

Brightly's

GUIDE TO READING

F A I R Y



T A L E S

WITH KIDS

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Then and Now: How Fairy Tales Continue to Invite Us to Think Harder and Smarter

by Maria Tatar



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by Devon Corneal



Why Kids Say They Love Fairy Tales

by Kari Ness Riedel



17 Multicultural Fairy Tales to Delight Every

by Charnaie Gor



Questions to Encourage Discussions with Your Kids About Fairy Tales

by The Brightly Editors



The Folklore Hiding in Popular YA Fantasy Novels

by Matt Staggs



Reinvented Fairy Tales for Adult Eyes Only

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Then and Now: How Fairy Tales Continue to Invite Us to Think Harder and Smarter

by Maria Tatar

Take a story, turn it into something larger than life, add a touch of magic, let it simmer for a few centuries, and presto! You have a fairy tale. With their high coefficients of weirdness, these stories — less about fairies than about monsters and wild things — haunt our collective cultural imagination. At their core, fairy tales are deceptively simple: transparent on the level of plot, but also sophisticated, complex, and full of mystery when it comes to their deeper meaning.

In pre-literate cultures, fairy tales were vehicles for processing trauma, transmitting ancestral wisdom, and debating cultural beliefs, values, and norms. Some of these stories ended not with “happily ever after” but with questions: “Which of these three brothers deserves the princess? The one who rescued her from the woods? The one who breathed life back into her? Or the one who transported her back home?” Or, they challenged listeners to think about ruses and stealth, traps and snares: “How did Jack manage to steal the Giant’s hen that lays golden eggs, his harp that sings, and all those sacks of gold?” Taking up paradoxes and staging contests of brute strength against wits, these dilemma tales and trickster narratives provided food for thought while stirring the soup, repairing tools, or spinning yarn.

More recently, we have been less invested in the complicated enchantments of fairy tales than in their social messaging. Our “Little Red Riding Hood” has become a story about “stranger danger,” plain and simple. “Beauty and the Beast” and “Cinderella” remind us to value inner beauty and character over outward appearance and circumstance. Many of our fairy tale adaptations for children today close with one-liners designed to create moral fables about specific values rather than narratives challenging us to think about how to escape worst-case possible scenarios and to imagine what could be, should be, or might be. “Little Red Riding Hood promised her mother that she would never again stray from the path” is something of a conversation stopper. How much better to explore a story

with a girl in red who finds ways to exploit the wolf’s weaknesses and outsmart him.

Yet it seems many modern fairy tales prefer to convey through stories the perils of straying from a fixed path, literally and figuratively, even as we live in a culture that encourages us all to color outside the lines, think outside the box, and take risks. Philip Pullman, a writer committed to the power of fantasy worlds and fairy tales, tells us that a good story should never have designs on readers: “‘Thou shalt not’ might reach the head, but it takes ‘Once upon a time’ to reach the heart.” Fairy tales should start conversations, not end them. They should make us think more and think harder about the premises that led us to pay attention to them in the first place.

Now, after the great migration of oral storytelling practices from the communal hearth to the nursery, when folklore and myth have been repurposed as bedtime reading, fairy tales are beginning to captivate us anew. Multi-generational, as well as multicultural, fairy tales get us talking in the same ways that headlines do their cultural work today. “We need stories in order to live,” Joan Didion tells us, but we also need them to imagine perils and possibilities and to become dreamers and inventors, philosophers and poets, and, yes, engineers and innovators as well.

And so it becomes all the more logical that Einstein, in several reported conversations that may be apocryphal but that ring true nonetheless, told parents: “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be very intelligent, read them more fairy tales.”

Maria Tatar is the John L. Loeb Professor of Folklore and Mythology and Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. She is the editor and translator of many acclaimed books, including *The Turnip Princess and Other Newly Discovered Fairy Tales*, and *Beauty and the Beast: Classic Tales About Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the World*.



So You Want to Read Fairy Tales: Here's Where to Start

by Matt Staggs

If your family would like to become more familiar with the genre's ancient roots before you dive into the many kid lit options, these collections provide fantastic introductions to the world of classic fairy tales for children and adults.

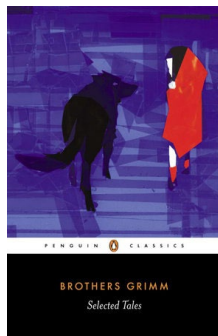
The Fairy Tale Trinity

If you're going to start reading fairy tales, you should start with the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, and Hans Christian Andersen.

Selected Tales

by the Brothers Grimm,
translated by David Luke

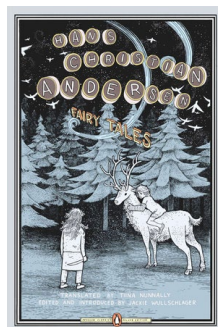
The Brothers Grimm are where you should begin. Their collections of fairy tales brought these old stories out of the forests and into the parlors of modern readers. You can find complete collections of their work, but they wrote a ton of them. If you're looking to develop a general familiarity with fairy tales, then you're better off reading a curated collection like this one.



Fairy Tales

by Hans Christian Andersen,
translated by Tiina Nunnally

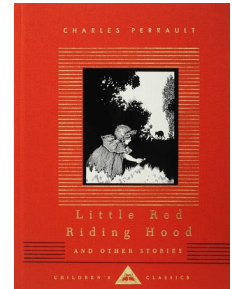
Your next stop should be the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, the author of many tales you'll recognize: "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "The Little Mermaid" among them. Like Aesop, Andersen used his tales to convey important morals. They were originally written for children, but adult readers will find them of great value as well.



Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories

by Charles Perrault,
translated by A. E. Johnson

At the age of 67, academic Charles Perrault turned his attention to writing fairy tales to entertain children. He's the author of one of my favorite fairy tales: "Little Red Riding Hood," which was later one of the inspirations for Angela Carter's excellent collection *The Bloody Chamber*.



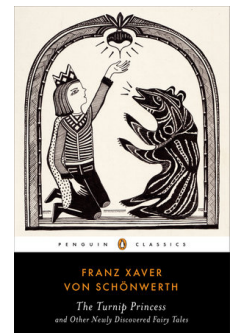
Rediscovered Classics

These are long-lost masterworks by storytellers that have only recently found their way to English-speaking markets.

The Turnip Princess and Other Newly Discovered Fairy Tales

by Franz Xaver Von Schonwerth,
translated by Maria Tatar

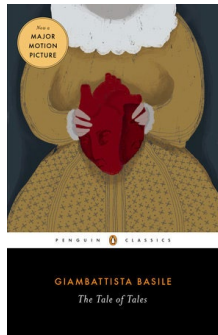
Something you might not know about the Brothers Grimm: They only collected fairy tales from literary sources, which they sometimes bowdlerized to make the stories more commercially accessible. They didn't actually go out into the fields to talk with the peasants who knew them. Franz Xaver Von Schonwerth did the legwork the Grimms didn't, traveling deep into the forests of Bavaria to collect these earthy stories as they were actually told. Maria Tatar, a world-recognized authority on fairy tales, translated this collection, so you can be sure of its fidelity to the original source.



The Tale of Tales

by Giambattista Basile, translated by Nancy L. Canepa

You might have heard that many of the original fairy tales had a dark side. Well, sometimes they had a dirty, sexy side as well. Giambattista Basile's *The Tale of Tales* is a hilarious and downright bawdy collection of stories from around Italy. Some of these are totally obscene and violent, so you won't want to share this one with younger kids.



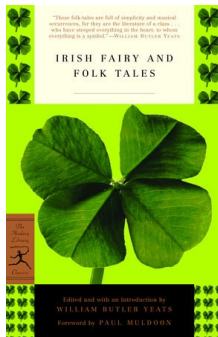
Regional Collections

You might also enjoy these collections that focus on the tales of particular nations.

Irish Fairy and Folk Tales

edited by William Butler Yeats

Poet, fiction writer, and part-time occultist W. B. Yeats's collection of Irish fairy tales is perhaps a little bit heavy on 19th-century mysticism and magic. Taken with a grain of salt, this is very readable look at the survival of folk customs and fairy traditions in rural Ireland, and a worthwhile historical document in its own right.



Russian Fairy Tales

by Aleksandr Afanas'ev, translated by Norbert Guterman

I bet you know more Russian fairy tales than you might think. Have you ever heard of Baba Yaga? The Swan Maiden? You'll find these characters and others in this classic collection. This is a pretty hefty book: Clocking in at 672 pages, you might want to just skip around and read what sounds interesting.



Out of the Woods

Strictly speaking, "fairies" are part of European folklore, but almost every culture has its own stories of little people, trolls, and magical animals. Ready to venture out of the woods of Europe? Give these wonderful collections a try!

Chinese Fairy Tales and Fantasies

by Moss Roberts

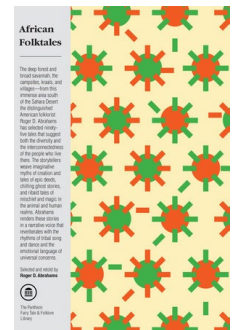
The Chinese have a rich tradition of ghosts and goblins, and were writing them down well before the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen ever picked up their pencils. This collection includes traditional fairy tales, ghost stories, and heroic epics.



African Folktales

by Roger Abrahams

The sprawling continent of Africa is the home of numerous tribes and nations, all of which have wonderful storytelling traditions. Roger Abrahams's *African Folktales* collects some of the very best traditional stories from these peoples, and could be a great jumping-off point for a deeper investigation into the topic.



American Indian Myths and Legends

by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz

The Native American tribes, like the native peoples of Africa, are incredibly diverse. All of them have their own tales and legends, many of which remain unknown to those outside the tribes. *American Indian Myths and Legends* is a treasure house of storytelling that will enlighten and entertain the curious reader.

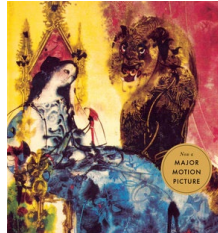


Miscellany

Want a little bit of everything? Here's a book I think you'll enjoy.

Beauty and the Beast: Classic Tales About Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the World

edited by Maria Tatar



You're likely familiar with the classic fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast," but did you know that the story you know is just one version of a tale known around the world? Maria Tatar has collected many of them in this amazing international anthology.

Curious about other science fiction
and fantasy subgenres?

Check out all of the
So You Want to Read lists on
UNBOUND WORLDS



10 Reasons Why Kids Need to Read Non-Disney Fairy Tales

by Melissa Taylor

Say “fairy tales” and your mind likely flashes to Disney and its animated versions of children’s classics. But old-school fairy tales by authors such as Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde, and Sophie Comtesse de Ségur are filled with a richness and complexity that is often missing from their big-screen renderings. Here are ten reasons it’s worth reading the original stories with your kid.

1. Life Lessons

Many of the moral lessons in the original stories are quite different from the Disney versions. Hans Christian Andersen didn’t write “The Little Mermaid” to teach us how to marry a prince, but to warn us that our actions have consequences. As Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller explained, “Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told me in my childhood than in any truth that is taught in life.”

2. Hope

Many fairy tales offer hope — hope that good can conquer evil, that enemies can be defeated, and of redemption. G. K. Chesterton said it best: “Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed.”

3. Shared Mythology

When kids know a familiar canon of stories they have a shared foundation, a common mythology. From an educator’s perspective, this is invaluable. What’s more, this background knowledge helps us to have a richer, more fulfilling literary experience. For example, one year my kids and I read several books about fairy tale lands — to fully enjoy these books, we needed knowledge of the original fairy tale stories that they reference.

4. What’s Possible

Fairy tales expand our idea of what’s possible and push our imaginations to soar with notions of “What if ____ were real or would happen?” Even though we know these stories aren’t really true, we still like to believe they are.

5. Cultural Appreciation

There’s nothing like reading Arabian Nights stories, Norse mythology, or African folk tales to give children an introduction to a particular culture. Especially with stories that are similar to each other, such as “Lon Po Po” and “Red Riding Hood,” which each bear the uniqueness of the narrator’s culture and traditions.

6. Short Stories

Fairy tales don’t require hours of reading. Their length is an attractive feature for children in general and reluctant readers in particular. Open an anthology and pick one or two stories without reading cover to cover.

7. Scary in a Safe Context

Fairy tales allow kids to learn how to deal with scary situations. As readers, we put ourselves into the stories. But since they’re stories, we don’t have to experience the scary firsthand. Instead, we see how the characters face their fears and we learn from their experiences.

8. Hard Truths

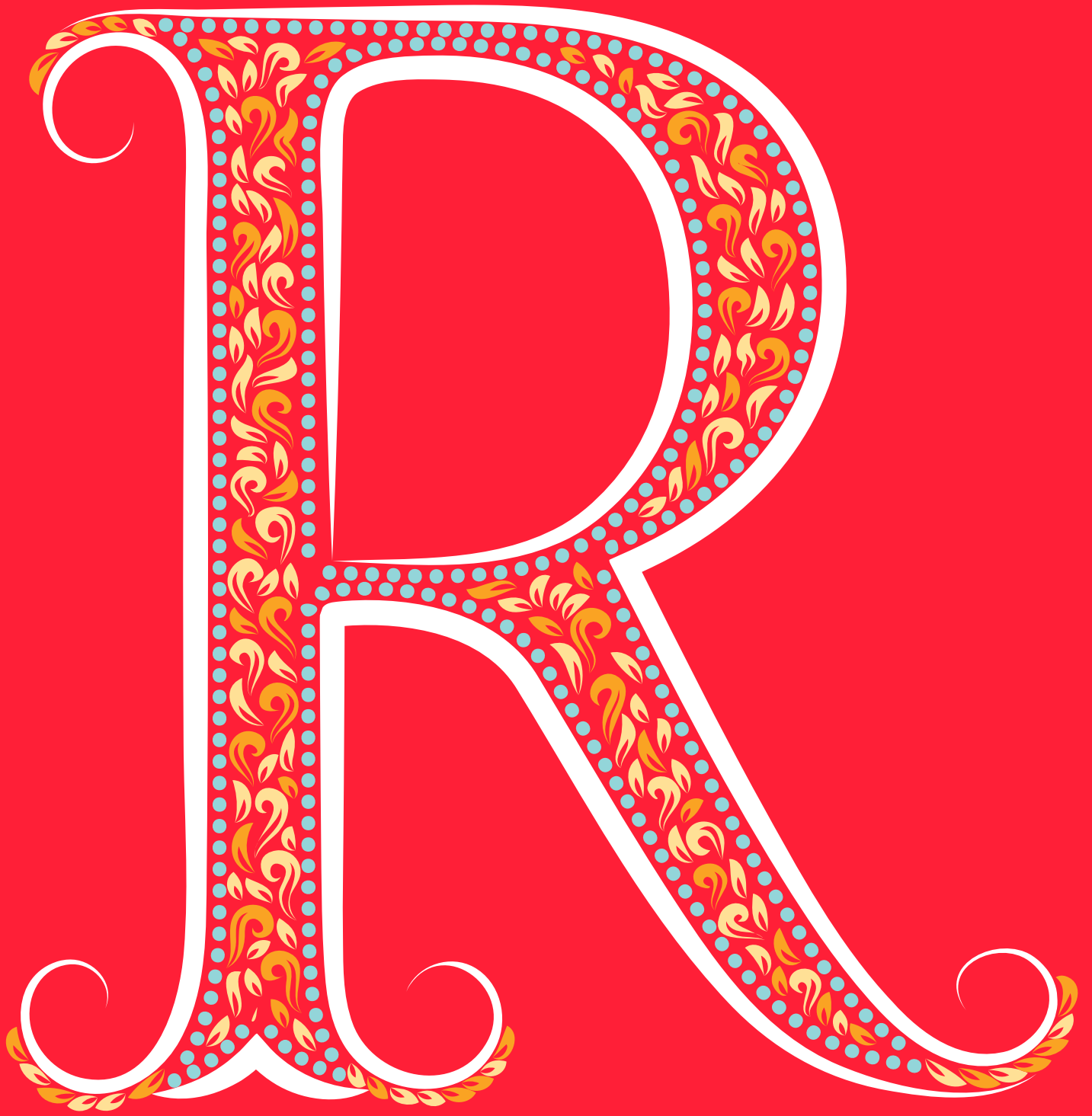
Like life, many fairy tales don’t have happy endings. Bad things do happen. C. S. Lewis believed that “sometimes fairy stories may say best what’s to be said.” After reading the stories, ask your kids, “Is the story telling you a truth about the world?”

9. Gateway to Fantasy

Fairy tales introduce children to the genre of fantasy by whetting kids’ appetites for magic and paving the road for more exploration of fantasy worlds.

10. Princesses Don’t Have a Dress Code

Read a variety of classic and reimagined fairy tales to discover princesses who don’t fit the Disney mold. Who knows? Maybe you’ll even find that you like troll princesses better than Cinderella.



11 Fractured Fairy Tales for Young Readers

by Devon Corneal

Ever wonder what would happen if Red Riding Hood weren't quite so dense, or the pigs got smarter, or Cinderella stood up to her evil stepmother?

Timeless fairy tales are timeless for a reason, but every so often, I need something different. That's where fractured fairy tales come in. If you want to be equally subversive, check out these wonderfully surprising takes on the classics.

Ninja Red Riding

by Corey Rosen Schwartz,
illustrated by Dan Santat

Corey Rosen Schwartz is a master at weaving together martial arts and familiar fairy tales to create extraordinarily engaging, funny, and unforgettable new stories. The wolf always learns his lesson, but in surprising ways, and don't be shocked when Red Riding Hood and her Granny show off their karate skills. Can't get enough? Check out Rosen Schwartz's *The Three Ninja Pigs* as well. Wolves don't have it so easy anymore.



The Mermaid

by Jan Brett

"Goldilocks" gets a splashy underwater setting in this picture book from the imitable Jan Brett. The Octopus family isn't too happy to come home to find Kintiro living in their home and, of course, sleeping in their beds. Kintiro makes a quick escape, but not before offering Baby Octopus a sweet gift. Inspired by the coast of Okinawa, Japan, Brett illustrates *The Mermaid* in her signature ever-so-stunning style.

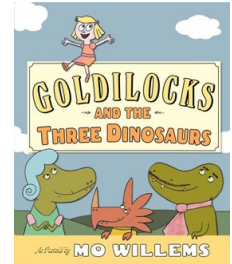


Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs

by Mo Willems

Only Mo Willems could write a story about a family of

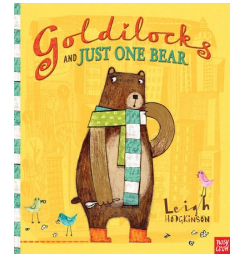
crafty dinosaurs who like to eat chocolate pudding and succulent children. Forget bears and porridge and an underage trespasser and think instead of wily carnivores, visiting friends from Norway, and a less-than-subtle trap for a clueless little girl. This Goldilocks isn't too bright, but things work out in the end.



Goldilocks and Just One Bear

by Leigh Hodgkinson

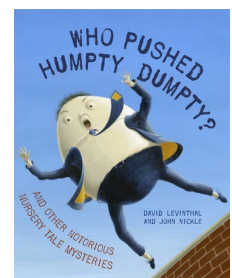
Fast-forward into the future of the "Goldilocks" tale and you'll find Little Bear on a big adventure. After growing up and leaving the comforts of the woods, he gets lost in a city and stumbles into someone else's apartment. When the humans who live there get home and find Little Bear in one of their beds, Little Bear and the matriarch of the family recognize each other from a long time ago. Could she be the very Goldilocks who, once upon a time, fell asleep in Little Bear's bed?



Who Pushed Humpty Dumpty?

by David Levinthal, illustrated by
Jon Nickle

Humpty Dumpty's fall is one of several fairy tale crimes being investigated by a blunt police frog named Binky who looks like he walked straight out of a '40s noir film. In Levinthal's world, Goldilocks is a serial offender, Hansel and Gretel go free after claiming self-defense, and Humpty Dumpty? Well, let me tell you — it wasn't an accident.



After the Fall (How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again)

by Dan Santat

After falling off the wall, Humpty Dumpty is still struggling to come to terms with the incident. Sure, he's physically put back together, but the fall caused some emotional scars too. Now Humpty is really afraid of heights, which keeps him from doing some of his favorite things. Can Humpty Dumpty overcome his fears and sit atop the wall again? An empathetic and unique look at emotional trauma, navigating fear, and discovering one's resilience.



Interrupting Chicken

by David Ezra Stein

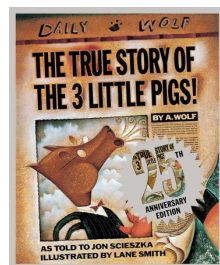
Anyone familiar with the particular agony that can come from reading to children before bed will appreciate *Interrupting Chicken* and its excitable, but well-intentioned title character who just wants to save her favorite fairy tales from their usual endings.



The True Story of the Three Little Pigs

by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith

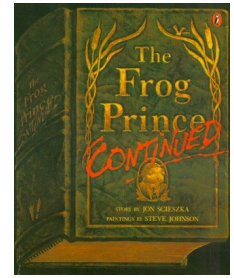
No one reworks fairy tales like Jon Scieszka. He's a genius. The clever, sly, and very, very funny *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* is on my All-Time Top Ten list of children's books. It takes a fairy tale, turns it on its head, and makes you root for the bad guy. It's perfect. If you've never heard the wolf's side of the story, it's time you did.



The Frog Prince, Continued

by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Steve Johnson

Equally amazing as *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* is Scieszka's *The Frog Prince, Continued*, which looks at the realities of "happily ever after." What happens when the princess is a nag and the prince has some swampy habits? You'll never look at fairy tales the same way again.



Cinder Edna

by Ellen Jackson, illustrated by Kevin O'Malley

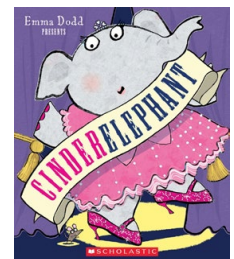
I always thought Cinderella was a little too reliant on her fairy godmother, which is why I was so thrilled to see that Cinder Edna wasn't going to make the same mistakes. Thank goodness Ellen Jackson gave the old Cinderella story a kick in the ball gown with a loafer, instead of a glass slipper.



Cinderelephant

by Emma Dodd

Cinderelephant isn't your usual fairy tale heroine, but what fun would it be if she was? With evil warthogs thwarting Cinderelephant's chance at happiness, it will take all of her Furry Godmouse's magic to give this pachyderm a happy ending.





11 Fractured Fairy Tales for Tweens

by Devon Corneal

Little kids aren't the only ones who can benefit from subversive authors taking liberties with the classics. There are some amazing reimagined fairy tales for tween readers too. Check out this list of snarky princesses, scary forests, dark forces, and sympathetic villains in the world of fractured classics.

The Hero's Guide to Saving Your Kingdom

by Christopher Healy, illustrated by Todd Harris

Middle grade readers, rejoice! Finally, fairy tales appropriate for your clever wit and disdain for authority. If you've ever wanted Prince Charming's back story or wanted to see Snow White, Cinderella, Rapunzel, and Briar Rose do more than sleep and swoon, then Christopher Healy's funny, unexpected, and clever series is for you. Boys and girls alike will find something to love and someone to cheer for as the heroes and heroines of this series take on dragons, witches, and adventures galore.



Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy

by Karen Foxlee

One day, Ophelia stumbles upon a boy locked away in a hidden room in the large museum where her dad works. She has never believed in magic, but when the Marvelous Boy tells her that his captor is the Snow Queen, she begins to doubt what she knows and, ultimately, finds herself on a high-stakes quest to save the world. *Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy* is an enchanting adventure featuring a strong, whip-smart, and brave protagonist.



Ella Enchanted

by Gail Carson Levine

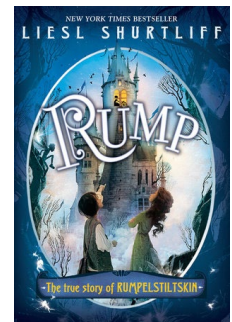
This hilarious take on "Cinderella" sees our heroine under an obedience spell that requires her to do anything she's told. Middle grade readers will love watching Ella learn to stand up for herself, break the curse, and find happily ever after.



Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin

by Liesl Shurtliff

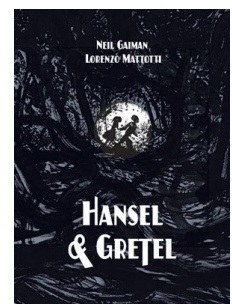
Poor Rump, he's got an unfortunate name, which doesn't earn him any friends in the magic kingdom. But with his best friend Red Riding Hood and a newly discovered talent for turning straw into gold, things might be looking up. Or not.



Hansel & Gretel

by Neil Gaiman, illustrated by Lorenzo Mattotti

You can't love fairy tales unless you embrace their dark core, and Neil Gaiman and illustrator Lorenzo Mattotti do exactly that in this version of "Hansel and Gretel." Less "fractured fairy tale," and more "perfectly modern presentation," this gorgeously illustrated and deftly told story is aimed at late elementary school-aged kids who can handle the more mature themes of the story.



Snow & Rose

by Emily Winfield Martin

Dive deep into a classic fairy tale and get to know the two very different sisters of “Snow White and Rose Red.” With captivating storytelling and stunning illustrations, Winfield Martin fleshes out the original story of a family grieving the disappearance of Snow and Rose’s father, and the sisters’ magical journey that leads them deep into the woods with only each other’s support.



The Goose Girl

by Shannon Hale

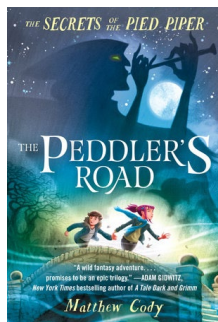
I don’t love the original “Goose Girl” story – too much hair braiding and illogical oaths. I much prefer Shannon Hale’s new version with a princess who can talk to animals and who doesn’t take a bloody mutiny lying down. This is a Goose Girl with pluck and a story filled with plenty of danger and suspense, and, of course, a happy ending.



The Peddler’s Road

by Matthew Cody

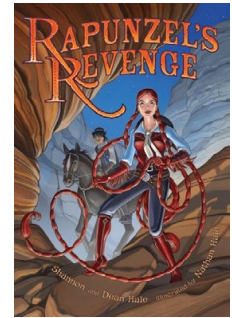
In this first installment of Cody’s fast-paced **The Secrets of the Pied Piper trilogy**, modern-day siblings Max and Carter meet the legendary flute-playing Piper in Hamelin, Germany, and they find themselves transported to Summer Isle, where stolen children have been imprisoned for centuries. Can Max and Carter work together to return to the safety of the world they came from? Can they help the other stolen children escape?



Rapunzel’s Revenge

by Dean Hale and Shannon Hale, illustrated by Nathan Hale

Shannon Hale does it again; only this time she gets her husband Dean in on the act to create this fabulous graphic novel. Imagine Rapunzel in the Wild West, teamed up with Jack in the Beanstalk, and using her hair as a lasso to bring justice and joy to all she encounters. Sound good to you? Me too.



A Tale Dark & Grimm

by Adam Gidwitz, illustrated by Dan Santat

Gidwitz creatively weaves several fairy tales into this middle grade novel that spotlights the titular characters from “Hansel and Gretel.” Featuring a snarky narrator who adds some comic relief (and even warns readers when things are about to get a little scary!) this silly, gory, and delightfully unpredictable novel is sure to delight older tween readers as it weaves its way through the trouble-fated siblings’ many perilous adventures in the woods.





Why Kids Say They Love Fairy Tales

by Kari Ness Riedel

Almost any young person can tell you the basic plot of “Cinderella” or “Hansel and Gretel” or “Little Red Riding Hood.” What is it about this genre of stories that makes them so memorable and so loved by kids and adults?

In talking with young people about why they love fairy tales, their responses are quite consistent. These stories draw them in, transport them to another place, and make them feel something — fear, happiness, worry, or excitement to name a few. They speak to universal themes of good versus evil and moral values like hard work and kindness. This makes sense as these tales were often passed down as oral traditions, so they must be captivating and relatable enough that people want to hear them again and again and memorize them to tell their own friends and family.

What Kids Say

Michael, 7, speaks for many kids when he says, “The magic is my favorite part about reading fairy tales.” Witches and warlocks, good fairies and evil trolls, characters who can transform into something more beautiful or an entirely new shape inspire active imaginations and make kids feel like anything is possible. Zoe, 9, loves the adventures in fairy tales. “Reading them lets me escape from the real world.” Isabella, 8, seconds that saying, “I can use my imagination when I read these and visit places I could never really go.”

Some, like Riley, 7, and Rowan, 9, rank “romance” high for why they like the stories while for siblings Raymond and Rose of Sharon, both 4, the more “twisted and bizarre” the better. Cecilia, 7, likes reading different versions of the same story from different cultures and “seeing the same things and the new things that show up” in each version.

What Educators Say

Educators also love sharing fairy tales with kids to strengthen their reading comprehension and writing skills. Kristen, a second grade teacher, likes to use these stories to introduce the topic of perspective. “We read ‘The Three Little Pigs’ and then another story from the Big Bad Wolf’s perspective. They loved it!” Jenni, a fifth grade teacher, uses fractured fairy tales like *The True Story of The*

Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka to kick off a creative writing unit with her students. “Reading a book like this opens up a new world to them as writers. Knowing that it’s okay to take a familiar storyline and riff off of it gets their creative writing juices flowing.”

Favorite Fairy Tales & The Disney Factor

When asked to pick their favorite fairy tales, the answers ranged from classics to modern twists to Disney’s versions. Kyra, 12, appreciates the depth and complexity of classic fairy tales. “They help me think about real life problems and give me hope.” Abby, 12, “loves the original, dark tales like the *Grimms’ Fairy Tales*.” Jack, 12, loves books like *A Tale Dark & Grimm* where “the tales take a twist and who you thought was bad becomes good.” For older tweens and teens, series like *The Selection* and *The Lunar Chronicles* take familiar tropes and characters and give them a modern and mature feel that these readers adore.

While many kids first get introduced to these stories through Disney books and movies, the “Disney-fication” of fairy tales is not for everyone. “The Disney versions are way too cheesy and wrap it all up with a ‘happily ever after’ formulaic ending. I prefer the modern takes on the fairy tales like *The Land of Stories* where things are more complicated,” shares Nicole, 12. Others, like Mezzie, 12, like the “happily ever after” ending and find it “comforting and optimistic.” I was glad to learn that the kids I spoke with do not think that the Prince must come in to deliver the happy ending. They know that the Princess is just as likely to be the hero of the story.

Magic, adventure, a quest with twists and turns, and a dash of romance are tried-and-true foundations of any good book. Fairy tales offer all of these elements with the added comfort of familiarity. Kids first learn the rhythm of these stories through being read to as toddlers and pre-readers. Then, they experience joy and contentment as they rediscover the same beloved story arcs and the related roller coaster of emotions in everything from chapter books through the latest young adult bestsellers. They are stories that progress with them through the years, building reading memories along the way.



17 Multicultural Fairy Tales to Delight Every Child

by Charnaie Gordon

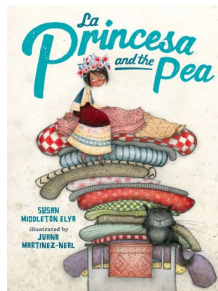
Perhaps one of the best things about reading fairy tales today is that there are so many multicultural versions for children and adults to enjoy. Gone are the days when all the main characters in fairy tales looked virtually the same. Now children from all over the world can glimpse different cultures through these stories and see themselves reflected as well.

Reading fairy tales with a multicultural twist also allows parents and teachers to have richer conversations with children. You can talk about the similarities and differences between the stories as well as the different cultural references, main characters, settings, and plots. Below are 17 fairy tale retellings to explore with little readers in addition to the classics.

La Princesa and the Pea

by Susan Middleton Elya, illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal

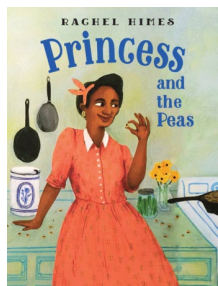
A fantastic bilingual retelling of the classic fairy tale “The Princess and the Pea.” The lively art featured throughout is inspired by the culture of Peru.



Princess and the Peas

by Rachel Himes

Set in the mid-1950s in Charleston County, South Carolina, this book features a vibrant African American community and themes of love, family, and, of course, food and cooking. John’s mother, Ma Sally, cooks the best black-eyed peas in town. When her son John tells her he wants to get married, three women vie for his hand in marriage. The caveat? The lucky woman chosen must be able to cook black-eyed peas as well as John’s mother.

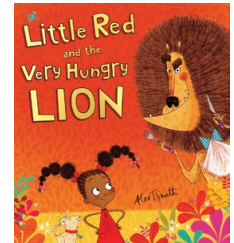


Little Red and the Very Hungry Lion

by Alex T. Smith

My kids and I are totally crushing on the character Little Red in this adorable, funny, and witty retelling of “Little Red Riding Hood.”

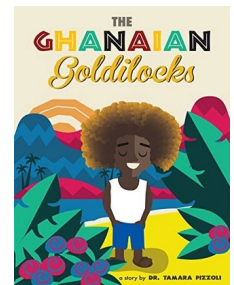
This book features a little Black girl (with the cutest two pigtails you ever did see) playing the part of Little Red. The story has an African savanna setting with a very lush landscape.



The Ghanaian Goldilocks

by Tamara Pizzoli, illustrated by Phil Howell

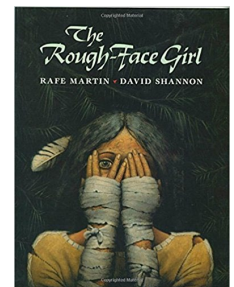
Set in Accra, Ghana, this book seamlessly weaves West African culture and themes into this beautiful modern retelling of “Goldilocks” that stars a little Black boy named Kofi as the main character.



The Rough-Face Girl

by Rafe Martin, illustrated by David Shannon

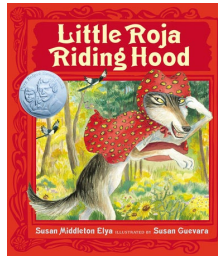
This is a Cinderella tale set in the Algonquin Indian tribes of North America. Instead of a fairy godmother to help, the Rough-Face Girl relies upon herself. A powerful retelling with a great message for young readers: Beauty lies within.



Little Roja Riding Hood

by Susan Middleton Elya,
illustrated by Susan Guevara

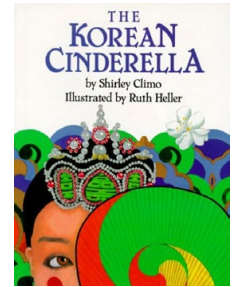
This is a cute, sassy, and modern Latino-inspired retelling of the classic fairy tale in which a little girl (chica) saves her grandmother (abuelita) from a wolf. There are Spanish words peppered throughout along with a handy glossary of Spanish words included in the back. A fun rhyming book to read aloud with children!



The Korean Cinderella

by Shirley Climo, illustrated by
Ruth Heller

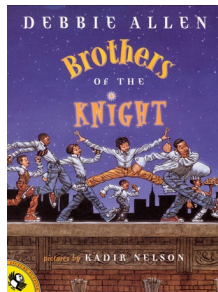
This Korean retelling introduces little readers to a young girl named Pear Blossom. Pear loses her mother and her father then remarries a terrible woman who has a daughter around Pear Blossom's age. Her step-family is constantly thinking of ways to belittle her by calling her names and giving her impossible chores.



Brothers of the Knight

by Debbie Allen, illustrated by
Kadir Nelson

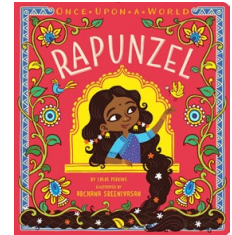
This contemporary retelling of the classic tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" takes place in Harlem, where an African American reverend tries to discover why the shoes of his twelve sons are worn out every morning.



Rapunzel

by Chloe Perkins, illustrated by
Archana Sreenivasan

This board book gives Rapunzel a beautiful Indian-inspired makeover. I love the books in the **Once Upon a World series** because they help change the way children see the world. Who says Rapunzel, Snow White, and Cinderella always have to look the same way?



Hansel and Gretel

by Rachel Isadora

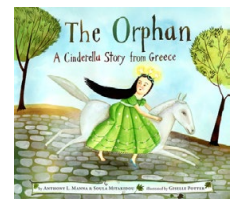
A colorful retelling of the classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale using the lush African jungle as the setting.



The Orphan: A Cinderella Story from Greece

by Anthony Manna and
Christodoula Mitakidou,
illustrated by Giselle Potter

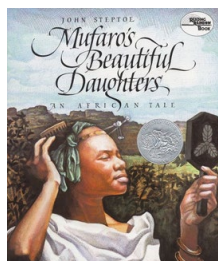
Follow the story of a little orphan girl from Greece. Young readers will enjoy the luminous and stunning watercolors and beautiful rhymes sprinkled throughout. The story is familiar to many children, so they should have no problem catching on to the differences between this story and the traditional tale.



Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale

by John Steptoe

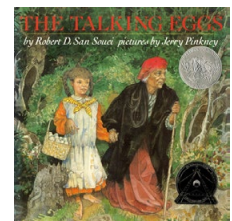
When an African king sends word that he is to marry, Mufaro sends his two beautiful daughters for consideration. While both girls are unequalled in beauty, Manyara is selfish and rude and Nyasha has a heart of pure gold. This is one of my favorite "Cinderella" retellings.



The Talking Eggs

by Robert D. San Souci, illustrated
by Jerry Pinkney

This beautifully illustrated and wonderfully written Creole folktale is full of expressive language that brings each scene to life. Little readers will venture to Loui-



siana in the American South and meet two sisters, cruel Rose and kind-hearted Blanche. Blanche’s aunty gives her a chicken house full of talking eggs with treasures for good, obedient girls: silver and jewels, dresses, shoes, and even a splendid carriage.

Little Red Gliding Hood

by Tara Lazar, illustrated by Troy Cummings

There is an ice skating competition coming up and Little Red Gliding Hood knows she can win, but she doesn’t have a partner. Oh, slippery slush! Author Tara Lazar makes reference to several popular fairy tales in this book and mixes them all into this hilarious story on ice! A fun book to read aloud with the little ones!

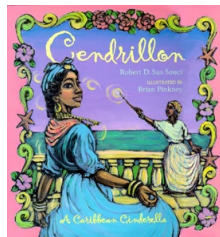


Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella

by Robert D. San Souci, illustrated by Brian Pinkney

Set on the island of Martinique, this Caribbean-inspired retelling of “Cinderella” is visually stunning.

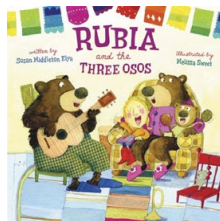
When Cendrillon’s grandmother realizes she is heartsick over a rich man’s son, she decides to give Cendrillon the gift of life. French Creole words are used throughout and listed with definitions in the glossary in the back.



Rubia and the Three Osos

by Susan Middleton Elya, illustrated by Melissa Sweet

A cute bilingual Latino version of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” with a twist. The ending shows Rubia (Goldilocks) fixing all of her mistakes in the end – a great message for children. There is also an English to Spanish glossary in the back of the book.

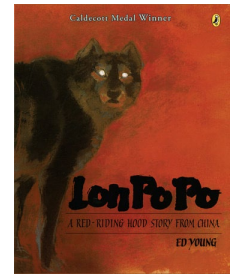


Lon Po Po

by Ed Young

This Chinese retelling of “Little Red Riding Hood” has become a classic. Winner of the Caldecott Medal, this version centers on three sisters and Lon Po Po, the Granny Wolf, who pretends to be their grandmother.

A bit darker than the original version, the wolf’s cunning and girls’ smarts are on full display in Young’s stunning artwork and story.





Questions to Encourage Discussions with Your Kids About Fairy Tales

by The Brightly Editors

Packed with layered plots, unique characters, and vivid settings, fairy tales offer kids lots of food for thought. Talking about these stories with young readers can be a great way to provide them with additional context, help them reflect on what they just read, and expand their learnings. With that in mind, we've put together this list of questions to encourage conversation and literary exploration with your child, whether you're reading the story aloud together or reading independently and discussing as you go.

1. What part of the story could you best picture in your mind? How come?
2. Who was your favorite character? Why?
3. Did the main character do anything that you would have done differently?
4. Who was the protagonist of the fairy tale? Who, or what, was the antagonist?
Were there "good" and "bad" characters, or were the characters a mix of both?
5. What kind of message do you think the author wanted to convey to readers with the story?
6. Did this story remind you of any other stories? How so?
7. Did this story seem old or new? Why? When was the story published?
(Hint: Look at the beginning pages of the book to find out!)
8. Have you read other stories by the author? If so, what do you remember about them?
9. If the fairy tale included illustrations, did you like them? Why or why not?
10. Did you enjoy the story?



The Folklore Hiding in Popular YA Fantasy Novels

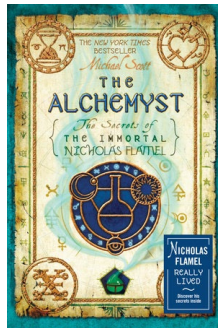
by Matt Staggs

Folklore and mythology are the cornerstones of the fantasy literature we love so much. Some connections between fiction and folklore are obvious — dragons and trolls, for example. Others not so much. Here are four examples in popular fiction that may have escaped your notice.

The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel Series

by Michael Scott

The Story: The six-book series that begins with *The Alchemist* is the story of Nicholas Flamel, a seemingly ordinary bookseller with an extraordinary past. In actuality, Flamel is an immortal master of magic in service to mysterious cosmic powers. After accidentally discovering Flamel's secret, two teenagers find themselves drawn into a secret world of magic and alchemy.



The Truth: Lots of characters in *The Alchemist* are based on historical characters, including Nicholas Flamel himself. The real Flamel was a 14th-century Parisian bookseller and scribe who lived to the ripe old age of 80. While that's old for the present day, it was practically ancient in the 1400s. Centuries later, various occultists somehow got it into their heads that Flamel had discovered the secret of immortality and escaped death, and a brisk business developed around selling manuscripts supposedly connected with the man. To be fair, Flamel probably did experiment with alchemy, but so did many other well-educated people of his age.

Ella Enchanted

by Gail Carson Levine

The Story: In Gail Carson Levine's fantasy novel, a fairy blesses (or curses, depending on your perspective) a young princess named Ella with the gift of obedience, meaning that she has to obey any direct command given her. Need-

less to say, the inability to say no is a terrible burden in a world full of scoundrels and magical beasts. Ella eventually frees herself from the spell, but it's not easy.

The Truth: Ella's story was inspired by "Cinderella," a fairy tale you already know quite well. What you might not know is that the idea of magically induced obedience can be found in an even older source: Irish mythology. The Irish believed that people could be compelled to behave in certain ways through the use of a *geis*, a ritual injunction placed upon them by supernatural (and occasionally earthly) powers. The *geis* could include just about anything, and was often rather arbitrary in its directions. One mythic hero was forbidden to spend the night in any house from which a fire is visible. Another was forbidden from breaking up a fight between his servants. Breaking a *geis* was a sure way to anger the gods, and all but ensured one's downfall.



Reckless

by Cornelia Funke

The Story: *Reckless* is the tale of a boy who travels through a mirror and adventures in a dark but beautifully strange world of fairies and monsters. As our hero explores this hidden realm, he finds himself deeply entangled in its enchantments.



The Truth: Any story about a journey through a mirror is going to invoke comparisons to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, but there's more to stories about magical mirrors. We've all heard that breaking a mirror can bring seven years of bad luck, but there's another, more sinister mirror myth connecting it to another realm: the land of the dead. In a surprisingly large number of

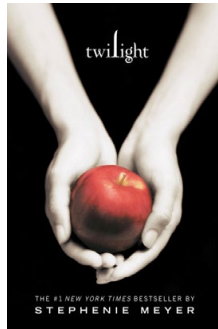
cultures, when someone dies it is customary to cover the faces of mirrors in his or her house. The reason varies from place to place. Some people say that a mirror can trap the soul of the deceased. Others believe that the souls of the departed linger for days after their death, and if they see their reflection, then they may become confused and not pass on to the next world.

Twilight

by Stephenie Meyer

The Story: Unless you've been in coma for the last dozen years, then you're probably familiar with Stephenie Meyer's tale of a teenage girl and the 100-plus-year-old vampire she loves.

The Truth: Lots of people have razed *Twilight*'s vampires for being sparkly and walking



about in daylight. However, *Twilight* is more faithful to folklore than you might realize — maybe even more than your favorite vampire novels and films. You see, the whole “burning in sunlight” thing was a creation of the movie industry. Even fiction’s most famous vampire, Bram Stoker’s Count *Dracula*, walked about by day whenever he needed to do so. Vamps flash-frying in the sun started with F. W. Murnau’s 1922 film “Nosferatu” (itself an unlicensed adaptation of *Dracula*). After that, Hollywood picked it up and ran with it.

The sparkle thing? Well, there’s no folkloric root to it that I can find, but to be fair, the old legends already offer some pretty crazy ways of detecting a vampire. One of the craziest comes from Romania. If you suspect a vampire of resting in a graveyard, lead a young boy mounted on a white horse through the graves. If the horse is spooked passing a plot, then you’ve found your vampire. My point is that if you’re looking for colossally silly vampire myths, then *Twilight*'s sparkly undead aren’t at the top of the list.

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YA fantasy novels!



Reinvented Fairy Tales for Adult Eyes Only

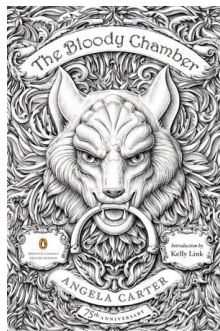
by Matt Staggs

Fairy tales really are for readers of all ages, including you! According to fairy tale scholar Maria Tatar, the original stories were meant to entertain adults — and they contained very mature themes before people like the Brothers Grimm cleaned them up. If you're looking for stories to explore on your own, check out these four decidedly adult takes on classic fairy tales:

The Bloody Chamber: And Other Stories

by Angela Carter

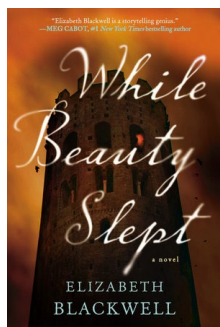
Feminist fantasy author Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* contains 10 retellings of well-known fairy tales, among them "Bluebeard" and "Little Red Riding Hood." Steeped in magical realism and spattered in blood, this compendium is frightening and darkly erotic. If you're a horror movie buff, you might be interested to learn that two stories from *The Bloody Chamber* were the basis for Neil Jordan's 1984 werewolf film "[The Company of Wolves](#)." (Great movie, by the way — definitely worth seeking out.)



While Beauty Slept

by Elizabeth Blackwell

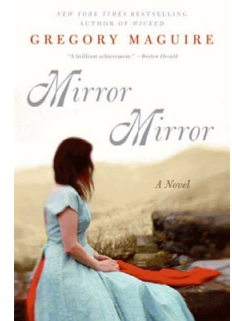
Elizabeth Blackwell's *While Beauty Slept* has earned comparisons to the work of Gregory Maguire. In this retelling of "Sleeping Beauty," a great grandmother who in her youth was a close companion of Beauty tells the real story behind the familiar fairy tale. Through her eyes, readers witness the true course of events that led the princess into an ageless slumber.



Mirror Mirror

by Gregory Maguire

Gregory Maguire's *Mirror Mirror* recasts the fairy tale "Snow White" in treacherous Renaissance Italy, with legendary spinner of plots Lucrezia Borgia as the Evil Queen. If you're familiar with Maguire's *Wicked Years* series — a take on L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* that pictured the Wicked Witch as an aspiring do-gooder done wrong — then you know how dark his revisionist fiction can get. Like *The Bloody Chamber*, this is definitely not one for the kids.



Hunted

by Meagan Spooner

Meagan Spooner's retelling of "Beauty and the Beast" finds Beauty tracking the mysterious creature her woodsman father was supposed to have been hunting when he disappeared. Known only as "The Beast," it lives in a ruined castle in a cursed valley. If she can find the Beast, she might just find her father, too.



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 reads for grown-ups.