

Essay Assignments 3 & 4 **Fairy Tales**

Keeping in mind our in-class readings and discussion, compose an essay which explores fairy or folk tales. For a model, you should follow the basic format for a classical essay as discussed in class. You may pick one of the following options as the general topic of your paper.

Option 1 - The Structure of Fairy Tales

- A. Pages 373-378 of *The Classic Fairy Tales* lists models for several fairy tale types taken from the Aarne-Thompson classification system. Discuss the ways that one of the Aarne-Thompson patterns listed in the book fits one or more contemporary stories or films. To pick a different Aarne-Thompson pattern not in the book, consult: *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Trans. and enlarged by Sirth Thompson. Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, Academia Scientarum Fennica, 1961. LC GR1.F55 no. 184-186.

Difficulty level: easy.

- B. Choose a popular fairy tale such as "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow White," or "Little Red Riding Hood" and compare/contrast several of the variants of that tale. In addition to textual variations, you may want to consider how the visual details of storytelling effect how the characters are represented.

Difficulty level: easy.

Option 2 - The Child's Need for Magic

In his book *The Uses of Enchantment* (on reserve), Bruno Bettelheim argues that fairy tales are a way of transmitting unconscious role models to children; that the true fairy tale or folk tale is devised to help children through their stages of psychological growth. Write an essay in which you discuss the importance of fairy tales to today's children. You might want to consider the following questions to help get you started thinking about the topic:

- How much should we (as parents, teachers, etc.) do to encourage the child's appreciation of such stories?
- Are there any dangers in a child's belief in fairy tales?
- Are there folk and/or fairy characters or tales that were important to you in your own childhood? If so, can you remember how and why they assumed importance in your life?
- Do you recall any examples of folk or fairy tale from your childhood that frightened you?
- Is there such a thing as "creative violence," that is, violence that helps to resolve rather than heighten fears and tensions? Is this the violence of the fairy tales?

- Do you really believe Bellelheim's assertion that many of the favorite fairy tales deal with oedipal conflicts and sexuality?
- Who are the mythical heroes for today's children? Where do they come from?

Difficulty level: moderate.

Option 3 - Gender Roles

- A. Compare a tale that contains a woman as a strong, resourceful hero (such as "Hansel and Gretel"), with a tale in which the male is the traditional strong hero who "saves the day" (such as the "Jack" tales). What do these tales have in common and how are they different? Besides obvious gender differences, what distinguishes the female hero from the male hero? Hint: You may want to research Pushkin's analysis of Russian fairy tales.

Difficulty level: moderate.

- B. Compare the roles of women in a traditional tale in which the heroine has a relatively passive role (such as "Cinderella"), and a tale in which a woman is a strong, resourceful hero. Are the two characters really very different? How? What lessons are being taught in both tales?

Difficulty level: moderate.

Option 4 - Mothers and Daughters

In a number of fairy tales such as "Cinderella" and "Snow White," the maternal mother is absent and has been substituted with a stepmother and/or a witch figure. Examine the representation of the mother figure (including grandmother and stepmother figures), the witch (crone) figure, and the relationships between these figures and the daughter/protagonist in traditional fairy tales. You might focus on one particular tale, or you might look at several different tales with similar themes. Discuss your analysis in relation to:

- Jungian theories: Analyze the tales in terms of the Mother, the Shadow, or the Animus/Anima archetypes. In addition to Jung, you may want to research the work of Marie-Louis von Franz and Sybylle Birkhauser-Oerie.
- Freudian theories: Consider the arguments for and against Bettelheim's psychological interpretation of such folktales for children.
- Feminist theories: The representations of motherhood, mothers, and mother-daughter relationships have taken a central place in feminist studies. See, for example, the work of Nancy J. Chodorow, Marianne Hirsch, Shari L. Thurer, and Adrienne Rich.

You might want to consider the following questions to help get you thinking about the topic:

- Are there significant differences described, either visually or textually, in the way a daughter/protagonist relates to a mother figure or a witch figure in different versions?
- How do visual details of storytelling effect the representation of the mother figure and/or the witch (crone) figure?

- Are there specific places in the text in which a daughter/protagonist relationship with a mother/witch figure changes? Note the changes among different editions (eg. Grimm vs. Perrault).

Difficulty level: moderate-hard.

Option 5 - Disney Adaptations

Many authors and reviewers, including Jane Yolen and Jack Zipes, have written favorable and unfavorable criticism of the versions of folk tales that appear in Disney movies. Using one of these critics as a starting point, analyze Disney's treatment of "Snow White" or some other folk tale. What are the arguments for and against the "Disneyfication" of folktales for children?

Difficulty level: moderate.

Writing Requirements—Essay 3

Length: 5-7 pages.

Sources: At least three. Your sources must meet the following minimum requirements:

- At least one source must come from the course packet or from The Classic Fairy Tales.
- At least one source must come from books, magazines, or journals from the University's libraries and/or Academic Search Premier (EBSCOhost).
- Dictionaries and general purpose encyclopedias and/or Web sites (e.g. Encarta, Wikipedia, About.com, etc.) do not count toward your source requirements.
- The stories or films you use as the basis of your analysis do not count toward your source requirements for this paper.

These are, of course, the minimum requirements; you may use as many sources as are necessary to adequately explore your topic. Always keep in mind that the sources you use reflect on how seriously you approached your research, and you will be evaluated on their applicability and strength.

Due Dates: Mon. April 9: Peer draft (bring 2 copies).
Wed. April 11: Final draft.

Writing Requirements—Essay 4

Length: 10-12 pages.

Sources: At least five. Your sources must meet the following minimum requirements:

- At least one source must come from the course packet or from The Classic Fairy Tales.
- At least two sources must come from books, magazines, or journals from the University's libraries and/or Academic Search Premier (EBSCOhost).
- Dictionaries and general purpose encyclopedias and/or Web sites (e.g. Encarta, Wikipedia, About.com, etc.) do not count toward your source requirements.
- The stories or films you use as the basis of your analysis do not count toward your source requirements for this paper.

These are, of course, the minimum requirements; you may use as many sources as are necessary to adequately explore your topic. Always keep in mind that the sources you use reflect on how seriously you approached your research, and you will be evaluated on their applicability and strength.

Due Dates: Mon. April 23: Peer draft (bring 2 copies).
Mon. April 30: Final draft (in my office no later than 3:00 p.m.).

Submitting Your Work

Essays must be submitted in a plain, 2-pocket folder with your name clearly written on the outside. Plastic folders or folders containing school logos or other decorative art will not be accepted. The following items must be included inside your folder:

- Final draft of essay, stapled, in a pocket by itself.
- First draft of essay I reviewed (if applicable).
- Completed Peer Evaluation Forms.
- Essay Grade Sheet (available in the "Notes & Forms" section of this Web site).

Penalties: Failure to turn in a peer draft on the due date will result in a one half letter grade penalty on your final paper. Failure to turn in peer evaluations on the due date will result in a one half letter grade penalty on your final paper. If late, your final draft will be docked one half letter grade for being late, then another half grade for each calendar day it's late.

Grading Criteria

When assigning grades, I reserve "A" for exceptional papers; you do not get an "A" simply by addressing the topic in a standard way and avoiding mechanical errors. (See the "Course Policies" section of the Web site for a more complete description of grading policies.)

I will assess you in the following three areas:

Invention

Introduction and Thesis: Are these components of your essay clearly written, easily identifiable, and effective in presenting the topic, providing direction to the paper as a whole, and discussing the significance of the topic?

Accuracy, Wording, and Research: Have you used the required outside sources to support your argument, and when using these sources, do you express their concepts fairly and accurately? NOTE: Failure to meet research requirements may result in an 'E' for the essay. Have you integrated quotes smoothly? If you are paraphrasing, do you use your own words yet still remain faithful to the author's original meaning? Have you expressed your ideas clearly and concisely? Is the essay in your own words?

Lines of Argument: Have you clearly and extensively defined necessary terms? Have you illustrated your criteria with specific examples and, if necessary, contrasting examples? Have you established ethical, logical, and emotional reasons (evidence) in support of your thesis, in order of importance?

Revision: Are there substantial changes between the draft and final versions of the essay? Does your final version meet the length requirements?

Organization

Beginning: Have you followed the organizational plan discussed in class? Have you offered an introduction in which you explain the issue and show why it is relevant? Have you presented a clear thesis that guides and unifies the essay?

Middle: Are your paragraphs focused and well developed? Do your paragraphs contain topic sentences? Have you revised for clarity and worked on eliminating wordy, unclear, and/or repetitive areas in your essay? Have you included transitional words between sentences and paragraphs to make your ideas flow more smoothly?

End: Do you offer a conclusion which does more than merely repeat your major ideas?

Style

Format: Does your paper adhere to MLA format, including font and point size? Have you correctly cited from your sources and inserted a parenthetical citation after each quote? Have you introduced the quote in an effective way? Have you correctly used MLA formatting and included a "Works Cited" page? NOTE: Failure to observe proper MLA format may result in a zero (0) style grade.

Tone: Is your tone appropriate for the chosen audience?

Grammar/Sentences: Is your paper free from grammatical errors such as sentence fragments, fused sentences, comma splices, mixed constructions, apostrophe errors, subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent disagreement? Is the essay free from spelling errors? NOTE: Five (5) or more grammar/sentence errors may result in a zero (0) style grade.