links not necessary for the quiz.

- <https://youtu.be/LieMIpZrPmk> Rapunzel
- <https://youtu.be/973YYzZrnqA> Hansel and Gretel
- This [link](#) is to a selection of other fractured fairy tales.

Works Cited

Hintz, Carrie, and Eric L. Tribunella. *Reading Children's Literature: A Critical Introduction*.

Broadview Press, 2020.

Warner, Marina. *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale*. Oxford, 2014.

Zipes, Jack. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. 2nd ed., UP of

Kentucky, 2002.