

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales sprang from the oral tradition and many of the best-known are centuries old. Collections of these tales appeared in print for the first time during the sixteenth century. The most influential being French, by Charles Perrault, Mme d'Aulnoy and Mme de Beaumont. These were widely translated. Not for the first time the British were slow to catch on – partially perhaps due to a strong suspicion of anything foreign and partially perhaps a Puritan distrust of magic and fantasy. However around 1770 British printers produced fairy-tale chap books for children including British tales such as *Jack the Giantkiller* and *Dick Whittington* and the genre became extremely popular. In them, everyone usually knows their place – whether the king in his castle or the beggar at the gate.

Charles Perrault (1628-1703) was a French civil servant and member of the Academie Française. His stories, which included such favourites as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood* have been reworked over the centuries.

The Grimm Brothers – Jacob Ludwig Carl (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Carl (1786-1859) were German folklorists. Both were intensely nationalistic and saw folk songs and stories as evidence of a Teutonic culture, which they hoped one day would help make a united Germany. In 1812 they published their first collection of folktales and in response to its great success a second volume appeared in 1814. These contained such tales as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Frog Prince*. Edgar Taylor translated into English the stories in 1823 and the collection has never been out of print.

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) was the son of a cobbler and an illiterate washerwoman. His 156 fairy tales, written between 1835 and 1872, are some of the most anthologized, translated and retold. Among his most famous tales are *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Snow Queen* and *The Emperor's New Clothes*. His tales espouse the basic beliefs of many a middle class home of the time – hard work, a decent income and a belief in God. The first English translation published in 1846, *Wonderful Stories for Children*, was a selection of ten tales.

The nineteenth century saw many collections of fairy tales from across the world being published. In Britain perhaps the most famous was Andrew Lang's "coloured" series of fairy tales – *The Blue Fairy Book* was the first (1889). They have recently

been reissued by the Folio Society. Joseph Jacobs collected and retold his English, Celtic and Indian tales between 1890 and 1894. The Victorians were much concerned with public morals (what went on behind curtains was another matter) and many a moral was tagged on to a tale. George Cruickshank in his *Fairy Library*, promoted total abstinence from alcohol. In his retelling of *Cinderella*, the Fairy Godmother rebukes the Prince for proposing fountains of wine to celebrate his marriage – strong drink is "always accompanied by ill-health, misery and crime".

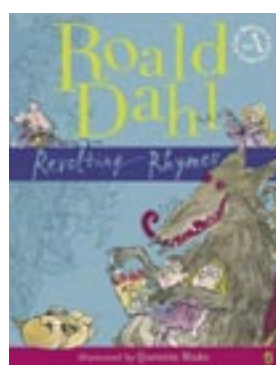
New fairy tales were written by many writers at the start of the twentieth century, appearing in such annuals as *Blackie's Children's Annual* and *Joy Street*. Both publications published original stories by some of the best writers including Walter de la Mare, E. Nesbit

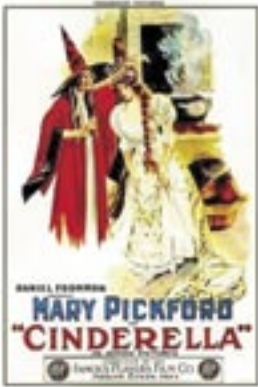
and Eleanor Farjeon and illustrated by the top artists of the day.

Post World War Two publishers produced not only European fairy tales but, increasingly, tales from other cultures. There was also a smattering of alternative retellings – *The Terribly Plain Princess* by Pamela Oldfield (1977), *The Practical Princess and other liberating fairy tales*, Jay Williams (1978) *The Paperbag Princess* by Robert Munsch (1980). *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes* (1982) combined with Quentin Blake's lively illustrations was an exuberant, some say scurrilous, retelling of six fairy tales.

There have been many scholarly books on the history, the inner meanings, the psychology of tales. They have provided a fertile ground for many an academic treatise – some more readable and intelligible than others. *The Classic Fairy Tales* (1974) compiled by Iona and Peter Opie took 24 of the best-known stories and presented them in the exact words of their first publication in English. Marina Warner looked at fairy tales from the viewpoint of storytelling by women – *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994) and Bruno Bettelheim analysed the stories and came up with many a provocative comment about their therapeutic effects – *The Uses of Enchantment* (1978).

Adults can read sexual traumas in many of the stories – just think of *Sleeping Beauty* or *Beauty and the Beast* or the *Frog Prince*. And it is this duality of meaning that perhaps helps them to endure – the child and the adult sharing but understanding in different ways. We allude to characters in fairy tales probably more than we think – they form part of our heritage.

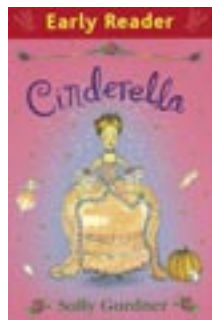
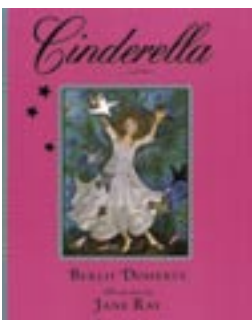




Cinderella

Some say the story originated in classical antiquity. But it was perhaps the version by Charles Perrault (1697) that brought it to wider prominence. (There is an admirable new translation of Perrault's *Tales* available in Oxford World's Classics). He introduced the pumpkin, the fairy-godmother and the glass slipper to the story. *Cinderella* has

always attracted not only the attention of writers and illustrators but has been turned into operas, ballets, and performed on ice. The first sight of it as a pantomime was at Drury Lane in 1904 and it has become a Christmas staple. Over the decades hundreds of films have been made, either direct adaptations or with plots loosely based on the story. Mary Pickford starred in a 1914 silent film version and many have fond memories of Disney's cartoon version first screened in 1950. Apparently barely a year goes by without a film version being produced somewhere in the world.



Then there are the books.

Berlie Doherty has retold *Cinderella* simply and to great effect, combined with the delicate, glowing illustrations by Jane Ray. In this version there is no pumpkin, no fairy godmother but a magical hazel tree and flocks of birds but there are slippers which only fit the true princess. A really lovely small paperback.

Cinderella is included in many collections. *Favourite Fairy Tales* sees the story retold by Sarah Hayes with a fairy godmother, a pumpkin which turns into a coach, rats who turn into footmen and a glass slipper. Illustrated by the Dublin based artist P.J. Lynch with wonderfully detailed pictures.

Sally Gardner has retold and gently illustrated the story and it has been issued as an Early Reader. Useful, I suppose, for a library box to have the label written right across the top of the book, but this traditional retelling could be read also by those who would perhaps scorn the label.

And for a sideways look at the story, from the point of view of a rat, there is the funny, touching tale *I was a Rat! ... or The Scarlet Slippers* by Philip Pullman, with delicate black and white illustrations by that most subtle of illustrators, Peter Bailey.

Illustration of *Cinderella* by P.J. Lynch taken from *Favourite Fairy Tales* retold by Sarah Hayes.



Goldilocks and the Three Bears

This story became widely known when it was published by Robert Southey in the unlikely sounding publication *The Doctor* in 1837. In this version it was an old woman who entered the house of the three bears, eats all their porridge and on hearing their return leaps out of the window to an uncertain fate. Subsequent versions changed the old woman to a young girl. Her name was changed from Silver-hair to Silver Locks to Little Golden-Hair and then, around the end of the nineteenth century to the now familiar Goldilocks.



Illustration from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* featured in *Yummy* by Lucy Cousins

It's a favourite of collections – and usually in those designed to appeal to the youngest children. *Yummy*, written and illustrated by Lucy Cousins using her characteristic bright, black outlined figures is perfect for reading aloud. Simple text with lots of opportunities for joining in. Usborne in *Fairy Tales for Little Children* takes a somewhat more moralistic take: *I'll NEVER, EVER be naughty again*. In the delightful Tony Ross version, Goldilocks vowed *that was the very last time that she ever ate someone's porridge without asking them first* Everyone in Emma Chichester Clark's illustrations wears the most wonderfully patterned clothing, indeed everything from chairs to rugs to beds is quite delectable. A very 1950s' designer world is in Steven Guarnaccia's take on the tale...and the language is as American hip as their furnishings. A new collection of poems by John Agard sees Goldilocks caught on CCTV. Anthony Browne tells the tale from both points of view, and in the wonderfully bonkers *Goldisocks and the Wee Bears* by Michael Rosen (you'll find the story in *Hairy Tales and Nursery Crimes*) the language is deliciously off-centre.

Hansel and Gretel

The Grimm Brothers first recorded this well-known German fairy story in 1812. Iona and Peter Opie indicate in *The Classic Fairy Tales* that the story was particularly popular in the Baltic regions. 1893 saw the first performance of *Hansel und Gretel*, an opera by Engleburt Humperdinck. There have been film and cartoon versions and there is a forthcoming (2012) action-horror film by Tommy Wirkola set fifteen years after the events of the fairy tale where the now adult Hansel and Gretel are professional witch-slayers!



Above and below: Illustrations from *Hansel and Gretel* retold by Berlie Doherty and illustrated by Jane Ray.

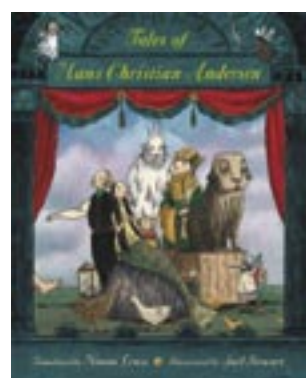
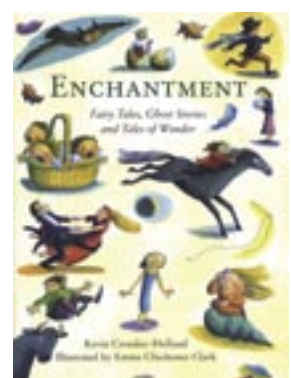
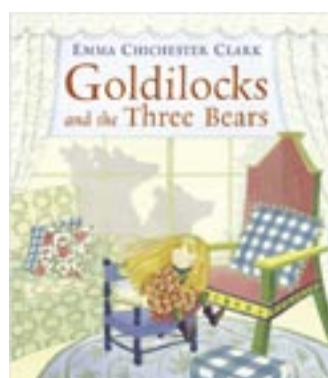
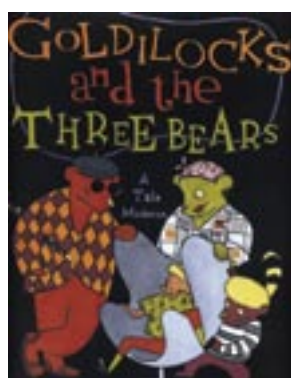


One of the most attractive versions of this story is, again, by Berlie Doherty and illustrated by Jane Ray. This is suitable for those just getting confident in their reading and is not as tough a version as some. The retelling by Grimm and illustrated by Arthur Rackham is somewhat shivery. And the modern multi-layered version by Anthony Browne has the grimmest possible stepmother and a nightmare picture of Hansel in his cage. But Gretel saves the day and the ending is as happy as it could possibly be.

Collections

A diverse array of collections of fairy tales has been published over the years illustrated by some of the best artists. But beware, not all the retellings are worthy of the illustrations. For a list of recommended collections and details of the books mentioned in this article please go to the *Carousel* website.

Enid Stephenson

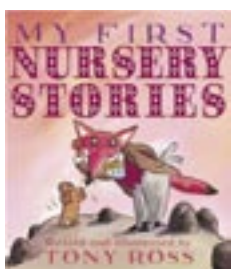


Collections



The Complete Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault in a new translation by Christopher Betts OUP £7.99
ISBN: 978-0199585809

Favourite Fairy Tales, retold by Sarah Hayes, illustrated by PJ Lynch
Walker £12.99
ISBN: 978-0744555646



My First Nursery Stories, retold and illustrated by Tony Ross
Andersen Press £8.99
ISBN: 978-1842708798

Fairy Tales for Little Children, assorted writers and illustrators, Usborne
£12.99 ISBN: 978-0746098226

Yummy, retold and illustrated



by Lucy Cousins
Walker £9.99
ISBN: 978-1406328721

My Favourite Fairy Tales, retold and illustrated by Tony Ross,
Andersen Press £12.99
ISBN: 978-1842709801

Tales of Hans Christian Andersen
translated by Naomi Lewis,
illustrated by Joel Stewart
Walker £9.99

ISBN: 978-1406309515

Grimms Fairy Tales translated in 1909
by Mrs Edgar Lucas, illustrated by
Arthur Rackham Calla Editions

The Classic Fairy Tales, compiled by
Iona and Peter Opie OUP
ISBN: 978-0192115591

Enchantment, folk and fairy tales
retold by Kevin Crossley-Holland,
illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark
Orion £9.99 ISBN: 978-1842550328

*Magic Beans, A Handful of Fairy
Tales from the Story Bag* by Malorie
Blackman, Philip Pullman, Alan
Garner, Berlie Doherty, Anne Fine
and many more David Fickling Books
£9.99 ISBN: 978-0857560438

The Kingdom under the Sea and other stories,
Joan Aiken and Jan Pienkowski
Cape £12.99 ISBN: 978-0857550095

Cinderella

Cinderella retold by Berlie Doherty,
illustrated by Jane Ray
Walker £4.99 ISBN: 978-1406329766

Cinderella retold and illustrated by Sally Gardner
Orion £4.99 ISBN: 978-1444002416

I was a Rat! Written by Philip Pullman,
illustrated by Peter Bailey
Yearling £5.99 ISBN: 978-0440866398

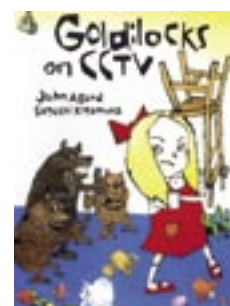
Goldilocks

Goldilocks and The Three Bears, retold and illustrated by
Emma Chichester Clark Walker £11.99 ISBN: 978-1406314847

Goldilocks and The Three Bears, retold and illustrated by
Steven Guarnaccia Abrams £11.99 ISBN: 978-0810989665

Goldilocks on CCTV
poems by John Agard,
illustrations by Satoshi Kitamura
Francis Lincoln £12.99
ISBN: 978-1847801838

Me and You, retold and illustrated by
Anthony Browne
Random House £5.99
ISBN: 978-0552559102



Hairy Tales and Nursery Crimes written by Mike Rosen, illustrated
by Alan Baker Andre Deutsch 1985 ISBN: 978-0233977089

Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel, retold by Berlie Doherty,
illustrated by Jane Ray
Walker £4.99 ISBN: 978-1406329780

Hansel and Gretel, retold and illustrated
by Anthony Browne
Walker £5.99 ISBN: 978-1406318524