Fairy tales

Definition: fairy tale from The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Genre of magical story, usually originating in folklore. Typically in European fairy tales, a poor, brave, and resourceful hero or heroine goes through testing adventures to eventual good fortune.

The Germanic tales collected by the Grimm brothers have been retold in many variants. Charles Perrault's retellings include 'Cinderella' and 'The Sleeping Beauty'. The form may also be adapted for more individual moral and literary purposes, as was done by Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen.

Summary Article: FAIRY TALES

From The Edinburgh International Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis

These are short 'once upon a time' narratives existing paradoxically concurrent with, yet removed from, the present and possessing qualities of entertainment and cautionary instruction, e.g., rites of passage, quests, awakenings, abandonment, etc. Fairy tales have been interpreted sociologically as reflections of social and political structures, but, since the influence of Freud and Jung, they have been interpreted primarily as narratives of inner psychological import. Characters are thus defined psychological attributes. Of prime importance is the first sentence, delineating 'the situation', e.g. 'There was once a miller who had fallen upon hard times' (the failed father), or 'There was once a childless king and queen' (the childless couple), and from this first sentence inevitable consequences follow.


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