

## Once Upon a *Tupa*: A Trove of Lesser-Known Fairy Tales

If I had gone to school, without a doubt I would have been *that* kid. The one crouched in a corner like Gollum, nose buried in a book, and growling at any other kid who dared approach my territory. Luckily, I homeschooled and could read books undisturbed to my heart's content. I relished getting lost in faraway magical worlds and found the real world sadly disappointing. My book collection began early, with my parents' childhood volumes being passed down to my eager fingers. Though now I cherish the memories of my parents reading me to sleep from these fairy tales, I didn't truly understand the significance of these tomes at the time, and mostly liked to admire how beautiful they were on the shelf. I spent most of my reading time at the local library, checking out whole sections of the children's shelves depending on what topic was my latest hyperfixation.

One day, that happened to be princess stories. Clambering into one of the library's reading nooks with my stack of illustrated 'once upon a time's, I noticed a recurring name. The day I realized nearly every culture has a version of the iconic Cinderella tale, my worldview was changed. Paradoxically, this both shrunk and expanded the world for me. What other similarities are there between different cultures? Are there cultures I didn't even know existed? Are all people really the same, deep down? I longed to find out. My own house was stocked with these forgotten international tales, and I had ignored this knowledge for so long.

Soon I was making connections; every culture had some folktales about some form of magic, as well as stories about animals. The same themes of evil step-relatives kept popping up, as well as heroes slaying monsters. The details varied, but the base storylines stayed more or less consistent. The worlds started to blend together into one massive universe that served as my escape: a safe haven separate from my overwhelming yet somehow mundane reality. And often, it made sense why some stories hadn't made it into modern American culture. Some morals were just too outdated, while some stories just seemed like knockoffs of a well known Grimm or Perrault tale. But still, the individuality of these fairy tales and folklore deserves to be known and celebrated. I grew up with relatively little knowledge about my mixed European heritage, but when reading these collections of stories, I feel the ties to my imaginative ancestors and the world as a whole.

These books inspired my own love for storytelling, which led to me becoming a TA for a creative writing class, and even winning first place in a story writing contest. The beauty of spinning a yarn and sharing it with others is the purest form of human interaction, and is unique to us as a species. Whether passed down through my family or purchased on my own, the works in my collection will be cherished, and I will keep these timeless treasures alive for generations to come.

## Bibliography

**Avery, Gillian. *Russian Fairy Tales*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995**

This book has some of the most gorgeous illustrations in my collection, and the Russian character names are so lovely and fun to read. Look me in the eye and tell me “*Vassilissa the Beautiful*” is not baby-name inspo.

**Barbeau, Marius. *The Golden Phoenix and Other French-Canadian Fairy Tales*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958**

Though most of these tales were traditionally from France, I feel like the nature of fairy tales is to be universal. I appreciate the importance of settlers bringing with them stories of princesses, heroes, and phoenixes and creating a rich folklore culture for the new country of Canada and mingling it with the lore of the indigenous peoples.

**Boekelaar, Els and Verschuren, Ineke, editors. *Over the Hills and Far Away*. Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1991**

A special anthology of ‘littlefolk’ tales, these stories from all across Europe feature faeries, elves, gnomes, leprechauns, and so on. Every culture has their own version, and comparing the similarities and differences in these tales is fascinating.

**Booss, Claire, editor. *Scandinavian Folk & Fairy Tales*. New York: Avenel Books, 1984**

The perfect book to read from on cold winter nights! There are also many beautiful pen and ink illustrations that are a joy for children and adults alike.

**Botkin, B. A., editor. *A Treasury of New England Folklore*. New York: American Legacy Press, 1989**

Even being from a scholarly, suburban area without many wendigo sightings or supernatural locals, I love the idea that people are people everywhere are superstitious and imaginative. New England can have fairy tales too!

**Bowman, James Cloyd and Bianco, Margery. *Tales from a Finnish Tupa*. Chicago: Albert Whitman & Co. 1950**

Narrowing from Scandinavia in general to just Finland, these stories are sprinkled with witty characters and fun Finnish words and phrases. Definitely planning on rereading this one soon!

**Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology*. New York: The Modern Library, undated**

Though not entirely accurate to the original Greek myths, Bulfinch’s collection is probably the reason for my middle school obsession with Percy Jackson.

**Calvino, Italo. *Italian Folktales*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980**

This one is a newer addition, so I'm looking forward to seeing how Italian fairy tales compare to the more well known French and German stories. Do they borrow much from the Roman mythology of Italy's past, or are they entirely unique? I can't wait to read this one!

**Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *The Norse Myths*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980**

I got into Norse mythology later into my childhood, after having been fully occupied by the children's versions of Greek and Egyptian myths. The Norse gods are darker and moodier, but I quickly fell in love with Odin and Loki just as much as Osiris and Zeus. I longed for a carriage like Freya's, drawn by huge grey cats.

**Croxall, Samuel. *Fables of Aesop & Others with Instructive Applications*. New York: The World Publishing House, 1876**

The oldest and most widely known anthology, these short tales about animals remain some of my most beloved. They definitely instilled in me a deep love for nature early on, and I always found that stories with a moral or an explanation (such as Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, another volume I'm hunting for my collection) were the most satisfying. This is also the oldest book in my collection, and as a history lover, it holds an extra special place in my heart.

**Grimm, Brothers. *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972**

Competing with Aesop for the most iconic anthology, the Grimm's collection is as classic as fairy tales can get. Though I'm always surprised by how deeply Disney managed to sanitize the storylines! The brothers Grimm are more collectors than authors, but their dedication to setting these folktales in stone and releasing them into the world is deeply admirable work in itself.

**Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*. New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. 1940**

My most recent addition, I look forward to this book bringing me back to the classic, well known Greek myths I grew up reading.

**Haviland, Virginia. *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Ireland*. London: The Bodley Head, 1961**

What kind of Bostonian would I be if not an Irish one? Irish folktales have more to contribute than just Finn McCool adventures, and I'm proud to have them as a part of my heritage.

**Huggins, Edward. *Blue and Green Wonders and Other Latvian Tales*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971**

Being part Latvian, I never saw any aspect of this culture reflected in American culture growing up. Having this book connects me with a magical, timeless part of my history.

**Ifans, Rhiannon. *Tales from the Celtic Countries*. Wales: Y Lolfa Cyf, 1999**

Rich with illustrations, I enjoyed this book as a child and I still do today. I'd never have known the Isle of Man has its own fairy tales!

**Jones, Beryl M. *Raise the Drawbridge*. North Wales: John Jones Publishing Ltd. 1999**

I love the historical accuracy of this book! Rather than pure fairy tales, these stories are set in real places and feature the real castles of Wales. I've always wanted to visit this country and learn more about my ancestors here, and this book is like dipping a toe into that world without having to buy a plane ticket.

**Kvideland, Reimund and Sehmsdorf, Henning K., editors. *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1991**

I can never get enough of Scandinavian folklore! Though there is some overlap between this volume and some of my other European anthologies, picking apart the differences or finding one unique gem makes it all worth it.

**Lawrence, Ann. *Tales from Perrault*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996**

Wires often get crossed when people attribute different fairy tales to different authors. Many of Perrault's classic tales get attributed to the brothers Grimm, though the Grimms were story gatherers more than they were authors. Perrault as well was working off of pre-existing folktales but he edited them to be more geared towards children, making his stories deeply nostalgic.

**Mason, Herbert. *Gilgamesh*. New York: Penguin Books, 1970**

While not an anthology in itself, this story is the first recorded fictional tale, appearing millenia before the Bible. Though many parts of it are lost, this epic story of gods, monsters, the beauty of friendship, and the agony of grief serves as the foundation for all storytelling. It inarguably has a home in my collection.

**Miller, Olive Beaupré, editor. *Tales Told in Holland*. Chicago: The Book House for Children, 1926**

Peppered with lovely illustrations, I never knew Holland had so many folk and fairy tales before finding this volume! Books like these truly expand the world, but also show that people everywhere are storytellers.

**Musick, Ruth Ann. *Green Hills of Magic: West Virginia Folktales from Europe.* Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970**

These tales come from European immigrants settling in West Virginia and sharing their stories with their communities. My mother's family were some of these, immigrating from Latvia and learning English from their children who went to local schools. America truly is a melting pot of culture, and these West Virginia European folktales are beautiful evidence of that.

**Randolph, Vance. *Pissing in the Snow & Other Ozark Folktales.* New York: Avon Books, 1976**

The title alone made this volume essential for my collection, and it shows a certain amount of earthiness that is unique to American folklore. This country has culture separate from politics and wars that not many of its residents are aware of, but once it's uncovered, American fairy tales make for a fun and fantastic read.

***Russian Fairy Tales.* New York: The Peter Pauper Press, 1959**

Such a cute little book! While my first collection of Russian tales has more stories and more deeply detailed illustrations, I couldn't resist this childrens' edition with traditional style printed pictures.

**Sheppard-Jones, Elisabeth. *Stories of Wales.* North Wales: John Jones Publishing Ltd., 1997**

I'm not really a fan of the cover art for this one, but my Welsh heritage gives this children's story collection a special place in my heart.

***The Arabian Nights.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974**

Like Aesop and Grimm, no fairy tale trove would be complete without the essential Arabian Nights. I remember my dad reading these to me as a little kid, mostly because he liked to show off his Arabic skills.

**Wood, Ramsay. *Kalila and Dimna: Selected Fables of Bidpai.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980**

India is the source of some of the most ancient tales, and these fit in with Aesop's fables in catering to my love of moralistic animal shorts. Some of the messages are so relevant it's hard to believe they were written thousands of years ago!