

The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm Study Guide

**The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm by
Brothers Grimm**

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The Frog-King, or Iron Henry

The Frog-King, or Iron Henry Summary

A princess promises to befriend a frog to get her ball back. Once she has what she wants, the girl leaves the frog behind. The king finds out about the princess's broken promise and makes her be friends with the frog. The frog turns into a prince whom she marries. As the couple rides in a carriage to the prince's kingdom, they hear a cracking noise made by iron bands that surround the heart of the prince's coachman. The coachman had the bands put around his heart to keep it from bursting from grief when the prince was turned into a frog.

The Frog-King, or Iron Henry Analysis

This story teaches that a person should be careful to keep the promises he makes. First, don't make a promise that can't be kept. Next, even if the results of a promise may seem unappetizing, there may be an unseen reward associated with keeping a promise.



Cat and Mouse in Partnership

Cat and Mouse in Partnership Summary

A cat and mouse set up housekeeping together. To be prepared for hard times they purchase a pot of fat which they store in the safety of a church. The cat devises a scheme to leave the house and have some of the fat for herself. She leaves the house three times under pretense of going to a christening. Actually, she makes three visits to the fat pot and eats all of the fat. When the cat and mouse go to the church to eat their fat they find the fat pot empty. When the mouse confronts the cat, the cat eats the mouse.

Cat and Mouse in Partnership Analysis

This story gives readers a warning about who they should and shouldn't trust. Cats and mice are natural enemies, so a friendship between the two is not a common sight. Instead of being suspicious of the cat, however, the mouse does not catch onto the cat's deceit until it is too late. Note also the symbolic use of the three christenings.



Our Lady's Child

Our Lady's Child Summary

A child is adopted by the Virgin Mary but she is sent back to earth after she lies to Mary. She marries a king. The couple has three children, each of which is taken away because the girl will not admit her lie. Just as she is about to be killed, the girl admits her fault and her children are given back to her.

Our Lady's Child Analysis

This story teaches a valuable lesson about telling the truth as well as the dangers of pride. The girl's original sin is that she opened the thirteenth door. Her pride keeps the girl from happiness and almost causes her death. Note the use of the symbolic number of three. There are three parts of the trinity. Also, as the Virgin Mary asks the girl three times if she lied just as Jesus asks Peter three times if Peter loves Him.



Story of a Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was

Story of a Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was Summary

This is the story of a young, mentally handicapped boy who is fascinated with other people's ability to shudder and react to fear, a reaction which he does not understand. He goes through a variety of trials meant to make him feel fear, but he does not respond properly to any of them. It is not until his wife pours fish on his back that he is able to shudder as he wishes.

Story of a Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was Analysis

Because of the imagery and supernatural happenings in this story it has a surreal, almost dream-like feel to it. Through his life, the ability to feel fear has been the boy's one great desire. The story teaches that if a person wants something badly enough and sets their mind to go after it, they will accomplish the goal, even if what they desire seems insignificant to others. In this case, the boy's hunt for his dream brought him riches and a happy life as extras.

The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids

The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids Summary

A wolf tricks seven kids into letting it into their house. The wolf eats all of the kids except one. The mother goat returns to find only one kid alive. The mother goat seeks out the wolf who is sleeping his meal off. She sees movement in the wolf's belly and cuts the belly open. All six kids jump out alive and well. The mother goat then instructs the kids to find rocks, which she sews up in the wolf's belly. The wolf wakes up thirsty. When he tries to get something to drink, the weight of the rocks pulls him into the well where he drowns.

The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids Analysis

This is a typical trickster gets tricked story. In an attempt to fill his stomach, a wolf tricks seven kids into thinking he is their mother. In a turn of events, however, he swallows the kids whole and the mother is able to cut them out of the wolf's belly alive. Note the typical unrealistic nature of the fairy tale where the mother is able to cut open the wolf's belly without him feeling the cutting or waking up.



Faithful John

Faithful John Summary

A faithful servant takes care of his master by getting for him the maiden he wants as well as keeping him safe. However, the master does not completely trust his servant and the servant is turned to stone. Only after the master sacrifices his own children is the servant restored. The children are also brought back to life.

Faithful John Analysis

This story teaches the lesson of trusting others. Although faithful John had always been trustworthy, the king does not trust his motives when this trust matters most. In order to undo his lack of trust in John, the king must sacrifice his own children to bring John back to life. In return for his ability to take this step of faith and sacrifice his children, the king is rewarded by not only getting his faithful servant back but also getting his children back. Consider the symbolism of the three ravens and the three drops of blood.

The Good Bargain

The Good Bargain Summary

A dumb peasant loses out each time he tries to earn himself some money. Although a Jew and soldier plan to trick the peasant out of a reward from the king, the peasant actually outsmarts them both through dumb luck.

The Good Bargain Analysis

This is the story of one person's stroke of good luck. The peasant earns money and a good coat as a reward for his ability to outsmart both a Jew and a king. The story bears the common marks of a fairy tale, as it includes talking animals as well as a king and princess.



The Strange Musician

The Strange Musician Summary

A musician alone in a forest decides to find a companion for himself. He does this by playing his fiddle. The first three creatures the musician meets are not the companions he wants so he tricks them and leaves them. The wolf sets all these companions free and they go looking for the musician. A wood cutter is fascinated by the musician's playing, and with ax in hand, goes closer to hear the music. As the wood cutter is listening, the wolf, fox, and hare approach the musician and the wood cutter feels they plan to do the musician harm. The wood cutter jumps between the animals and musician, and tells the animals if they hurt the musician they will have to deal with him. The animals run away into the woods. The musician plays the wood cutter one more song of gratitude, and then goes on his way.

The Strange Musician Analysis

It is hard to understand the moral of this story. It seems the musician is the bad guy in the story as he tricks several animals into being captive simply because they were not the companions he desired. In the end, however, the musician is protected and freed from the animals' revenge. It does not seem right this cruel man was not punished for his wrongdoing.



The Twelve Brothers

The Twelve Brothers Summary

After thirteen sons, a king has a daughter. He has threatened to kill all of his sons if the new child was female, so all of his sons have gone into hiding. As the girl grows up she learns about her brothers and goes in search of them. She finds her brothers but picks twelve enchanted flowers, which causes the boys to turn into ravens. The sister must not speak or laugh for seven years for her brothers to be turned back into humans. Her mother-in-law convinces the girl's husband to have the girl put to death. Just as she is about to be burned at the stake, the seven years expires and her brothers rescue her.

The Twelve Brothers Analysis

This is a story of the love that can develop between siblings even when these siblings aren't raised together. Supernatural effects include the transformation of the brothers into ravens as well as their retransformation into humans after their sister's seven years of silence.



The Pack of Ragamuffins

The Pack of Ragamuffins Summary

A group of unlikely companions decides to spend the night at an inn. They promise to pay the innkeeper, but instead of doing so, they make mischief. The innkeeper swears never to let such a strange group stay at his inn again.

The Pack of Ragamuffins Analysis

In this story, the innkeeper learns a very valuable lesson about taking in groups of people who he does not trust. As he had suspected, the group was up to no good. They used his space, ate his food, and left only mean tricks in return.

Brother and Sister

Brother and Sister Summary

A brother and sister run away from their evil stepmother. The boy is turned into a deer when he drinks from a brook enchanted by his stepmother. The two stay in a house in the woods until they are discovered by a king. He marries the sister and the deer goes to live in the palace with them. Learning of her stepchildren's good luck, the stepmother kills the sister. The sister's ghost visits the palace and is seen by the king. The king brings the real queen back to life and has the stepmother burned at the stake. As she dies, the roe turns back into the brother.

Brother and Sister Analysis

In the tradition of the fairy tale, this story includes the elements of the supernatural. These elements include a wicked stepmother who is able to bewitch a brook and is also able to change the look of a person. Despite the trials of their life, the children prevail over their evil stepmother and gain happiness and wealth. Also note the use of the symbolism of three as the brother goes to three brooks before he drinks. Also, the queen visits the nursery three times before she will not return

Rapunzel

Rapunzel Summary

Because a man steals rampion from a witch's garden, he and his wife are forced to give their new baby to the witch. The witch raises the child as her own. At the age of twelve, the child is locked in a tower with no doors or stairs. A prince hears Rapunzel singing and makes a plan to rescue her from the tower and marry her. The witch learns of the plan had has Rapunzel banished to a desert. The witch confronts the prince and in his fear, he jumps from the tower and his eyes are put out. By fate, Rapunzel and her prince are reunited. Her tears heal his eyes.

Rapunzel Analysis

This is a typical fairy tale in the sense that good eventually wins out over evil. The witch, or enchantress, in the story obviously has a problem with people taking things from her as she punishes the man who takes plants from her garden by taking away his baby. She again tries to keep Rapunzel to herself by locking her in tower, but the king's son finds a way around this. The supernatural is addressed in this story as Rapunzel's hair is strong enough for a man to climb up and not break. The idea of tears healing a wound is also farfetched and unrealistic.



The Three Little Men in the Wood

The Three Little Men in the Wood Summary

A stepmother is cruel to her stepdaughter and makes her go out to pick strawberries in the middle of winter. The stepdaughter meets three men who bless her and help her. The girl's stepsister is jealous and wants to be blessed also. She visits the men but they curse her instead of blessing her. The stepdaughter marries a king. The jealous stepsister and stepmother arrange to have the new queen killed. The king learns of the scheme and brings the queen back to life. He has the stepsister and stepmother killed.

The Three Little Men in the Wood Analysis

This is another good versus evil story in which the good daughter is rewarded and the bad one ultimately punished for her evil ways. It teaches children there is a reward for being nice, kind, and doing what they are told even when they are taking orders from someone who is not nice and kind. Also note the heavy use of the magical number three in this story.

The Three Spinners

The Three Spinners Summary

A woman has a lazy daughter who will not spin. She beats her daughter so that her cries are heard by a queen. The queen asks the mother why she is beating her daughter. The mother claims it is because her daughter won't stop spinning. The queen begs the daughter to be allowed to come to the palace and spin for her. The girl is taken to the palace where she is shown three rooms full of flax. After the girl has spun all of this flax, she will be allowed to marry the queen's son. Three strange women one, with a broad, flat foot, one a drooping lip, and one an oversized thumb offer to do the spinning if she will invite them to her wedding. Later at the wedding, the girl's husband asks the three women how they came to have such deformities. They blame their deformities on spinning. Because the man does not want his wife look like these women, he insists that his new wife not spin anymore.

The Three Spinners Analysis

This story seems rather backward in its form of a moral. Although it was not necessarily the girl who lied about her ability to spin, the girl is caught in a situation where she can be rewarded by the queen for an ability she does not have. The girl does keep her word to the three lady spinners and invites them to her wedding. It is their appearance that convinces her new husband that his wife no longer needs to spin and frees the girl from having to admit she does not know how to spin.



Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel Summary

A stepmother convinces her husband to abandon their children in the forest. The first time they find their way back home. The second time they find their way to the house of a witch who tries to eat Hansel. Gretel kills the witch by locking her in an oven. The two find their way back to their father's house.

Hansel and Gretel Analysis

Fairy tale motifs used in this story include the wicked stepmother . There is also a witch who is mean and cruel. Before turning into this mean and cruel witch, the witch disguises herself as a kind old lady who wants to help the children. Parents often use this story as a way to demonstrate to their children why they should not talk to or trust strangers.



The Three Snake-Leaves

The Three Snake-Leaves Summary

A young man marries a princess who insists that when she dies, her husband must agree to be buried alive with her in her tomb. She dies and the man does as she has requested. He discovers three leaves that bring his wife back to life. After this experience the woman does not love the man as she once did. She plans to have her husband killed and marry another man. The first husband tells the princess' father of her plan and he has the princess and her new love put to death.

The Three Snake-Leaves Analysis

This story borders on the mystic, as it includes leaves which have the power to bring the dead back to life. The story teaches that if a person is not capable to following through with a promise, they should not make this promise. This is illustrated not only by the wife's unwillingness to be buried with her husband, but also by her intention of killing her husband in order for her to be with someone else.



The White Snake

The White Snake Summary

A servant samples a king's secret dish one day. The food, a white snake, gives him the ability to hear the conversations of animals. This skill allows him to solve the mystery of the queen's missing ring. In exchange, the servant is allowed to go out and see the world. While exploring, the servant meets a princess, on whom he uses his special skills to win her hand and heart in marriage.

The White Snake Analysis

A man's magical ability to hear the conversations of animals first saves his life then allows him to marry above his rank. Note the use of the symbolic three in the story. The servant is met by three different types of animals and is given three different tests.



The Straw, the Coal and the Bean

The Straw, the Coal and the Bean Summary

An old woman cooks some beans she has gathered. One bean, one piece of straw, and one burning coal escape and meet on the floor. The three run away together. They come to a creek over which there is no bridge. The straw offers to lie across the creek while the others use him as a bridge. The coal starts across but then becomes afraid halfway across and stops. The hot coal burns the straw in half and the two fall into the creek and drown. The bean laughs so hard at his companions that it bursts. A nearby tailor sews the bean back together with black thread.

The Straw, the Coal and the Bean Analysis

This story is an example of a fairy tale that is used to explain a phenomenon found in nature. This particular story explains why beans have a black seam.



The Fisherman and His Wife

The Fisherman and His Wife Summary

A fisherman catches an enchanted flounder that gives him and his wife a new house. The wife soon becomes unhappy with her house and wants a bigger one. The fish grants her this wish. This happens several times. The woman eventually wishes to be like God. The fish grants this wish also and puts her back in her pig-sty.

The Fisherman and His Wife Analysis

This story is basically a story of greed. It carries a warning not to be greedy. What begins as a desire to better her condition leads the woman in the story down a trail on which she becomes greedier and greedier. The woman's last desire to be like God places her back in her pig-sty. Most people do not realize that a desire to be like God should be a desire for lowliness and humility.



The Valiant Little Tailor

The Valiant Little Tailor Summary

A tailor manages to kill seven flies in one swat. He is so proud of his achievement that he sews himself a girdle with the claim written on the fabric. This claim gives the tailor the upper hand in many adventures and he eventually marries the king's daughter. When the princess learns her husband is only a tailor she plots to have him killed. He again uses his status as a mighty killer to scare off his opponents.

The Valiant Little Tailor Analysis

The moral of this story is that brawn is not always better than brains. In this story the tiny tailor outwits a band of giants, a unicorn, and a wild boar to become and remain a king.



Cinderella

Cinderella Summary

Cinderella is forced to stay at home while her stepmother and stepsisters attend a festival where the prince will choose a wife. Cinderella sneaks to the festival. The prince is enchanted by her and will dance only with her; however, he does not know who she is. He arranges for her to leave a shoe behind so he can seek her out. With the help of this shoe, he finds his true love and the two are married.

Cinderella Analysis

Here we have the typical wicked stepmother and stepsisters taking advantage of the true daughter. As is common in fairy tales, Cinderella is saved from her wicked step-family by the king's son who takes her as his wife. There are also instances of darkness and cruelty as the mother instructs her children to mutilate their feet in order for the slipper to fit.



The Riddle

The Riddle Summary

After an experience with a witch, a king's son devises a riddle which a princess can not answer. Although she has promised to marry the man who presents her with a riddle she can not solve, the princess tricks the king's son into giving her the answer to the riddle. Instead of marrying the princess, the son is set to be put to death. He is able to prove the princess tricked him and is saved. In the end he marries the princess.

The Riddle Analysis

A combination of luck and intelligence keeps this prince safe and ultimately makes him a king. The prince is lucky because he is not injured by the witch or her dangerous drink. The prince uses his intelligence when he comes up with the riddle for the princess, then keeps her mantle when she tries to get information out of the price about the answer to the riddle. Like most other fairy tales, this story includes the sacred number three with the princess having three days to figure the answer to the prince's riddle.



The Mouse, the Bird and the Sausage

The Mouse, the Bird and the Sausage Summary

A mouse, a bird, and a sausage live together. The sausage is in charge of the cooking, the bird is in charge of fetching wood, and the mouse is the head of fetching water, setting the table, and lighting the fire. In speaking with a fellow bird, the bird becomes convinced that his life is not as good as he once thought. The bird decides to change up duties with his housemates. In the end, the mouse, bird, and sausage are all killed because of this change in duties.

The Mouse, the Bird and the Sausage Analysis

Like many fairy tales, this story teaches a moral. Once a person has a good thing going, they should stick with this plan instead of trying to make changes.



Mother Holle

Mother Holle Summary

A mother makes her stepdaughter jump into the well after the girl accidentally drops her shuttle into the well. The girl wakes in a large meadow where she does work that needs to be done. Finally she comes to the house of a little old woman. The girl stays and works for this woman until realizes she is sad and missing her home. Mother Holle leads the girl to a large door, hands her the shuttle, and then showers the girl with a gold covering. The mother's daughter wants to be blessed as well, so she jumps into the well also. This girl, however, does not do the work that needs to be done, and in the end Mother Holle showers this girl with pitch instead of gold.

Mother Holle Analysis

This story teaches the lesson that doing good work will ultimately be rewarded, while those who do bad work and don't attend to their jobs will be punished. Like many other fairy tales, one of the main characters is a stepdaughter who is treated badly by her stepmother. Also central to the story is the unrealistic idea that a person could fall down a well and not be killed.

The Seven Ravens

The Seven Ravens Summary

Because he is angry with his sons for taking so long in bringing back water for his daughter's baptism, a father wishes his sons were ravens. His wish is granted. As the girl grows up she feels responsible for her brothers' being turned into ravens. She searches them out and they are reunited. The spell is broken and the boys are transformed back into humans.

The Seven Ravens Analysis

This is a story of the power of love and of family. Although the sister does not know her brothers, she feels responsible for what has happened to them and feels she must make the situation right again. The sister is willing to go out on her own and save her brothers. Again in the motif of the supernatural the girl travels to both the sun and moon, which is physically impossible.



Little Red-Cap

Little Red-Cap Summary

A girl is distracted by a wolf on her way to her grandmother's house. He learns her plans and goes to the grandmother's house where he eats the grandmother. When the girl arrives at the house, the wolf eats her also. A man passing by saves the grandmother and her granddaughter from the wolf's belly. The next time a wolf tries to distract the girl, she will not listen to him. She instead goes to her grandmother's house where she and her grandmother trick the wolf and the wolf is killed.

Little Red-Cap Analysis

"Little Red-Cap" is a warning to children to listen to and obey their parents. Although the girl's mother warned her not to wander off the path, the girl does so anyway and puts both her grandmother and herself in danger. The girl has obviously learned her lesson as the next time an attempt is made to distract the girl from her duties, she does not allow herself to be drawn away. The story can also be seen as a way to convince children that it is not safe to talk to strangers no matter how kind or friendly they seem.

The Bremen Town-Musicians

The Bremen Town-Musicians Summary

A group of four animals decide to go the Bremen and be town musicians. On their way, they scare a band of robbers out of their house. The animals decide they like the house and live there the rest of their lives.

The Bremen Town-Musicians Analysis

This story is one told for pure enjoyment. There is really no discernible moral or lesson to be learned from it. It does, however, follow the general pattern of the fairy tale. The unnatural idea of animals becoming town musicians is paired with the idea that animals can talk and communicate with one another in a human way.



The Singing Bone

The Singing Bone Summary

One brother is killed by another in jealousy after the youngest brother manages to kill a wild boar. Years later, a shepherd sees a bone lying beneath the same bridge where the brother was killed. The bone begins to sing. It sings the story of the murder of the younger brother by the elder. The shepherd takes the bone to the king, who has the elder brother put to death and the younger brother's bones dug up and buried in a beautiful tomb.

The Singing Bone Analysis

This story has an uncanny similarity to the story of Cain and Able in the Bible. Both these stories tell of a pair of brothers who are in competition with each other. When one brother earns the prize in each story, this brother is killed by the other. In both stories the death of the innocent brother is avenged by God.



The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs

The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs Summary

A king tries desperately to kill a child who is prophesied to marry the king's daughter. The king finally sends the boy to pluck three golden hairs from the devil's head, a feat he feels the boy cannot perform. Not only does the boy return with the hairs, he also brings back riches from other kingdoms that he helped along the way. The greedy king wants treasure of his own so he also goes to visit the devil. However, he is tricked into taking the place of a ferrier and is forced to row back and forth across a river the rest of his life.

The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs Analysis

This is another story that teaches that once a person is deemed worthy of good things, there is little one can do to ruin this prophesy. Although the king tried three times to kill the boy who was destined to marry the princess, three times his plans were foiled. Also note this story makes use of the magical three. There are three questions, three golden hairs, and three attempts to murder the boy.



The Louse and the Flea

The Louse and the Flea Summary

In this story the accidental burning of a louse sets off a chain of events which ultimately concludes with a spring overflowing its banks and destroying everything.

The Louse and the Flea Analysis

This nonsense little story combines both prose and poetry to tell a tale of the ultimate destruction that can come when one person overeats to a situation.



The Girl Without Hands

The Girl Without Hands Summary

A man is tricked by the devil and promises his daughter to the devil. The daughter, however, is so pure the devil can have nothing to do with her. He hopes to make the daughter unclean by having her hands cut off. This ploy does not work and he is forced to leave her alone. The girl goes out into the world where she is married to a king. The devil again interferes and the queen is sent away because it is believed the king wants her dead. She goes to the house of an angel where she is allowed to stay for free. After learning she is not dead, her husband the king finds her and her son there. During the time she was away, her hands have miraculously regrown.

The Girl Without Hands Analysis

This story tells the power of good in an evil world. Although this girl was promised to the devil, she kept herself pure and overcame his original scheme. Even though the devil continues to try to cause problems for the girl and her son throughout her life, circumstance prevail where the girl ultimately wins in any situation. There are also references to the girl being guarded by a physical angel of God, a miraculous occurrence that hasn't happened since times of the Bible.



Clever Hans

Clever Hans Summary

A man goes six times to visit his suitor. Each time he brings her nothing, but rather demands a gift from her. The man either loses or destroys each gift. His mother instructs Hans how he should have treated the gift, and Hans tries to follow her advice. After misunderstanding his mother's advice to "cast friendly eyes" on Gretel, Gretel runs away and will have nothing more to do with Hans.

Clever Hans Analysis

This tale is almost a riddle that must be figured out. The title of the story is in itself an oxymoron. Hans is not clever but instead stays one step behind through the entire story. In the end, the boy takes literally what his mother says when she tells him he should "cast friendly eyes" on the girl. Instead of looking at her kindly, he cuts the eyes from the family livestock and throws them at the girl, who understandably runs away.



The Three Languages

The Three Languages Summary

A count sends his son three times to learn with a private master. Each time the boy learns only the language of an animal. The first time the animal is a dog, the second a frog, and the third the birds. The count disowns the boy and sends him away. One night the boy stops at a castle where he finds a hidden treasure because he knows the language of the dog. The boy finds the treasure and the king adopts the boy as his own son. Eventually, the boy becomes pope. Although he doesn't know the prayers or masses, the birds sit on his shoulders and repeat to him what he should say.

The Three Languages Analysis

Here a father disowns his son for learning things that the father considers useless. These useless talents, however, win the boy favor with a king and a place as a pope. The moral of the story is to consider carefully what talents and abilities are useless and which are useful. All abilities have their place in this world.



Clever Elsie

Clever Elsie Summary

Although he originally believes his intended to be clever, Hans learns she is lazy. As a result, he tricks her into believing she is not herself. She goes into the woods and is never heard from again.

Clever Elsie Analysis

The title of this story is misleading in that the girl in the story is really not clever at all. Hans thinks he has gotten a real jewel until he learns her true nature.



The Tailor in Heaven

The Tailor in Heaven Summary

A lame tailor seeks entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Peter instructs the tailor to sit quietly. Instead of following orders, the tailor looks about heaven and cannot resist the urge to sit in the Lord's seat. From this seat the tailor can see everything on earth, including a old woman in the act of stealing two veils. In his anger the tailor throws down the Lord's golden footstool. The tailor goes back behind the door. The Lord asks Peter what has happened to his footstool. The tailor admits he threw the footstool. The Lord tells the tailor the no one has the right to judge except the Lord Himself. If He acted the way the tailor had, the Lord says, there would be no furniture at all in heaven. The Lord banishes the tailor from heaven.

The Tailor in Heaven Analysis

This story teaches the dangers of judging the actions of others. Only the Lord is worthy of bringing judgment upon His people. All others should mind their own business.



The Wishing Table, the Gold-Ass, and the Cudgel in the Sack

The Wishing Table, the Gold-Ass, and the Cudgel in the Sack Summary

Three sons are given magical gifts by their masters when they finish learning a trade. These gifts are used to help the sons' family and friends become rich.

The Wishing Table, the Gold-Ass, and the Cudgel in the Sack Analysis

This is a story where good wins out over evil. Though they are unfairly punished once and embarrassed once, all three sons are eventually vindicated. They are also rewarded with by riches.



Thumbling

Thumbling Summary

The minute boy of a man and woman has various adventures after his father sells him. Through his own quick thinking, the boy is returned safely to his home and the father promises not to sell him again.

Thumbling Analysis

The idea of this story is that ability is not determined by size. Although Thumbling is not big in size, he accomplishes some big feats, which include driving his father's horses, getting his parents riches, and saving a preacher from a robber.



The Wedding of Mrs. Fox

The Wedding of Mrs. Fox Summary

A fox believes his wife is cheating on him, so he pretends to be dead. Several wooers visit the "widow" fox, but she will see none except the one with nine tails like her former husband. As she is about to remarry, the first husband comes back to life. Later the old fox really dies. Again the widow fox has many suitors but she will settle only for the one with red stockings and a red pointed mouth. When she finds this one, she marries him with great joy.

The Wedding of Mrs. Fox Analysis

This story is split into two stories. One covers the first fake "death" of the husband fox. This death is a trick the fox devises to catch his wife in the act of adultery. In the second story the husband fox really dies and the woman is at last able to marry a new husband and leave behind her thoughtless husband. This story is written with a combination of prose and poetry.



The Elves

The Elves Summary

First story - A group of elves mysteriously help a shoemaker. The shoemaker rewards them with clothing and they are never seen again.

Second story - A servant girl is invited by the elves to be godmother. The servant goes to the christening. When she returns to her place of employment the people there don't know her. It turns out she was actually gone seven years instead of three days.

Third story - A mother's baby is taken away by elves and a changeling left in its place. The woman is instructed to boil water in an eggshell to bring her baby back. As the woman boils the water in the shell, the baby is brought back to her.

The Elves Analysis

These three related stories all involve elves. In the first story the elves help the shoemaker with his business. In the second, a servant girl is made a godmother to an elf baby but loses her job when she returns to her job seven years later. Finally, a woman's baby is taken away by elves, but ultimately brought back.

The Robber Bridegroom

The Robber Bridegroom Summary

The daughter of a miller is promised in marriage to a suitor. The daughter is afraid of her betrothed, but she visits his house. She learns he is actually a killer. When the maiden returns home, she tells her father what she learned at the suitor's house. The wedding is held as planned and as all the guests sit at the table, they are asked to tell a story. The bride tells the story of what happened to her at the murderer's house. Realizing he has been found out, the murderer tries to leave, but the guests apprehend him.

The Robber Bridegroom Analysis

This is another story of an outsmarting, this time on the part of a bride. This is a very dark tale as it talks about cutting a person up as well as killing this person. The story does not provide ideal material for a bedtime story.



Herr Korbes

Herr Korbes Summary

A hen, cock, millstone, cat, duck, egg, needle, and pen travel to the home of Herr Korbes. They arrive to find he is not at home, but set themselves up around the house. When Herr Korbes does arrive home, he is attacked by each of his visitors and then finally killed when the millstone drops on him.

Herr Korbes Analysis

Wicked people should take care when they return home because they don't know who might be waiting for them. In this case Herr, Korbes is killed when a millstone falls on him. The moral is that wicked people will eventually get the punishment they deserve.



The Godfather

The Godfather Summary

A man with many children learns he is to pick the first person who comes to him at the city gates as the next godfather. This person agrees to be godfather and gives the man a glass of water that can be used to heal dying people. The godfather instructs that if death is standing at the person's head, the water will cure them, if death is standing at the person's feet, the water will not cure them. The man becomes so famous with his water that even the king asks for the man to come and heal his sons. One day the man goes to tell the godfather about the success he has had with the water. The man enters the godfather's house to find all sorts of strange things. The man questions the godfather about the strange things he has seen and the godfather tries to explain away each thing. The man becomes so alarmed that he runs away and escapes any danger the godfather might have done to him.

The Godfather Analysis

The unusual story is told mainly for entertainment purposes. The story is based on the magic of water that will heal a dying person as well as a godfather that might or might not be the devil.



Frau Trude

Frau Trude Summary

A girl is forbidden by her parents to visit the house of Frau Trude. The girl goes anyway and finds herself in fear when she looks in the window and sees the devil himself. Frau Trude knows the girl has seen her as she really is. For this reason, the girl is turned into a block of wood.

Frau Trude Analysis

This is simply a story to teach children to be more mindful of and obedient toward their parents.



Godfather Death

Godfather Death Summary

A man seeks a godfather for his thirteenth child. Death proposes to be godfather, a proposal the father accepts because death makes all people equal. The godfather gives his godson a gift of an herb that will cure people. The godson misuses these herbs twice and death takes the godson to a cave beneath the earth and shows him the light of men's lives. Although the godson pleads for his life, godfather death fumbles his light and the godson dies.

Godfather Death Analysis

This story is very similar to the content of the story "The Godfather." This story, however, has a more defined moral than the other godfather story. This tale describes the consequences of disobeying and misusing the gifts given to a person.



Thumbling's Travels

Thumbling's Travels Summary

Thumbling, a thumb-sized man, goes out into the world. Thumbling stays at a tailor's house where he complains so about the food that he is run out of the house. Next, he helps a band of robbers steal the contents of a king's treasure room. Finally Thumbling hires himself out as a servant. Because he irritates the maid, she feeds him to a cow. The cow is butchered and Thumbling makes it out of his scrape alive. Finally, Thumbling is almost eaten by a fox but averts this tragedy by telling the fox it can eat the chickens in Thumbling's father's yard instead.

Thumbling's Travels Analysis

This story is very similar to the one found in the tale "Thumbling." Both stories feature the same thumb-sized main character. In both stories, the main character is eaten by a cow and falls in with a group of robbers. Thumbling, however, acts differently in each of the stories. In one he assists the robbers, while in the other, he foils the robbers' plans. Again, note unlikely circumstance of the little man being eaten alive by a cow but in reality not damaged.



Fitcher's Bird

Fitcher's Bird Summary

In this tale a wizard transforms himself into a beggar so that he can kidnap and kill young girls. He is outsmarted by a man's daughter, who not only saves her sisters but also saves herself. The wizard is locked in his house by the girl's family and the house is set on fire.

Fitcher's Bird Analysis

This is another story where one of the characters outsmarts another to save herself and her family. As in most of the other stories, this tale contains aspects of the supernatural, with dead people coming back to life as well as an egg that will not come clean.



The Juniper Tree

The Juniper Tree Summary

A boy is killed by his stepmother. In an attempt to cover up the murder, the woman bakes the boy into a pudding and feeds the boy to his father. The boy's sister collects his bones, and as she cries over them they become a bird which flies away. The bird kills the stepmother by dropping a millstone on her. The bird is turned back into a boy and he, his sister, and his father live together happily.

The Juniper Tree Analysis

In true fairy tale fashion this story features a mean stepmother who kills her stepchild, cuts him up and feeds him to the boy's father. Also in the fairy tale tradition the boy comes back to life as a bird that ultimately gets revenge on his mean stepmother.



Old Sultan

Old Sultan Summary

A farmer prepares to kill his old dog who has lost all of his teeth and is no longer useful. The dog and wolf come up with a plan for the wolf to pretend to steal the farmer's baby. The dog will bring the baby back so that the dog will be honored for his bravery. In return, the wolf wants to steal a sheep. The dog will not allow this theft. The wolf sets up a challenge between the dog and a wild boar. The dog can find no other ally but a three-legged cat. The wolf and boar believe the cat's tail is a saber and the noise the feline makes as it hops on its three legs is the noise of someone stooping to pick up stones to throw. The wolf and boar are frightened and hide from the harmless pair. Once the wolf realizes it is only a cat and dog that have scared him so badly, he is ashamed and renews his friendship with the dog.

Old Sultan Analysis

Animals with the ability to talk not only with each other but also with humans are the main characters in this story. The story teaches the morals of the value of friendship, the need to stand up for one's self when someone is trying to do something that is wrong, and that the stronger do not always triumph.



The Six Swans

The Six Swans Summary

A king hides his children from his new wife. She finds the children and turns the children into swans. The girl escapes the curse and saves her brothers from their curse.

The Six Swans Analysis

This fairy tale combines several common elements. These include a wicked stepmother and a witch along with a spell which must have certain conditions met before the spell can be broken. Morals taught by this story include the value of family as well as the need for trust.



Little Briar-Rose

Little Briar-Rose Summary

Upon the birth of their daughter a king and queen give a feast. They invite only twelve of the thirteen Wise Women in the kingdom. The thirteenth one is left out because they do not have enough plates. As the Wise Women are blessing the child, the thirteenth woman shows up and places a curse upon the child. At the age of fifteen years old the child will prick herself with the spindle of a spinning wheel and die. All the guests are in shock at this curse but the twelfth Wise Woman has not blessed the child yet. She is not able to undo the curse but softens it by saying the child will not die but only sleep for 100 years. The curse comes to pass and the entire castle falls into a deep sleep. The castle is grown over with a thorny hedge through which no man can pass. Just as the curse is about to expire a young man comes to the kingdom who hears of the sleeping princess. He believes he is the one who will be able to break through the hedge and rescue her. When he reaches the palace he find the thorny hedge is in full bloom and the branches part to let him through. He finds the sleeping princess in the castle and as kisses her, the entire palace comes back to life. The two are married.

Little Briar-Rose Analysis

This is a story of magic and spells. It tells of a beautiful princess that is rescued by her charming prince. Actually, the only thing this prince had that others didn't was timing. He just happened to be in the right place at the right time. The moral of this story might be that if you plan to hold a feast, don't leave important guests out just because you don't have enough flatware. Save yourself the embarrassment and buy more plates!



Fundevogel

Fundevogel Summary

A forester adopts a boy whom he finds abandoned in the top of a tree. The forester raises him with his own daughter, Lina. One day Lina sees the cook bring in a larger than normal amount of water. Lina questions the cook and learns the cook plans to boil Lina's brother. Lina tells her brother of the plan and the two run away together. Three times the cook sends servants to search for the children. Three times they are saved by turning into other objects. The final time the children turn into a pond and a duck. As the cook is lying down to drink from the pond, the duck grabs her head and drowns her.

Fundevogel Analysis

The element of the supernatural occurs in this story with the children being able to transform themselves into any object they desire. Also note the use of the symbolic three. The cook sends three servants after the children. They also seek the children three times before the cook is killed.



King Thrushbeard

King Thrushbeard Summary

A king has a daughter who is beautiful but proud and haughty. She is of marrying age, but has found no one who suits her. One by one she degrades and humiliates all of the suitors including one to whom her comments give the name King Thrushbeard.

Because of her behavior the father marries her to a beggar who comes to their house.

The beggar takes away the princess as his wife. They walk through a beautiful countryside all of which the fiddler tells her belongs to King Thrushbeard. The girl begins to bemoan her fate and wish she had been nicer to the king. After many attempts, she finally gets a job at the palace as a kitchen maid. One day she helps prepare for the wedding of the king's son. As she watches, King Thrushbeard sees her in the doorway and thinks her so beautiful he wants to dance with her. She tries to run away but is confronted by King Thrushbeard. He reveals that he was the beggar. The king was trying to teach the girl a lesson about her haughty spirit. The lesson is learned and the two are wed.

King Thrushbeard Analysis

In this story the prideful princess is taught a lesson in humility by one of her suitors. The story is also one of disguises as the king turns himself both into a beggar and a drunken man in order to make his point clear to the princess.



Little Snow-White

Little Snow-White Summary

A queen gives birth to a daughter named Snow-White. The queen dies in childbirth and the king remarries an evil woman. The step-mother has an enchanted mirror which tells her she is the most beautiful woman in the land until one day Snow-White surpasses her step-mother in beauty. Unable to be satisfied with the child being more beautiful than she the step-mother hires a huntsman to kill Snow-White. The huntsman lets Snow-White go free. Snow-White finds her way to the home of seven dwarfs where she agrees to keep house for the men in exchange for her keep. The step-mother's enchanted mirror gives away Snow-White's location. She tries three times to kill the girl. The third time Snow-White is believed to be dead but a prince wakes her from her sleep. Snow-White marries the prince and the step-mother is killed.

Little Snow-White Analysis

This story teaches a valuable lesson that one should not trust everyone they meet since not everyone is worthy of trust. Although a person may appear to be harmless, it may only be a disguise. In the end, the evil step-mother gets her punishment for trying to kill her step-daughter simply because she was pretty.



The Knapsack, the Hat and the Horn

The Knapsack, the Hat and the Horn Summary

Three sons seek riches for themselves. The third gets three magical items and returns home. His brothers do not recognize him and run him away. He calls out his armed men. In an effort to regain peace the king offers the third brother his daughter in marriage. The daughter uses the son's magical items against him. In the end the son destroys his unloving wife, the king and the entire palace.

The Knapsack, the Hat and the Horn Analysis

This story combines the elements of magic and supernatural. For instance, there is a magical tablecloth that covers itself with food every time food is requested. Also there is a knapsack, hat and horn all of which have special magical powers.



Rumpelstiltskin

Rumpelstiltskin Summary

A miller brags to the king that his daughter can spin straw into gold. She can not actually perform this feat so she employs a manikin to do the work for her. On the third day she has nothing to pay the manikin with so she promises her first child. The girl is married to the king and the two soon have a baby. The queen's sorrow at losing her baby makes him give her a chance to keep the child. He gives the queen three days to guess his name. A messenger discovers the man's name. When the queen correctly guesses the man's name the manikin becomes so angry that he stomps his foot into the ground and then pulls himself in half.

Rumpelstiltskin Analysis

This is another story where the trickster gets tricked. When he realizes he has been outsmarted the manikin allows his anger to get the best of him and destroys his own self.



Sweetheart Roland

Sweetheart Roland Summary

A witch loves her real daughter and hates her stepdaughter. The witch plans to kill her stepdaughter but instead kills her real daughter. Knowing her life is in danger the stepdaughter goes to her sweetheart's house and they run away together. The witch follows the lovers who transform themselves into a thorn hedge and rose. The witch tries to pick the rose but as she does so an enchanted musician begins to play. The witch is forced to dance until she dies. Roland leaves his bride and goes to his father to arrange their wedding. He falls into the snares of another and forgets his real bride. The real bride is forced to go to Roland's wedding where all the girls are to sing for the bridal couple. Roland recognizes his true bride's voice and the two are married.

Sweetheart Roland Analysis

This is the story of the lasting effects of true love. The story includes several fairy tale elements. These include the evil step-mother and the abused stepdaughter as well as the magical transformation of a girl into a flower.



The Golden Bird

The Golden Bird Summary

A king's son goes in search of a golden bird. He meets a fox who help him recover a Golden Horse and a Golden Bird. In exchange for his help, the fox asks the son to shoot him and cut off his head and feet. The son refuses. On the way home, his brothers try to kill him. The fox saves the son's life and advises him how to get into his father's palace without being killed. Again the fox begs to be repaid by being shot and having his head and feet chopped off. Finally, the third son agrees to do so and when he does the fox turns into the princess's brother.

The Golden Bird Analysis

This is a story of an unlikely young son who makes many mistakes but finally proves himself to his father. Although his disobedience slows his progress, the son finally learns to obey the fox's advice.



The Dog and the Sparrow

The Dog and the Sparrow Summary

A dog is befriended by a sparrow. The sparrow gets the dog meat and bread to eat. The dog lies down in the road for a nap while the bird watches. A waggoner drives down the road. Despite the sparrow's warning that the sparrow will make the man poor if he runs over the dog, the waggoner hits the dog with his wagon and kills it. The sparrow gets his revenge by pulling the bung from one of the two wine casks in the back of the man's wagon. Then the sparrow pecks the eyes out of one of the horses. The man tries to hit the sparrow with an ax but misses and hits his horse instead. The sparrow then attacks the other barrel of wine and the other two horses in a similar manner. The sparrow's revenge continues at the waggoner's home where the sparrow and fellow birds eat all the stored corn. The man chases the sparrow around the house, smashing furniture and belongings until he finally manages to catch the sparrow. He swallows the bird whole but the bird makes its way back up to the man's mouth. The man asks his wife to get the ax and kill the bird in his mouth. The wife misses with the ax and kills her husband instead.

The Dog and the Sparrow Analysis

Although the sparrow is one of the smallest creatures, it wreaked quite a bit of havoc in this man's life. The moral of the story may be never to underestimate your opponent. Even a small creature can pack a big punch. Also, any living thing is a sacred being. One should go out of their way not to injure another creature.



Frederick and Catherine

Frederick and Catherine Summary

In this silly story a woman and her husband outsmart some salesmen. Later when Catherine shows her laziness, Frederick tricks her into believing she is not herself. Catherine finally winds up in a turnip patch where she scares the local preacher because he thinks she is devil.

Frederick and Catherine Analysis

Although Catherine effectively runs the robbers away, Frederick still looks for a way to get rid of her. She is an unintelligent person who gives Frederick more problems than assistance.



The Two Brothers

The Two Brothers Summary

Twin brothers are adopted by a huntsman and taught the craft of hunting. As adults, the twins venture out in the world and gain a variety of animal companions. These baby animals—two hares, two foxes, two wolves, two bears and two lions—are gifts given to the brothers for not shooting adult animals for food. The boys split up and divide the animals between them. One marries a princess but is turned into stone by a witch. The second twin goes to save his brother and is mistaken for the princess's husband. He saves his brother but is then killed because his twin believes he has been unfaithful with the princess. In his sorrow, the first brother brings the second back to life. After he returns home and talks to his wife, he realizes his brother was true to him and slept with his wife only when there was a sword between the two of them.

The Two Brothers Analysis

In this tale a set of unlikely circumstances allows an abandoned boy to become a king. Like most other fairy tales, it is set in the land of fairy tales filled with dragons and enchanted forests and witches. In the end of the story the twin brothers are reunited and they live happily.



The Little Peasant

The Little Peasant Summary

A peasant has a calf made from wood which he hopes will turn into a real calf. The calf is stolen so the peasant lodges a complaint with the mayor and is granted a live calf. The peasant kills the calf to sell its skin. On the way to sell the skin, the peasant finds a wounded raven which he wraps in the skin. It begins to storm and the peasant takes shelter in a miller's house. While he is there, the miller's wife prepares a feast for herself and the parson. The miller returns home unexpectedly and his wife quickly hides the food as well as the parson. The miller sees the peasant with his raven and asks about the raven. The peasant claims the bird can tell secrets. The peasant first has the bird "tell" where the food items are, then arranges a price of three hundred talers for the fifth secret. This secret gives away the hiding place of the parson. When the peasant arrives home with so much money, his neighbors first ask how he got so rich, then try to sell cow skins to get as much money as he did. When they discover they have been tricked by the peasant, they have him condemned to death. As his sentence is about to be carried out, the peasant tricks a shepherd into taking his place. The peasant returns to his village herding the shepherd's flock. He tells the villagers he got the sheep out of the water. The villagers believe him and jump into the water and drown. The peasant inherits the wealth of the whole village.

The Little Peasant Analysis

Although he is not rich, this peasant is not dumb. He uses his cunning to outsmart an entire village of people. This story seems not to teach a moral but instead be created solely for its ability to entertain.

The Queen Bee

The Queen Bee Summary

The youngest of a king's three sons is made fun of when he tries to join his elder brothers and make his way in the world. As the boys travel through the world, they come on a group of ants whom the youngest son will not let the older ones injure. They also encounter some ducks and bees, which the youngest protects as well. The group comes to a castle where everything is asleep or has been turned to stone. They finally find a man who tells them the secret of breaking the curse that lies over the castle. The older brothers cannot break the curse, but the youngest does with the help of the animals. At the completion of this final task, the spell is broken and the Simpleton marries the youngest princess and becomes king.

The Queen Bee Analysis

This story teaches that people should be kind to all the creatures they met as they don't know which people, or creatures, may be of help in the future. Also, just because a person may seem insignificant and weak does not mean they are useless. They may achieve more than anyone every expected. Notr also the repetition of things three times.



The Three Feathers

The Three Feathers Summary

A king gives his sons a test to determine which one will rule his kingdom once he has passed away. He asks the boys to go out and bring back the most beautiful carpet they can find. In order to make things fair, the king blows three feathers into the air, each determines which direction each of the three boys will take. Of the two elder boys one goes east while another goes west. The feather of the youngest goes straight up and back down. The youngest son notices a trap door in the ground. After he goes through this door, he meets a toad who gives him a beautiful carpet. The older brothers bring back rough handkerchiefs. When the king declares the youngest will be king, the elder sons begs for another test. Just as before, the youngest goes down the trap door and gets a gold ring from the toad. The older brothers bring back rusty carriage rings. Once again, the king declares the youngest will replace him. A second time, the older sons declare another test. This time the king asks his sons to bring back the most beautiful woman they can find. The youngest son gets a woman from the toad while the older sons bring back only peasant women. For a third time the king declares the youngest son will become king. For a third time the older sons ask for another challenge. This time the king asks that the woman they choose jump through a ring in the palace. Although the peasant women are able to perform this task, they fall clumsily and break their arms and legs. The youngest's woman jumps gracefully through the ring and lands safely. For a final time, this young boy is declared to be the king's successor.

The Three Feathers Analysis

Like "The Queen Bee", this story focuses on a character known as the Simpleton. Like in "The Queen Bee", the main character in this story is younger and less intelligent than his older brothers. The younger, less intelligent brother, however, manages to outperform his older brothers and earn the role of king.



The Golden Goose

The Golden Goose Summary

Three brothers go into a forest to cut down trees. The oldest is sent off with cake and wine. In the forest he meets a man who asks for food, but the oldest brother refuses to share. As a result, the oldest son cuts himself in the arm and has to go home. The middle brother also refuses to share his food and likewise injures himself and must go home. The youngest son is sent off with cinder cake and sour beer. When he encounters the man, he happily shares. The man grants him good luck. This the youngest son cuts down a tree and finds a golden goose. He takes the goose with him to an inn. The goose attracts the attention of the innkeeper's daughters. The first tries to pull a feather from the goose but becomes stuck to the goose. The second touches her sister and becomes stuck to her, and likewise with the third. The next morning Dummling takes the goose with him, ignoring the three girls trailing along behind him. Seeing the scene, a pastor tries to pull the girls away but becomes stuck also. A sexton likewise joins the chain. They come to a kingdom where the king's daughter never laughed. As Dummling and his chain of companions runs past her, the princess begins to laugh. The king does not want his daughter married to such a dumb man so he puts the boy up to three challenges, each of which Dummling conquers with the help of the man in the woods. After meeting these challenges, Dummling is allowed to marry his princess wife.

The Golden Goose Analysis

This is another alteration of the Simpleton story. In it, the youngest and most disadvantaged of three brothers is able to outwit his older and more intelligent brothers. Again there is also the repetition of things three times.



Allerleirauh

Allerleirauh Summary

A queen dies and leaves the request that her husband marry no one who is not as beautiful as she. The king searches far and wide but finds no one as beautiful as the queen but his own daughter. In order to prevent her father from committing this crime, the daughter presents a challenge. The king must have three beautiful dresses made for her. Then he must make her a mantle which includes a piece of fur from each animal in the kingdom. The king is able to meet these challenges. To keep from marrying her father, the girl runs away taking with her only the fur mantle, the three dresses, a golden ring, golden spinning wheel, and golden reel. She hides in a hollow tree. Allerleirauh is found by the king of another kingdom. She is believed to be an animal and is taken home to clean the kitchen. The princess gets the chance to look on three different festivals. At each of these festivals she cleans herself and puts on one of her three beautiful dresses. She is noticed by the king and dances with him. Afterwards, she cooks for the king the most wonderful bread soup he has ever tasted and puts one of her golden trinkets in the soup dish each time. At the final festival, the king slips a golden ring on Allerleirauh's finger. She is late getting back to the kitchen and is not able to change her dress. When she serves the king his soup, he sees the golden ring on her finger and recognizes her as his love. The two are married.

Allerleirauh Analysis

The heroine of this story is put in an uncomfortable position which forces her to run away. Despite her circumstances, however, she is able to regain her status as a queen without using unlawful means.



The Hare's Bride

The Hare's Bride Summary

A hare tricks a human maiden into going with him to his hut and marrying him. The girl is sad because she is alone in the hare's world. She makes a human-sized doll of straw, dresses it in her clothes, and runs away.

The Hare's Bride Analysis

This brief story tells how a young girl escapes from a hare who attempts to marry her. Again, in fairy tale fashion, animals are able to communicate with humans and likewise.



The Twelve Huntsmen

The Twelve Huntsmen Summary

A king's son is already promised in marriage to one girl. Upon the king's death, he promises himself to another girl. The first fiancée finds eleven other girls who look like her. They dress like huntsmen and join in service to the king's son. As they are hunting one day, news comes that the new bride is approaching the palace. The first fiancée becomes so hurt that she faints. As the king rushes to her, he realizes she is his first bride. He sends the second bride away and marries his first love.

The Twelve Huntsmen Analysis

This story again contains many important fairy tale components. There is a talking lion, a palace, a king, as well as a prince and princess. Although she has been wronged, it is the princess's quick thinking and ability to persevere that allows her to win back her rightful man.



The Thief and His Master

The Thief and His Master Summary

Hans sends his son out to be taught by a master in witchcraft and theft. The master will take money from the father only if he comes back in a year's time and cannot recognize his son. Fearful that he will have to pay the money, the man speaks with a dwarf who tells him how to recognize his son. Hans takes his son home. They go to a fair where the son turns himself into a horse and is sold back to the master thief. Because his father forgets to take off the horse's bridle, the son cannot change himself back into a man and must ask the stable maid to take the bridle off. The son turns himself into a sparrow but the master thief realizes who he is and follows him. They cast lots several times and each time the master loses. Finally, the son kills the master thief.

The Thief and His Master Analysis

This appears to be another story told primarily for its ability to entertain. If there is any moral or learning value, it is the idea of the student surpassing and outsmarting the teacher.



Jorinda and Joringel

Jorinda and Joringel Summary

A man named Joringel and his fiancée Jorinda walk through a forest and talk. Joringel realizes they are near the castle of a witch but doesn't know the way home. Both he and Jorinda are turned into birds by the witch. Jorinda is taken back to the castle where the witch has thousands of birds in cages. All of these birds were once young maidens. Joringel is turned back into a human. He seeks some way to save her. One night he dreams of a red flower with a pearl in the center. This flower has the power to reverse spells. Jorinda finds this flower. He takes it back to the castle and touches the witch so she no longer has the power to place spells on anything. He then turns his fiancée and all the other maidens back into humans.

Jorinda and Joringel Analysis

Note the common elements of the fairy tale. These include a witch capable of turning people into animals and a flower with the power to reverse these spells.



The Three Sons of Fortune

The Three Sons of Fortune Summary

A man gives each of his three sons an item with which he hopes they will be able to earn their fortunes. The eldest receives a cock, the middle a scythe, and the youngest a cat. Each discovers that on the main land their items are not unusual. When they travel to an island their items are unusual. The people there pay great amounts of money for them. The people who buy the cat become fearful when they hear the cat meow and fear that she plans to attack them. They abandon the palace where the cat is and shoot cannons at the palace in an attempt to kill the beast. The cat escapes the attack, but the entire palace is destroyed.

The Three Sons of Fortune Analysis

This amusing story tells about a people unfamiliar with the common cat. Because they don't know about the generally peaceful animal, they think it is preparing to attack when it begins to meow. As a result, the people destroy their own palace in attempt to put the cat to death.

How Six Men Got On in the World

How Six Men Got On in the World Summary

A man is discharged from the king's army and is disappointed with the three farthings he gets for pay. He decides to get together a group of men who will help him get all of the treasure of the country. His five companions all have special talents that help the man win all of the wealth of the kingdom. This wealth is split among the six companions.

How Six Men Got On in the World Analysis

Supernatural powers are the focus of this story. It is by finding friends with supernatural powers that this lone army man is able to outsmart a king. Dismissed from the army with only a small stipend, the man is determined to earn riches worthy of his sacrifice. He ends up with the riches of the entire kingdom.



The Wolf and the Man

The Wolf and the Man Summary

A wolf who has never seen a man brags that he would take this creature out if he ever had the opportunity. When the wolf does meet a man, he is shot with a gun, is wounded, and runs away. The fox laughs at the wolf because of his bragging.

The Wolf and the Man Analysis

This story instructs that one should not brag about how he might react to a situation he has not yet encountered. Note the talking animals.

The Wolf and the Fox

The Wolf and the Fox Summary

A wolf and a fox are companions. The wolf calls constantly for the fox to get him food. Each time the fox gets the wolf food, the wolf is not satisfied with what he has gotten and goes back by himself for more. Each time he goes back, the wolf is hurt when he is caught in his attempt to get more food. Finally, the wolf and fox go together to get salted meat out of a cellar. The fox stays on his guard, making sure no one is coming and that he has not made himself so fat that he cannot fit back through the door of the cellar. The wolf, on the other hand, eats so much that when the owner of the cellar comes, he cannot get out of the cellar and is killed.

The Wolf and the Fox Analysis

This story is a warning to be satisfied with what one gets and not be greedy. Greed and lack of respect can be a deadly combination.



Gossip Wolf and the Fox

Gossip Wolf and the Fox Summary

A she-wolf invites a fox to be godfather of her child. The fox agrees. When the fox asks the wolf to catch food for the child, the fox lies down and rests as the wolf goes for a lamb. The wolf is caught and doused with a burning mixture. When the wolf drags herself back to the fox, the fox pretends he has been hurt by a farmer. Although the wolf can barely walk, she carries the uninjured fox to safety. When they are safe, the fox runs away laughing at the faithful wolf.

Gossip Wolf and the Fox Analysis

This story tells of a faithful friend and an unfaithful one. Although the wolf is willing to go out of her way for her friend the fox, the fox does not appreciate the sacrifice and makes a joke of the whole circumstance.

The Fox and the Cat

The Fox and the Cat Summary

A cat meets with a fox and believes the fox to be clever and highly intelligent. When the fox speaks to the cat, he is arrogant. The hounds get after both the cat and the fox. The cat climbs a tree and gets away. The fox is caught.

The Fox and the Cat Analysis

The moral of this story is that people, and animals, don't always live up to their reputation. Although the cat believed the fox was smart and cunning, it was caught by the hunters while the cat wasn't.



The Pink

The Pink Summary

A queen wishes for a child. Her wish is granted and the boy has the gift of receiving anything for which he wishes. The cook of the palace covets the boy for this gift and takes the child. The cook sprinkles some blood on the Queen's apron to make it look as if the boy was eaten by wild animals. The Queen is punished by being locked up in a high tower with no food or water. Doves from God feed the innocent woman. The boy is taken by the cook to a different land, where the cook commands the boy wish for his own palace and garden. The cook also has the boy wish for a pretty girl to be the boy's friend. As the boy gets older, the cook is afraid he will try to go in search of his father, so he arranges to have the girl kill her friend. The girl tricks the cook and does not kill the boy. The boy decides he wants to see his mother and father. The girl does not want to travel, so he turns her into a flower and takes her with him. The boy first visits his mother, who is still alive and well. Then he visits his father in disguise. He causes the king's table to be full of game meat. The boy wishes for a servant to ask about the Queen. When this happens, the boy uncovers his identity. He tells his father how he came to be taken from his mother. The Queen is called from the tower and the cook put to death. The boy then changes the girl from a flower back into her true form. The two are married.

The Pink Analysis

In this story it is learned that one's sins will always come back to haunt them. When one has done wrong, there is no way to cover the sin up forever.



Clever Gretel

Clever Gretel Summary

Gretel is a cook who has a habit of drinking wine and tasting what she is cooking. The master calls for two chickens to be cooked for himself and a guest he has invited. The guest is slow in coming, so Gretel reasons that since the wings of the first chicken are burning, she should eat them. She finishes off the whole chicken. The guest has still not arrived, so she decides it is a shame to waste the other chicken, so she enjoys it also. Just as she has finished the second chicken, the master calls for the food. Gretel meets the guest at the door and tells him he must run away as the master plans to cut off the guest's ears. Gretel tells her master the guest has stolen both chickens and is running away with them. Although the master chases his guest, asking for just one chicken back, the guest will not stop. Gretel's greediness is covered up.

Clever Gretel Analysis

In this story a woman with a habit of eating and drinking manages to cover up the fact she has eaten the food intended for her master's guest.



The Old Man and His Grandson

The Old Man and His Grandson Summary

Because they are embarrassed by their father's inability to eat without making a mess, the man's son and his wife make the man sit behind the stove to eat. The young grandson builds something with a few pieces of wood. The parents ask what it is and he tells them it is a trough for them to eat out of when they grow old. Learning their lesson, they allow the grandfather to eat at the table again.

The Old Man and His Grandson Analysis

This brief story teaches parents how children will follow their example. The parents treat their elderly father cruelly; therefore, the child will follow in the parents' steps and treat them cruelly when they are old.

The Water-Nixie

The Water-Nixie Summary

A water-nixie kidnaps two children. She makes the children work and does not feed them well. One day while the nixie is at church, the children run away. They are chased by the nixie but manage to get away from her.

The Water-Nixie Analysis

This story seems to be purely of an entertainment form. It tells of two children who escape a water-nixie's forced labor and free themselves. Note the irony of the children freeing themselves while the nixie is at church.



The Death of the Little Hen

The Death of the Little Hen Summary

A hen and a cock go to a nut hill to find nuts. Instead of sharing the nut she finds, the hen eats the entire nut by herself. It becomes stuck in her throat and her husband goes to fetch some water. By the time the cock has gotten the water, the hen has died. The cock's cries attract a group of animal and together they prepare to bury the hen. The procession reaches a stream. They attempt to cross the stream and the entire party, with the exception of the cock and dead hen, fall into the water and are drowned. The cock is left to bury the hen on his own.

The Death of the Little Hen Analysis

This is a tale where animals are given human feelings and emotions. There is much activity and to do about a creature who died in such a selfish manner.



Brother Lustig

Brother Lustig Summary

Lustig is dismissed from the army with nothing but a loaf of ammunition bread and four coins. After this is gone, he goes into business with St. Peter. St. Peter is able to heal people. Lustig tries to copy his actions but does not do the procedure correctly. St. Peter gives Lustig a knapsack that will give him what he wants so that Lustig won't try healing again. In the end of the story, Lustig tricks St. Peter with the knapsack into letting Lustig into heaven.

Brother Lustig Analysis

This is the story of a regular man who cheats and tricks his way through life. Common fairy tale motifs of enchanted knapsacks and people with the ability to alter their appearance are included in this tale.



Gambling Hansel

Gambling Hansel Summary

A man has gambled to the point he has lost everything that he owns. The day before he is to lose his house, the Lord and St. Peter come to stay with him. They grant Hansel three wishes, but he wishes only for means to continue gambling. Even after Hansel dies, he continues to gamble in both heaven and hell. He is finally thrown to the earth, where the bits of his soul go into the compulsive gamblers of today.

Gambling Hansel Analysis

This story explains why there are impulsive gamblers on earth. It is strange, however, that the Lord would grant a man wishes which He knew would be so dangerous.

Hans in Luck

Hans in Luck Summary

After finishing seven years of labor, Hans asks for his pay. His master gives him a piece of gold as big as his head. Hans trades this piece of gold for a horse he can ride and rids himself of the heavy piece of gold. Hans believes this to be the best trade until he falls off the horse. Then he trades his horse for a cow and is happy until he finds the cow will not give milk. Hans continues to make trades until he winds up only with a grindstone and a plain stone. He grows weary carrying these stones and sets them on the side of a well so he can get a drink. He accidentally knocks the stones into the water. Even though he goes home empty handed, Hans believes this accident was fortunate as he no longer has to carry the heavy rocks.

Hans in Luck Analysis

The luck Hans has is only luck in the moment it happens. There will come a time when he will regret having given away his seven year's wages and returning home empty handed.



Hans Married

Hans Married Summary

In an effort to marry his nephew Hans profitably, an uncle brags to a rich man that the boy has plenty of "patches". While the rich man takes the claim to mean Hans has lots of land, the uncle means the boy has patches on his clothes.

Hans Married Analysis

By trickery and a play on words a man has his nephew Hans married to a rich young girl.



The Gold-Children

The Gold-Children Summary

A man has two golden children, one of whom marries a beautiful girl. One day as he is hunting, this gold child is turned into stone by a witch. He is saved by his brother.

The Gold-Children Analysis

This is the story of the power of the love of family. Although the one son doesn't want to be away from his father's home because people make fun of him, he goes out to save his brother.

The Fox and the Geese

The Fox and the Geese Summary

A fox comes upon a flock of geese that he wishes to eat. The geese make him promise that he will wait to eat them until they have a chance to pray and receive forgiveness. The geese pray ceaselessly.

The Fox and the Geese Analysis

The moral of this story might be to think carefully before making a promise. Although the promise may sound good at first, there may be some unexpected setbacks.



The Poor Man and the Rich Man

The Poor Man and the Rich Man Summary

While visiting the earth, the Lord looks for a place to spend the night. A rich man turns Him away. The poor couple across the street welcomes Him, feeds Him, and lets Him sleep in their bed. Before He leaves, the Lord gives the poor man three wishes. The poor man wishes for health and happiness, and daily bread. Not knowing what else to wish for, the Lord suggests the man wish for a new house. When the rich man and his wife see their poor neighbor's new house, the poor man's wife asks the man to chase the Lord down and ask for three wishes also. The Lord does so, but indicates his wishes will not go well for him. As the man tries to decide what he will wish for, his horse begins to act up. He wishes the horse's neck was broken. The horse immediately falls down dead. Not wanting to lose his saddle, the man cuts it off and carries it home on his own back. After walking awhile, the man begins to think how easy his wife has in life and wishes she was on the saddle instead of it being on his back. He returns home to find his wife unable to get off the saddle and has to use his final wish to remove his wife from the saddle.

The Poor Man and the Rich Man Analysis

The moral of this story is that one should be careful who he turns away and who he welcomes into his home. The supernatural slant in this story is that it is based on the idea there was a time when the Lord walked about the earth and granted wishes like a genie.



The Singing, Soaring Lark

The Singing, Soaring Lark Summary

A man asks his daughters what gifts they would like. The youngest wants a singing, soaring lark. The man finds a bird for his daughter, but it belongs to a lion. In order to keep the lion from eating him, the man promises to give the lion the first thing he meets when he returns home. The youngest daughter is the one who meets the man when he comes home. She goes to meet the lion to subdue it. She finds the lion is actually a prince who is a lion by day and a man by night. The two are married. When the girl's oldest sister is married, she goes home to visit her family without her husband. When the next sister is married, she insists that her husband go with her. He does so, although he knows that if he is touched by candlelight he will turn into a dove and fly about for seven years. Despite precautions, the husband is touched by candlelight and turns into a dove. His wife tracks him until he turns back into a lion. An enchanted dragon turns into a princess who takes the lion away. This dragon princess and the lion husband plan marriage. After buying time with her husband by selling dresses, the true wife is able to make her husband remember her. The two run away together.

The Singing, Soaring Lark Analysis

Be careful what you promise, this story teaches. There is also the supernatural in this story with lions turning into men as well as fights with dragons.



The Goose-Girl

The Goose-Girl Summary

A queen prepares her daughter for marriage. The queen sends a rich dowry and a waiting maid. The girl rides her horse Falada, a talking horse. During the journey the waiting-maid refuses to tend to the princess's needs and instead makes the princess wait on herself. The waiting maid makes the princess take off her royal clothes and ride the maid's horse. The king and prince mistake the waiting maid for the princess. The real princess has been threatened by the waiting maid not to give away her real identity. The waiting maid is married to the prince and the real princess is given a job watching geese. The waiting maid has Fadala's head cut off so the horse cannot give away her secret. The princess pays the knacker to nail Falada's head in a place where she can see it. As she and a boy go each day to tend the geese, the boy notices how the princess greets the head and how it replies that if her mother knew of her situation, she would be saddened. The boy complains to the king about this action and the king follows one day to observe. The king tricks the princess into giving away her secret. At a great feast, the king asks the waiting maid what should happen to a person who has done the deeds the waiting maid had done and she responds the person should be killed in a cruel manner. The king grants this sentence be fulfilled on her.

The Goose-Girl Analysis

In this story a waiting maid takes advantage of a princess's weakness and attempts to take the princess's place. With the help of the wind and a talking horse, the princess regains her rightful throne. Note the symbolism of the three drops of blood. Also the princess makes three trips as the goose-girl past the horse's head before she is recognized as the true princess.

The Young Giant

The Young Giant Summary

Thumbling is kidnapped by a giant who feeds him and makes him grow strong and tall. After six years the boy is strong enough to pull an oak tree out of the ground. The giant returns the boy to his father but his father doesn't recognize him or want him. The boy plows his father's field for him and then travels away from his family. He tries to be a smith's apprentice but strikes the anvil so hard he pushes it into the ground. Next the giant applies as a head-man at a farm. He again asks for only the opportunity to hit his boss three times after the end of a year's work. The giant proves himself to be better than any of the other workers and is kept on for the whole year. When the year is finished, the boss decides he doesn't want to be hit by the giant and tries to figure a way to kill the giant. All his tries fail and the giant gives him a kick that sends the man so far from home he is never able to return. The man's wife is kicked also. She sails away even further than her husband.

The Young Giant Analysis

In these stories each boss that hired Thumbling thought he was doing himself a favor by hiring a man who did not expect monetary wages. When it came time to pay what they did owe, the men realized that paying the giant the money would probably have been much less painful. Here again the character Thumbling is presented. In this story he is more cruel and violent than usual.



The Gnome

The Gnome Summary

A rich king has an apple tree which he has stated that anyone who eats an apple from it will be doomed to be a hundred fathoms under the ground. One day the king's three daughters are overcome with a desire to eat an apple and are transported underground. The king requests helpers to search for his daughters. Three brothers accept the challenge and set up headquarters in an abandoned castle. Each day one remains in the castle and two go out in search of the princesses. Every day a manikin stops at the castle and asks for a piece of bread which he drops and then asks for it back. On the youngest brother's day to stay at the castle, he tells the gnome to pick up his own piece of bread and then beats him. The gnome begs for mercy and agrees to tell the youngest brother where the princesses are. The youngest brother saves the princesses but is afraid his brothers will turn on him, so he stays underground and tricks his brothers by making them think he is dead. The youngest brother finds a flute in his underground prison. When he plays this instrument, a pack of elves come and throw him back up to the earth's surface. The brother goes to the house of the princesses' father, and when the truth comes out, the two elder brothers are hanged and the youngest brother is given the youngest princess in marriage.

The Gnome Analysis

Although the odds were against Stupid Hans, he outsmarts his older brothers and becomes the only one who actually marries a princess. The reward for the two elder brothers' infidelity and the betrayal of their brother is death by hanging. The moral of this story is that eventually right will win over evil.



The King of the Golden Mountain

The King of the Golden Mountain Summary

After a merchant's ships sink, he becomes poor. The merchant makes a deal with a dwarf that he will give the dwarf the first thing that touches his leg when he gets home if the dwarf will give the man all the money he needs. Unfortunately this thing turns out to be the man's young son. The father and black dwarf cannot decide who should have the son, so he is put out in a boat on the sea. The boat comes to rest near an enchanted castle, where the boy endures three nights of torture in order to set a princess free. He marries the princess and the two are happy until the man wishes to see his father again. The queen gives him a ring that has the power to transport people from place to place. The only rule is the king is not to wish the queen at his father's house. The king forgets this promise while trying to convince his father he really is a king. After the mistake, the queen abandons her husband. The first king travels back to the Golden Kingdom and gets revenge on his wife with the help of some magical items he picks up from a couple of quarreling giants. In his revenge, the wife is killed and he takes over as ruler.

The King of the Golden Mountain Analysis

This is another story in which the good guy is avenged at the end of the story. Although the queen tries to abandon her husband and get another, she is the one who is punished in the end of the story.



The Raven

The Raven Summary

A king's infant daughter is turned into a raven when her mother wishes the naughty child was a bird. One day a man hears the bird lamenting that it once was a king's daughter. The man is told by the bird what he can do to set it free. Instead of following the bird's instructions, the man takes a drink from the woman and he falls asleep. After this happens three times, the raven leaves the man with a piece of bread, piece of meat and glass of wine that continually replenish themselves, a letter telling the man where he can find the raven, and a gold ring. The man tries to go to the castle where the raven is located, but he does not know how to find the castle. A giant helps him locate the castle. Once there the man is unable to climb up to the castle because it is located on a glass mountain. One day he hears three robbers arguing. They have in their possession an invisibility mantle, a sword that will unlock doors, and a horse that could take the man up the glass mountain. The man tricks the robbers out of these items and then frees the princess from her spell. The two are married.

The Raven Analysis

Note in this story the use of the symbolism of the number three. For instance, the man is given three chances to be awake on the hill of tan when the raven arrives. Also, there are three things that the man takes from the three robbers that help him to finally free the princess. The moral of this story is that even if a person messes up, they can often still redeem themselves if they try hard enough.



The Peasant's Wise Daughter

The Peasant's Wise Daughter Summary

A peasant and his daughter receive a piece of land from the king. As they are working it, they find a gold mortar which the peasant gives to the king even though his daughter advises him not to. As his daughter predicted, the king throws her father in jail because there is no pestle. When the king learns the peasant's daughter told him the gift was a bad idea, he wants to meet this wise woman. He poses a riddle to the daughter and tells her if she solves the riddle he will marry her. The girl solves the riddle and is married to the king. A dispute comes up in the kingdom concerning the ownership of a foal. The queen becomes involved in this dispute and the king divorces her because of her involvement. He sends the queen back to her peasant's hut and tells her to take with her only her most beloved possession. The queen drugs the king and takes him back to her hut. As the king realizes her love for him, he forgives her and they are remarried.

The Peasant's Wise Daughter Analysis

This is perhaps the most beautiful picture of love found in these fairy tales. From the queen's actions in taking the king as her most prized possession, the king realizes how deep her love for him is and how she did not intend her actions to harm him in any way.



Old Hildebrand

Old Hildebrand Summary

A wife and the parson plan to spend a day together. The wife pretends to be sick and the parson preaches that any man who has a sick relative can cure that person by making a pilgrimage to Göckerli hill. The woman's husband begins his trip. The parson and the wife enjoy each other's company. An egg seller meets the husband on his trip and warns the husband that he has been tricked. The egg seller takes the husband back to the husband's house in his egg basket so that the husband can see for himself what mischief his wife is up to. Once the husband sees what is happening, he chases the parson out of his home.

Old Hildebrand Analysis

A parson and his parishioner's plans to spend a day together are spoiled by an intelligent gossip. The husband catches his wife enjoying the company of the parson and runs the parson out of his home.



The Three Little Birds

The Three Little Birds Summary

Three sisters are married to a king and his two ministers. The queen has three children but her sisters are childless. All three times the queen gives birth the sisters throw the baby into the lake and tell the king the queen gave birth to an animal. After the third "animal" birth, the king puts his queen in jail. The babies survive their murder attempt and are adopted by a fisherman. As the children grow older, they learn the fisherman is not their real father and go in search of their biological parent. The two brothers seek first but have no luck. The sister goes last and is directed by an old woman on an adventure, wherein she brings back a bird and a glass of water. The second son hunts in the king's forest where he meets with the king. The king demands his identity, and when the boy says he is the fisherman's son, the king disputes him. When the king goes to the fisherman's house, the bird begins to sing the truth that all three of the fisherman's children are actually the king's children. Knowing now that his wife gave birth to real children, the king releases his now sickly wife from prison. She is given the daughter's glass of water to drink and is soon restored to health. The queen's sisters are burned for their attempt to murder the king's children.

The Three Little Birds Analysis

This story deals with the real life reality of adopted children. In true fairy tale fashion, however, the queen is freed from prison after the truth about her children is revealed. Also the evil sisters are punished for their role in the attempted murder of the children. The moral of the story is that jealousy is not a good characteristic. It can cause a person to do things they will later regret.



The Water of Life

The Water of Life Summary

Three princes wish to cure their father by bringing him a drink of the water of life. On their quest for the water, the two oldest sons are mean to a dwarf who bewitches them so that they become stuck between two mountains. The youngest son is kind to the dwarf, and the dwarf tells him where to find the water of life. The youngest son does as the dwarf instructs and takes with him a cupful of the water, a sword with which he can kill many armies of men, and a loaf of bread that is never depleted. He also finds a maiden who says she will marry him in one year's time.

The youngest son returns to the dwarf and begs the dwarf to tell him where his brothers are. The dwarf warns the boy to leave his older brothers alone, but the boy saves his brothers. On the way home, the brothers encounter three kingdoms where there is war and famine. The youngest brother uses his sword and loaf of bread to end the wars and famine in all three kingdoms. The older brothers put the water of life into their own cup and replace the youngest's with sea water. The king tastes the sea water and becomes sicker. The older brothers bring the true water of life and the king becomes well. The king thinks his youngest son has tried to kill him and orders the boy to be shot, but the huntsman lets him go free. A while later three wagon loads of gold and precious stones are sent to the king from the kingdoms helped by the youngest son. The king realizes his mistake. The youngest son claims his princess bride and is married. He is then reunited with his father. The two elder brothers go out to sea and are never heard from again.

The Water of Life Analysis

This is another story that teaches the importance of being kind to everyone. It is never known which person is the one who can help out. This is the case with the dwarf in the story. Though both the older brothers thought he was useless, the small man held the information they needed to save their father.



Doctor Knowall

Doctor Knowall Summary

A peasant sees a doctor's richness and desires it for himself. He is told that all he has to do to be a doctor is buy an A B C book, trade his wagon and oxen for money, and nail a sign to his door that reads "Doctor Knowall". A great lord calls for the doctor to solve the mystery of his stolen money. Through luck, the doctor is able to solve the mystery.

Doctor Knowall Analysis

This story tells how one man's pure luck brings him a life of fame and fortune. It also depicts how a guilty conscious can make one uncomfortable even when a person does not know what they have done.



The Spirit in the Bottle

The Spirit in the Bottle Summary

A woodcutter gives all of his earnings to his son to go to school. After two years of school, the son runs out of money and returns home. His father borrows an ax for the boy and the two cut wood together. At lunchtime, the boy walks among the trees instead of resting. He finds a bottle containing a spirit that begs to be let out. The boy lets the spirit out of the bottle only to learn the spirit plans to strangle the boy. The boy tricks the spirit to get him back in the bottle and threatens to leave him. The spirit persuades the boy that if he lets him out again, he will be rewarded. True to his word, the spirit gives the boy a cloth, one end of which will heal wounds and the other end of which turns things to silver. The boy turns his ax blade to silver, which bends. The father is angry because the boy has ruined the ax and the father must now find a way to pay for it. He sends the boy to sell the ax. The boy returns with the profit of four hundred talers. The neighbor had asked for only one taler and six groschen to replace the ax. The boy tells his father about the cloth. He returns to school and becomes a great doctor.

The Spirit in the Bottle Analysis

The rags to riches story tells of a boy who uses his stroke of luck to better himself and his society. Again it contains the supernatural element common to the fairy tale. Spirits in bottles who give away rags that turn things to silver aren't very common in the real world.



The Devil's Sooty Brother

The Devil's Sooty Brother Summary

Returning from war with no money, a soldier makes a deal with the devil to work in hell for seven years. Although he has been ordered not to look in the kettles that simmer above hell's fires, Hans looks and sees his former corporal in one kettle, his former ensign in one, and his former general in another. Because he adds fresh logs to these fires, Hans saves his own life, and after his seven years of labor he is sent forth from hell back to earth. During his time in hell he was not allowed to cut his hair or nails or clean himself. At the inn where Hans stops, the landlord refuses to let him in until he sees Hans has gold. The landlord lets him stay but steals his gold. Hans goes back to the devil and asks for help. The devil helps him wash up, gives him another bag of gold, and sends him back to the landlord with orders to return the stolen money or take Hans' place tending the fires of hell. The man returns the money. Later the king of the area hears Hans singing and orders him married to his daughter. After the king's death, Hans himself becomes king.

The Devil's Sooty Brother Analysis

This story includes aspects of the supernatural, with Hans traveling to hell to work for the devil. He is then allowed to come back to work where, despite his deal with the devil, he prospers and eventually becomes king.



Bearskin

Bearskin Summary

A man returning from war finds himself face to face with the devil. The devil proposes the man not cut his hair or nails, not wash his face and not even pray for seven years. During this time the man is to wear the devil's green coat and a bearskin cape. If the man dies during the seven year period, the devil would win his soul; if not, the man would be free and would be given an endless supply of money. At one inn, Bearskin finds a poor man who is about to starve to death. Bearskin gives the man enough money to care for himself and his three daughters. In exchange, the man gives Bearskin one of his daughters in marriage. The two eldest will not take him but the youngest accepts the man has a good heart and agrees to marry him. Bearskin divides a ring between the two of them and then goes out to finish his seven years with the devil. At the end of the seven years, the devil cleans Bearskin up and gives him back his old coat. The now handsome Bearskin dresses up and rides in a carriage to his bride's house. The eldest sisters try to woo him by giving him choice meat and wine. When he pulls out his half of the ring, the youngest sister recognizes him as Bearskin. In anger over their folly, the older sisters kill themselves. Therefore, the devil gets two souls instead of Bearskin's one.

Bearskin Analysis

This story teaches that one should not judge a person by the way they look but instead the intent of their heart. The youngest sister sees Bearskin's inner beauty and puts that above his outward appearance. In return, she winds up with a handsome soldier. Her haughty sisters kill themselves as a result of their foolish decision. Note in this story the unusual importance placed on prayer and on the soul's relation with God. For instance, one of the criteria that Bearskin set forth for the devil was that he would not do anything that would endanger his salvation.



The Willow-Wren and the Bear

The Willow-Wren and the Bear Summary

A wolf and a bear walk together in the woods, discussing the beautiful singing of the willow-wren. After the bear offends some baby birds, there is a war called between the creatures of the air and the creatures of the land. The birds send in a gnat to spy on the creatures of the land and learn their battle secrets. The birds win the war. The bear apologizes to the baby birds.

The Willow-Wren and the Bear Analysis

This is a story of mistaken identity. The bear believes the birds to be royalty and expects them to live as royalty. Instead, they are common birds. The bear's comment that the babies are disreputable starts a war that is only won by deceit. The babies, however, abandon their hunger strike and begin eating again.



Sweet Porridge

Sweet Porridge Summary

A poor child and her mother are given a pot that will cook porridge when commanded and stop cooking when commanded. The mother asks the pot to cook porridge and eats until she is satisfied. The mother cannot remember the command to make the pot stop cooking, so it continues to make porridge until the entire town is filled. The child stops the pot from cooking, but not soon enough to spare the town.

Sweet Porridge Analysis

This is an entertaining story that teaches that one can have too much of a good thing.



Wise Folks

Wise Folks Summary

A man orders his wife not to sell their cows for less than two hundred talers. The cattle buyer agrees to the bargain, but as he doesn't have his money with him, he leaves one of the cows as promise of payment. When the husband finds his wife has made a silly bargain, he lifts his stick to beat her, but instead decides to try to find if there are people more silly than her. He meets a woman and her son whom he tricks into believing he has fallen from heaven. He is able to take from them money and a horse. They believe he is giving it to their relative in heaven. He comments that if stupidity always brought such great reward, he would honor it more.

Wise Folks Analysis

This is a story about taking advantage of the disabilities of other people. First, the cattle dealer takes advantage of the woman's lack of intelligence. Then the woman's husband takes advantage of both a woman and her son's apparent stupidity. Either way, this ability to take advantage becomes a vicious cycle which never ends.



Tales of the Paddock

Tales of the Paddock Summary

I - A paddock comes to share a little girl's afternoon meal of bread and milk. The mother sees the paddock and kills it. After it dies, the little girl becomes sick and dies.

II - An orphan girl is spinning when she sees a paddock creep out of a wall. She lays down a blue silk handkerchief and the paddock brings her a crown. The girl picks up the crown. When the frog returns and cannot find the crown, it beats its head against the wall until it is dead.

III - A child asks a paddock if it has seen her sister. The frog asks the child if she has not seen her own sister.

Tales of the Paddock Analysis

These stories do not present frogs in a very favorable light. It seems that anyone who acts against the paddock is in some way punished or at the very least left in want.



The Poor Miller's Boy and the Cat

The Poor Miller's Boy and the Cat Summary

A miller is ready to retire but has no family, only three apprentices to whom he can leave his business. The miller decides the apprentice who brings him the most beautiful horse will be granted the mill. The three apprentices set out together, but the two smarter ones soon abandon the stupid one. Stupid Hans wanders about until he meets a talking cat. The cat makes a deal that Hans will work for her for seven years. His reward will be a beautiful horse. Hans returns to the mill with the promise the horse will follow in three days time. In three days, a carriage carrying a princess arrives at the mill. The princess is the transformed cat. She brings the beautiful horse, which is far better than the horses the other apprentices brought. The princess takes Hans to her castle and he becomes her king.

The Poor Miller's Boy and the Cat Analysis

As the ending of this story indicates, it is important not to judge a person as a simpleton. Even an insignificant seeming person can turn out to be very important and influential. Note the inclusion of the threes in this story. There are three apprentices and there are also three days that pass before Hans' horse arrives.



The Two Travelers

The Two Travelers Summary

A shoemaker and a tailor meet together while traveling. The tailor always shares the money he makes with the grumpy, unfriendly shoemaker. Once they must travel through a large forest to reach the capital. The shoemaker takes enough food for seven days, but the tailor only takes enough for two days. The journey takes longer than the tailor expected, and he begs the shoemaker twice for bread. Each time the tailor begs, the shoemaker gives him bread but also puts one of the tailor's eyes out in exchange. The shoemaker leaves the blind tailor beneath the gallows where two dead sinners hang. These dead men tell the tailor the dew on the grass will heal his eyes. Once he has healed, the tailor goes on his way. He finds a horse he could ride but the horse begs freedom since he is not old enough to be ridden yet. The tailor then promises himself the next thing he sees, he will eat. He passes a stork, a duck, and a beehive, all of which beg to be left alone and promise the tailor assistance later. The tailor reaches the city and soon finds food and a job. He is even hired as the court tailor for the king. Ironically, the shoemaker also works for the king. Eventually, the tailor is given the honor of marrying the king's daughter. As a punishment, the shoemaker is required to make the tailor's wedding shoes, and is then forced out of town. His travels take him to the same gallows where birds peck his eyes out. The shoemaker then wanders blind into the forest where he apparently dies.

The Two Travelers Analysis

This story illuminates the difference between a good hearted person and a cruel person. Although he is given many opportunities, the shoemaker refuses to be kind, loving, or friendly. The tailor, meanwhile, shares what little he has and is always easy to get along with. In his attempt to make the tailor appear untrustworthy, the shoemaker ends up ruining his own life instead. The tailor credits his favorable outcome with his faith in God and endless good luck.



Han the Hedgehog

Han the Hedgehog Summary

A childless man wishes for a child. His wife bears a baby boy that is half man and half hedgehog. This baby, Hans the Hedgehog, lives behind the stove in his father's house for the first eight years of his life. After these eight years, the boy rides a rooster into the woods. He takes with him many of his father's donkeys and pigs, and watches his herds from tree. As he sits in a tree, he plays the bagpipes. One day a king hears these bagpipes and asks Hans to show him the way to his kingdom. Hans does so with the request that Hans will be given the first thing the king sees on his return home. The king writes down and signs this promise, but indicates Hans will not be given the first thing the king sees. Soon another king likewise is lost and hears Hans' music. Unlike the first king, he does make the promise to give the hedgehog the first thing he sees. The first king's daughter agrees to marry Hans but is stripped and cut then returned home. The second king's daughter agrees to marry Hans but is afraid of his quills. Their first night together he promises to take off his quill suit if men from the palace will burn it in the fire. This is done and Hans turns into a handsome man.

Han the Hedgehog Analysis

Looks can be deceiving, especially when dealing with fairy tales. Although all of his life Hans had been half a hedgehog, when he is married, he turns into a real person.



The Shroud

The Shroud Summary

A young boy dies and his mother cries for her boy continually. The boy's ghost begins appearing at night. The ghost begs its mother to stop crying so its burial shroud will dry and it can rest comfortably in the grave. The mother gives her sorrow to God and the child is able to rest peacefully.

The Shroud Analysis

This story tells the importance of giving one's troubles to a greater power, in this case, God.



The Jew Among Thorns

The Jew Among Thorns Summary

A servant waits on his master faithfully for three years without asking any wages. At the end of his three years the servant decides to go out and see the world. He asks for his wages. His miserly master gives him three farthings. The servant meets a dwarf who asks for the three farthings since the servant is still able to work. The servant gives him the money, and in exchange the dwarf grants the servant three wishes. The servant wishes for a gun that will hit anything at which he aims, a fiddle that will cause all who hears its music to dance and people to give him anything for which he asks. These wishes are granted. The servant meets a Jew. The Jew is listening to a bird sing and wishing for the bird. The servant takes his gun and shoots the bird down. He sends the Jew into the thorn bushes to fetch the bird out. Once the Jew is in the thorns, the servant decides to play his fiddle. Even though he is in the thorns, the Jew begins to dance. The thorns tear his clothes and scratch his skin. The Jew finally begs the servant to stop playing and promises him a bag of gold. When he is free, the Jew runs to the closest town and accuses the servant of stealing his gold. The servant is sentenced to die, and just before he is to be hung, he asks permission to play his fiddle again. As the servant plays, all the people of the town begin to dance. After observing this response, the judge believes the servant's story and condemns the Jew to death.

The Jew Among Thorns Analysis

In this story, the Jew tries to accuse a servant of stealing from him and beating him. Instead, the Jew, who actually stole the gold which he paid the servant to stop playing his fiddle, is sentenced to death in place of the servant. The story illustrates the idea that when one tries to trick someone for their own profit, the trick may come back and hurt them instead.



The Skillful Huntsman

The Skillful Huntsman Summary

A locksmith decides to try another vocation. He asks a huntsman to train him in hunting. The man does so, and at the end of his training the boy receives a gift of an air-gun that hits its mark every time it is shot. The boy tries the gun out on some giants he meets. Three times he is able to shoot a bite of meat out of one giant's mouth. The giants decide to employ the huntsman to help them free the king's daughter. The boy's job is to shoot a small dog in the palace. Once the boy has done this, he decides to see the princess for himself. He walks through the palace and takes a sword he finds. He locates the princess and he takes one of her slippers, a piece of her scarf, and a piece of her nightgown. He tells the giants they must enter the castle through a small hole. As each one crawls through this hole, the boy cuts their heads off. The boy cuts off the giants' tongues and keeps them as proof he killed them. When the king finds that his daughter has been saved, he asks who did the feat. A captain claims he saved her, but the princess does not want to marry the captain. Her father sets her up in a hut where she must cook for people all day and never accept payment. The huntsman goes to this hut and the princess recognizes his sword as her father's. She asks where he got it and he shows her the remnants of the princess' clothes as well as the giants' tongues. The princess alerts her father she has found the person who freed her. The captain is killed and the huntsman becomes the princess' husband.

The Skillful Huntsman Analysis

This is another story where a boy who is practically nobody eventually becomes the king. The boy reacts to his own inner feelings that something is not quite right with the giant's rescuing the princess.



The Flail from Heaven

The Flail from Heaven Summary

A man sells his oxen. To formulate his price, he takes the butcher a peck of seeds. For each seed in the peck the man will receive one taler. The man drops one seed from his peck on the way to the butcher's shop. As he returns home, the man notices the seed has grown into a tree that reached to heaven. The man climbs the tree to see what the angels are doing. The tree begins to sway because someone is cutting it down. The man grabs a hoe and a flail and makes himself a rope to lower himself down. He lands in a deep hole and uses the flail to get out. He keeps the flail as proof his story is true.

The Flail from Heaven Analysis

This is a farfetched tale similar to the modern story of Jack and his beanstalk. Here a man climbs to heaven and returns with a flail as proof his story is true. How does this common farming utensil prove that his story is true?



The Two King's Children

The Two King's Children Summary

A prince is separated from his hunting group during a hunt for a stag. The stag turns into a person and takes the prince to a castle. The king promises to give the prince his oldest daughter if he keeps watch over her during the night and answers each time the king calls. The prince keeps watch but is not allowed to have the eldest daughter. Instead, the man says he must stay a night with the middle daughter and the youngest daughter as well. The king also gives the prince three impossible tasks to complete. During each of these tasks, the youngest daughter summons earth-men to do the work for the prince. The prince is still not allowed to marry the youngest daughter. The two lovers run away.

The king has no luck in catching the couple so the queen follows them the third day. She is able to speak to her daughter. The queen gives her daughter three walnuts, which she says will help the girl. The prince and princess travel to the prince's kingdom. The prince goes to the palace alone to let his family know he has returned. They prepare a carriage to fetch his bride but he forgets all about her. The princess waits for him. The prince arranges to marry another princess. On the three nights before the wedding, the princess wears beautiful dresses contained in the walnuts. She exchanges these dresses for time with her intended. As the prince listens to her talk, he remembers what has happened. He seeks her out and the two are married.

The Two King's Children Analysis

This story contains almost all of the common characteristics of the fairy tale. There is magic. This magic occurs when the princess is able to order the earth-men to do work for the prince in an unrealistic amount of time. Magic walnuts also contain dresses that become big enough for a princess to wear. The story also teaches a lesson not to give up when one has a goal in mind. In this case the goal is marriage between the prince and youngest princess. In order to defend their love, they must run away from her parents and also overcome the prince's amnesia caused by his mother. Note also the frequent use of groups of three. Just a few examples include the king's three daughters, the three trials the prince must pass, the three times they are followed by her parents and forced to turn themselves into inanimate objects, and the three dresses contained in the three walnuts.



The Cunning Little Tailor

The Cunning Little Tailor Summary

Three tailors set about to win the heart of a haughty princess. When they arrive, the youngest tailor is the only one able to guess the answer to the princess's riddle. After correctly guessing the riddle, the young tailor learns he must also survive the night with a bear. The tailor tricks the bear into thinking he will give the bear violin lessons. The tailor tells the bear his nail must be cut, and locks the bear's paws in a vice. The tailor and his bride ride to the church in a carriage. The other two tailors unlock the bear so he is free to run after the carriage and get his revenge on the tailor. The tailor stands on his hands so that his legs appear to be a vise and threatens to re-apprehend the bear. The bear runs away in fear and the couple is happily married.

The Cunning Little Tailor Analysis

In this story it is the most unlikely character that is able to answer the princess's riddle and also successfully spend the night with the bear. This story teaches the lesson that one should never underestimate anyone's potential. Also note the touches of the supernatural in the story. This includes the talking bear who wishes to learn to play the violin.



The Bright Sun Brings it to Light

The Bright Sun Brings it to Light Summary

A tailor finds a Jew on the road. He believes the Jew will have money with him so the tailor beats the Jew and demands money. The Jew says he has only eight farthings. As the Jew dies, his last words are: "The bright sun will bring it to light". The tailor assumes this saying refers to the Jew's money. Years later the man is drinking coffee at his home. The bright sunlight throws reflections off the ceiling and the man repeats the saying. The wife asks what it means. He tells her about the murder and begs her not to tell anyone. She spreads the story about town. Her husband is put on trial for murder and sentenced to death.

The Bright Sun Brings it to Light Analysis

This story is a form of a riddle. When the Jew indicates the sun would bring something to light, the Jew meant his own murder instead of his money, as the tailor thought it meant. As the tailor ponders his cup of coffee, his wife insists he tell her why the bright sun's reflections have interested him so. In this way, the sun brought the tailor's responsibility for the Jew's murder out in the open.



The Blue Light

The Blue Light Summary

As a result of injury, a soldier is dismissed from the king's service with no pay and no way to support himself. He meets up with a witch. The witch allows him to do work for her. The witch asks the soldier to go down into a well to retrieve a blue light. The soldier does so but refuses to give it to her until she pulls him fully out of the well. This angers this witch. She drops him into the well and leaves him. The soldier assumes he will die in the well and finds his pipe. The man lights the pipe from the blue light, and a dwarf who must grant all of the soldier's wishes appears. The dwarf helps the soldier out of the well and also shows the soldier where the witch's stash of treasure is located. The soldier demands the witch be taken before a judge and killed. Wishing to get revenge on the king, the soldier has the dwarf bring the king's daughter to him at night and has her perform menial tasks. The princess believes these occurrences to be dreams but her father believes them to be true. The soldier is caught when the princess leaves her shoe in the soldier's room. He is put in prison and sentenced to be killed. He summons the dwarf, who tells him to go along with everything done to him. The man does so, but as he is being led to his execution, he summons the dwarf. He commands the judge, constable, and king all be killed. The king begs for his life and gives the soldier his kingdom in exchange. The soldier is also married to the princess.

The Blue Light Analysis

This is the ultimate fairy tale. It is a story in which all wrongs are brought to right. In this story a magical dwarf appears every time a soldier lights his pipe with a certain blue light. The lesson this story intends to teach is for listeners to treat others with the respect they deserve. Otherwise, one day they may be able to achieve their revenge.



The Willful Child

The Willful Child Summary

A child who will not mind her parents dies. Her arm sticks up out of the grave. When the mother strikes the arm with a rod, the girl puts her arm down and rests in her grave.

The Willful Child Analysis

As noted in the Book of Proverbs from the Christian Bible, sparing the rod causes the child to become spoiled. In this story, even in death the child will not do as she is supposed to until her mother uses the rod of punishment.



The Three Army Surgeons

The Three Army Surgeons Summary

To impress an innkeeper three army surgeons promise to remove from one surgeon his hand, the other his heart, and the third his eyes. They will then replace these organs the next day. The removed organs are given to a servant girl for safe keeping. The girl accidentally allows the cat to get the organs. To replace the organs, her boyfriend cuts the hand from a thief, the eyes from a cat, and the heart from a pig. The next day the surgeons rub their organs with a special salve, which re-attaches the organs. They notice they are acting strangely. The one with the pig's heart cannot resist the urge to dig in the dirt. The one with the thief's hand cannot help but steal, and the one with the cat's eyes can see mice, even at night. They realize they have not gotten their own organs and go to the innkeeper for an explanation. He blames the phenomenon on the servant girl. The innkeeper gives the surgeons enough money to support them the rest of their lives.

The Three Army Surgeons Analysis

In an attempt to impress a stranger, these three surgeons are mutilated for the rest of their lives. The story teaches that although most people have a natural desire to impress others, following this desire may cause inevitable harm to one's own self. As in other stories, this tale presents things in groups of three. For example, there are three surgeons, three real organs, and three false organs.

The Seven Swabians

The Seven Swabians Summary

Seven Swabians set out on an adventure. They carry one spear, a weapon so long it takes all seven to hold it. In their first adventure, the Swabians are scared by a hornet and surrender to a garden rake. Once they realize they have been silly, the seven agree not to speak of the incident. Next, they encounter a hare, which they believe to be a dragon. The seven attack and are happy when their "enemy" runs away from them. Next the men come to a river they want to cross. They all drown when they try to wade across this deep, rough river.

The Seven Swabians Analysis

These Swabians were foolish in that they didn't recognize the difference between circumstances that were truly dangerous and those that weren't. They are easily scared by benign things while they plunge quickly into the deep river which results in their death.



The Three Apprentices

The Three Apprentices Summary

Three apprentices travel together. They are given a money-making proposition by the devil. The devil gives each of the three apprentices a phrase with which they must answer any question directed at them. They are not allowed to speak any words other than their assigned phrases. They live in an inn where the other residents believe them to be mad. A wealthy merchant stays at the inn overnight and is murdered by the innkeeper. The innkeeper pins the crime on the apprentices until the devil appears and grants the apprentices pardon. The apprentices are allowed to say the innkeeper was the one who murdered the merchant and that there are other murder victims hanging in the basement. The innkeeper is killed and the devil gets his soul. The apprentices are set with money for the rest of their lives.

The Three Apprentices Analysis

This story depicts one man's attempt to place the blame for a crime on three innocent men. Because they are unable to defend themselves, the three apprentices fear they will be killed, but hold out for the promise of money. Note the groupings of three. There are three apprentices and three sayings. Also the devil makes a supernatural appearance in this story.

The King's Son Who Feared Nothing

The King's Son Who Feared Nothing Summary

A king's son goes out in the world to entertain himself. At a giant's house he begins playing with the giant's oversized nine-pins and balls. The giant wonders at the prince's unusual strength. He asks the prince to bring an apple from the tree of life for the giant's fiancée. The prince agrees. He arrives at the garden to find the animals that protect it sleeping. He steps over the animals and climbs the fence. After locating the tree of life and climbing it, he inserts his arm through a ring before an apple and takes the apple. The ring clamps down on the prince's arm and gives him superhuman strength. Instead of climbing back over the fence, he shakes the gate from its hinges. The noise wakes the animals and the lion follows the prince. The lion appears to view the prince as his master.

The giant gives the fruit to his fiancée. She wants to see the ring also, so he begs the prince to give it to him. The prince won't part with the ring so the two fight over it. The giant puts out the prince's eyes, thinking he will kill the prince and get the ring. The lion pushes the giant off the cliff and the giant dies. The lion leads the prince to a stream where his sight is restored. The lion and the prince continue to travel. They come to an enchanted castle where a black princess asks the prince to help release her from her curse. In order to set the princess free, he must endure three nights of this torment without crying out or uttering a sound. He does so, and on the third day the princess is as white as snow. The castle is freed from the spell and the two are married.

The King's Son Who Feared Nothing Analysis

This fairy tale is surrounded with magic and the supernatural. There are a cast of unusual characters. These include a giant, devils, and a princess over whom a spell has been placed. In the story the prince is also given superhuman strength when the ring from the tree of life clasps around his arm.



Donkey Cabbages

Donkey Cabbages Summary

A huntsman is given the gifts of an invisibility cloak and a bird's heart that causes gold to appear under his pillow. He sees a beautiful maiden, who is the daughter of a witch, and decides to stay at their castle. The witch plans for the daughter to woo the huntsman so she can get both the heart and the cloak. The girl does as directed. The huntsman winds up in a cabbage patch and realizes he has been tricked. Some of the magic cabbages cause the man to become a donkey while others turn him back into a man. He feeds these cabbages to the maiden and her mother. The mother dies but the huntsman transforms the maiden back into her human form. The two are married.

Donkey Cabbages Analysis

In this story, as is common in fairy tales, the wicked witch is destroyed. The huntsman and the princess are married. Magic abounds in this story as foodstuffs turn people into animals and cloaks allow people to travel wherever they wish. Aspects of the story are also grouped into threes as there are three people in the castle who are turned into donkeys.



The Old Woman in the Wood

The Old Woman in the Wood Summary

A servant girl is the only one to survive an attack by robbers. Not knowing what else to do, she sits down and gives God her situation. A white dove comes and gives her a key, which unlocks a tree where there is food. The dove brings another key to a tree where there is a bed, then another key to a tree where there are clothes. The girl lives like this for quite awhile until the dove asks her to retrieve a plain ring from an old woman's house. The girl catches the woman trying to sneak away with the ring and takes the ring back to the dove. The dove does not appear right away, so she leans against a tree which envelops her. She turns to see a handsome prince who has been transformed from a tree to a person by the magic of the ring. He takes the girl back to his kingdom and they are married.

The Old Woman in the Wood Analysis

Magic abounds in this tale. A prince and his entire royal guard have been transformed by a witch into trees. The prince is only allowed two hours each day when he becomes a dove and can move about. It is by chance the girl is abandoned in the exact spot where the enchanted trees are located. As the servant girl becomes a princess, this story teaches that anyone can become significant through faithfulness and love.



The Three Brothers

The Three Brothers Summary

A father cannot decide which son should get his house when he dies. He has his sons learn trades. When they return, the one who shows him the greatest masterpiece will be the one who wins the house. The first son shaves the whiskers off a running hare without injuring the hare. The second son puts shoes on a horse while it is galloping. The third has learned from a fencing master. It begins to rain and the boy twirls his sword above his head so quickly none of the drops hit him. The father exclaims this is the masterpiece and grants the youngest the house. The brothers live together in the house after their father passes away. When the brothers grow old and one dies, the others are so sad they die also and are buried together in the same grave.

The Three Brothers Analysis

This is the first fairy tale in which there is no violence. There is magic in that the three brothers are all able to perform unimaginable feats, but even after the father singles one of the boys out as the best, there is no anger or retaliation. Instead, the brothers love each other so much that they live in harmony until they are old, then are even buried together.



The Devil and His Grandmother

The Devil and His Grandmother Summary

Three soldiers desert the king's army. They hide in a cornfield thinking the troops will move on but instead these deserters are trapped. A dragon finds them. He promises to guide them past the troops if the soldiers promise to serve him for seven years. The soldiers learn the dragon is the devil. They are given a whip which produces gold and told to live in richness for seven years. After that time, if they can't find the answer to a riddle, they will belong to the devil. At the end of the seven years, one of the soldiers meets an old woman who tells him to go to a rock house where he will find help in learning the answer to the devil's riddle. The house belongs to the devil's grandmother. She promises to question the devil about the riddle so the soldier can hear the answer himself. The devil is angry when the soldiers are able to correctly answer his riddle. He loses his power over them and they are able to keep the whip with which they can support themselves the rest of their lives.

The Devil and His Grandmother Analysis

In this story, the devil uses trickery to try to procure three souls for himself. In a turn of events, the devil's own grandmother allows the answer to the riddle to be known. By doing so, she causes the devil to lose his power over the souls of the three soldiers whom he had originally tricked into his service.



Ferdinand the Faithful and Ferdinand the Unfaithful

Ferdinand the Faithful and Ferdinand the Unfaithful Summary

A rich couple becomes poor and has a son. There is no godfather except a poor man with nothing to give the child. The godfather gives the child the name Ferdinand the Faithful. He gives the midwife a key which will fit a castle the child will find when he turns fourteen. When the child turns fourteen he unlocks the castle and finds a white horse inside. Ferdinand mounts the horse and rides to a village where he is hired by the king as an outrider. His companion, Ferdinand the Unfaithful, also gets a job in the king's service. In an attempt to do away with Ferdinand the Faithful he suggests the king send Ferdinand the Faithful to rescue the king's love from giants. Ferdinand the Faithful rescues the princess. The princess falls in love with Ferdinand the Faithful. She entertains the king by cutting off Ferdinand the Faithful's head and then re-attaching it. She asks the king if she can do the same for him. He agrees and she cuts his head off then pretends she can't re-attach it. The king dies and the princess marries Ferdinand the Faithful.

Ferdinand the Faithful and Ferdinand the Unfaithful Analysis

This is the story of a good person and his evil alter ego. Ferdinand the Faithful lives up to his name when he successfully rescues the princess for the king. In an act of unfaithfulness toward the king, however, Ferdinand the Faithful marries the king's princess after the princess basically murders the king.

The Iron Stove

The Iron Stove Summary

A princess frees a handsome prince from an iron stove. As a result of her disobedience, she almost loses the prince to another woman. She uses three dresses to buy time with the prince and convince him of her love. The two are married.

The Iron Stove Analysis

Despite her inability to follow directions, the princess winds up getting her prince at the end of the story. Note the heavy use of groupings of three in this story. The princess is the third maiden sent to the iron stove, she is to speak only three words to her father, and the toads give the girl three gifts one of which is three nuts and another three needles. There are also three dresses and three chances to spend the night with the prince.



The Lazy Spinner

The Lazy Spinner Summary

A lazy woman makes her husband feel accountable for her lack of work. She tricks her husband into believing cutting reels will cause him to die. She also deceives him by making him believe she is responsible for ruining her yarn.

The Lazy Spinner Analysis

This lady has not only the intelligence to know how to get out of doing work, she also knows how to contrive a plan so that others will feel responsible for her lack of work. If she only put the amount of effort into working as she put into trying to get out of work she would be an industrious individual!

The Four Skillful Brothers

The Four Skillful Brothers Summary

Four brothers are sent away from home by their father to learn a trade. They return home and show their father the skills they have acquired. Their skills are put to the test when a king's daughter is kidnapped. The king promises to allow the one who saves the girl to marry her. Working together, the four brothers rescue her. The king cannot decide which one actually saved the princess, so instead of choosing one to marry his daughter, he instead gives each brother half a kingdom.

The Four Skillful Brothers Analysis

Although each brother has learned a skill, their greatest accomplishment was learning to work together to achieve a common goal. Notice that his story uses groupings of four instead of groupings of three. There are four brothers and four trades instead of just three.



One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes

One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes Summary

A woman has three daughters—one with one eye, one with two eyes, and one with three eyes. She hates the daughter with two eyes. The mother and other sisters are mean to the two-eyed girl. Through the help of an old woman, the two-eyed girl buries a goat's entrails out of which a silver tree with gold fruit grows. Because she is the only one who can pull a branch from the tree, the girl is married to a knight. The one-eyed and three-eyed sisters eventually wind up at the home of their two-eyed sister, who takes them in and cares for them.

One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes Analysis

Although her sisters have been nothing but mean to her, the two-eyed sister still has compassion on them and takes care of them in their need. Note the use of common fairy tale magic in this story. Examples of this include the charmed table and the magically growing silver and gold tree.



Fair Katrinelje and Pif-Paf-Poltrie

Fair Katrinelje and Pif-Paf-Poltrie Summary

A wooer must ask permission from five relatives before he is allowed to marry his sweetheart. He learns her dowry is only fourteen farthings, three and a half grosen, and a little food. She learns he is merely a broom-maker.

Fair Katrinelje and Pif-Paf-Poltrie Analysis

This story seems to be for entertainment more than teaching purposes. The jumble of odd and confusing names as well as the poverty of the characters is an amusing combination.

The Fox and the Horse

The Fox and the Horse Summary

A horse is disowned by its master because it is no longer able to plough and work. A fox helps the horse "bring home" a lion. Because the horse has accomplished this feat, the owner promises to care for him the rest of his life.

The Fox and the Horse Analysis

Despite his nature, a fox helps a horse capture a lion and take the lion to the horse's master's house. The master had planned on getting rid of this "useless" animal until the horse proved himself able to perform this feat. The story teaches that things, animals, and people should not be written off too easily. They may still have some usefulness left in them.



The Shoes That Were Danced to Pieces

The Shoes That Were Danced to Pieces Summary

Each night twelve princesses wear their shoes out with dancing, even though they are locked in their room. The king seeks someone to find what his daughters are doing each night. A wounded soldier accepts the challenge. He discovers the secret passageway the girls follow to meet their suitors to dance the night away. As a reward for his work, the soldier is given the oldest princess as his wife and is promised he will be king after the current king passes away.

The Shoes That Were Danced to Pieces Analysis

Twelve princesses believe they have gotten away with their secret love affairs until someone comes along who knows how to outsmart them. Once their secret is out, the girl's dancing days are over as their princes are bewitched.



The Six Servants

The Six Servants Summary

In an attempt to do away with mankind, a sorceress presents all of her daughter's suitors with a task they must perform. With the help of a group of six servants with special abilities, one man is able to complete all the tasks. The sorceress causes her daughter to be angry with her new husband because she must now take orders from a common man. The daughter sets forth a test for her husband. He or one of his servants is to stand in the midst of burning wood. One servant agrees to this task and survives his time in the fire. The man reveals his "real" identity. He tells her he is a swineherd. She helps with the swine one week. She meets people who ask her if she knows who her husband is. They take her to him in his palace. He tells her he had to make her suffer after the amount of suffering she had put him through. The two are wed.

The Six Servants Analysis

A proud sorceress and her daughter are brought down a notch by a cunning prince and his band of six odd servants. Despite her belief she will be married to a common man, the daughter learns at the end of the story her new husband is actually a prince.



The White Bride and the Black Bride

The White Bride and the Black Bride Summary

After a stepdaughter is kind to God, He grants her three wishes. Through fate, the beautiful stepdaughter is set to be married to a king. The stepmother is jealous and causes the king to be tricked into marrying one of her natural daughters instead. Meanwhile, the stepdaughter is killed by her stepmother and turns into a swan. When the king tries to kill this swan, it transforms into the beautiful girl. The king marries the beautiful stepdaughter and has her stepmother and stepsister punished.

The White Bride and the Black Bride Analysis

This story focuses on the symbolism of the colors black and white. White is traditionally associated with things that are pure and innocent while black is associated with things that are evil and bad. Although the stepmother tries to trick the king into taking her daughter instead, she is unable to cover up the girl's true nature, which has become visible through her black, ugly skin.



Iron Hans

Iron Hans Summary

In a king's kingdom there is a forest so dangerous that every man who goes into it is never heard from again. Iron Hans, who is responsible for the deaths, is found at the bottom of a lake and locked up in the king's palace. Hans tricks the king's young son into letting him out of his prison. He kidnaps the boy. He agrees to care for the boy if the boy can successfully tend Hans' golden well. The boy lets several things, including his own hair, fall into this well. For this reason, Hans sends the boy away. The boy is given work as a garden servant where his golden hair gives away his identity as royalty. During a war, the boy rides a horse he is given by Iron Hans and overcomes the enemy. The boy's only request is that he be given the king's daughter in marriage. The boy's actions break a spell placed over Hans and he turns back into a king.

Iron Hans Analysis

This is a story of an unlikely hero. It turns out the garden servant at a great castle saves a kingdom from enemy forces. He also turns out to be a king's son and then inherits riches from another king whom his actions have freed from a curse.



The Three Black Princesses

The Three Black Princesses Summary

A fisherman becomes burgomaster of a town in East India after he receives six hundred dollars for his son. The son escapes from his captor and discovers an enchanted castle with three black princesses. He can free them from their spell if he does exactly what they tell him. Instead, the boy takes his mother's advice and drops hot candle wax on each of the princesses' faces. The girls turn half white. His actions doom them to be cursed forever. In fear, the boy jumps out of the window and breaks his leg. The castle sinks into the ground and is never seen again.

The Three Black Princesses Analysis

This is an odd story that has two completely different storylines. The first involves the fisherman becoming burgomaster by paying the enemy to East India six hundred dollars. The second centers around the fisherman's son who discovers a castle where three enchanted princesses live.



Knoist and His Three Sons

Knoist and His Three Sons Summary

This curious story is about a man and his three sons who sail in a boat with no bottom to a forest.

Knoist and His Three Sons Analysis

This is merely an entertaining little story with no discernible plot or story line.



The Maid of Brakel

The Maid of Brakel Summary

A maiden begs St. Anne to help her find a husband. A clerk replies the maiden will not have a husband. The maiden believes the statue of Anne's child Mary has said this and tells her to hush and let her mother talk.

The Maid of Brakel Analysis

In this story an altar clerk decides to have a little fun with a visitor to the chapel. He learns how deep the woman's faith is though when she tells the statue of Mary to hush and let her mother speak.

My Household

My Household Summary

This rhyme tells where one goes, the name of her man, child, cradle, and drudge.

My Household Analysis

This is a silly rhyme told only for purposes of entertainment.



The Lambkin and the Little Fish

The Lambkin and the Little Fish Summary

A stepmother dislikes her stepdaughter and stepson and has then turned into a lamb and fish. She calls for the cook to butcher and cook the lamb. The cook hears the lamb and fish talking to each other. The cook has another lamb butchered and takes the girl-lamb to be cared for by a woman. This woman turns out to be the boy and girl's foster mother. She blesses the fish and lamb and they regain their human forms.

The Lambkin and the Little Fish Analysis

An evil stepmother hates her stepchildren, and for this reason turns them into animals. As chance would have it, there is a woman who takes pity on the children and turns them back to their human forms.



Simeli Mountain

Simeli Mountain Summary

A poor brother watches as twelve robbers leave a mountain. He goes to the mountain and says the secret password. He decides to take only a pocketful of gold with which he feeds his family and does good works. His rich brother demands to know where his poor brother has gotten his money. The rich brother goes to the mountain and picks up as many jewels as he can carry. He forgets the name of the mountain which he must call in order to leave. The robbers catch him in the cave and kill him.

Simeli Mountain Analysis

This story teaches that greed is a dangerous personality characteristic. In this story, the rich brother is killed as a result of his greed. Note the use of magic in this story where a mountain splits open when called by a secret name.



Going a Traveling

Going a Traveling Summary

A poor man's son goes traveling. He plans to tell everyone he sees "not much, not much, not much". The first time he uses this phrase, a group of fisherman wind up bringing in only a few fish. The fishermen advise him to use a different phrase. This happens with each new group of people he meets. Each phrase is inappropriate until finally he causes a cart to fall into a pit. He is whipped so soundly by the driver that he goes back and never travels again.

Going a Traveling Analysis

This unfortunate son never has the right word to say. He is finally so unwelcome on his travels that he is forced to go back home.

The Donkey

The Donkey Summary

A queen gives birth to a donkey. The ass is raised in the castle as a prince. The donkey learns to play the lute. He travels to a different kingdom where they will not let him in the castle until he plays his lute. The royal family becomes fond of the donkey and he eventually marries the princess. At night he removes his donkey suit and becomes a real man. One night the king burns this suit and the prince must remain a man.

The Donkey Analysis

This donkey-baby that the queen wanted drowned turns out to be the king of two kingdoms. This story includes a set of unrealistic circumstances true to the nature of the fairy tale. These circumstances include a human giving birth to an animal, an animal learning to play a lute, and an animal turning into a human.



The Ungrateful Son

The Ungrateful Son Summary

A son will not let his father have any roast chicken. The chicken turns into a huge toad that attaches itself to the son's face. For the rest of his life the son goes around with this amphibian and is forced to feed it.

The Ungrateful Son Analysis

Because he will not share with his father, a son is punished by being forced to carry around and feed a toad the rest of his life. This is a warning to older children to continue to care for their parents even in their old age.



The Turnip

The Turnip Summary

Two brothers serve as soldiers. The poor brother becomes a turnip farmer. He grows a huge turnip which fills an entire cart. The farmer gives this turnip to the king. In return, the king gives the poor farmer land and riches. The rich brother is jealous of his poor brother's fortune. He gives the king a gift of riches, thinking he will get more riches in return but the king only gives him the turnip. The rich brother tries to kill his poor brother but his brother is rescued by a student.

The Turnip Analysis

The sack of wisdom is truly a sack of wisdom. It teaches one not to believe everything they hear. Both the poor brother and the student were gullible and believed what was told to them. Both learned the valuable lesson that people don't always have another person's best interests at mind.

The Old Man Made Young Again

The Old Man Made Young Again Summary

St. Peter and the Lord stay one evening at a blacksmith's house. A poor old man comes by seeking money. They have pity on the man and make him young so he can earn his own way. They borrow the smith's forge, heat the man up, and then cool him in a tub of water. The old man comes out as young as a teenager. The smith decides to try this on his aged mother-in-law. During the process she screams and cries so that she wakes her pregnant daughter and daughter-in-law. The sight of the burnt woman scares them so much that both women go into labor and give birth. Instead of being human babies though, the women give birth to apes.

The Old Man Made Young Again Analysis

This story is an example of a fairy tale that tries to explain a natural phenomenon. The events of the story attempt to explain how the race of apes came to exist.

The Lord's Animals and the Devil's

The Lord's Animals and the Devil's Summary

The Lord creates the wolf. The devil creates the goat. The goats' long tails get caught in the hedges so the devil bites off the tails. The goats destroy fruit bearing trees and vines. The Lord sets his wolves on the goats and they are killed. The devil explains to the Lord any animal the devil has created must have the destructive nature of the devil. The Lord then tricks the devil, and in his anger the devil puts out the eyes of all the goats and puts his eyes in the animals instead.

The Lord's Animals and the Devil's Analysis

This story explains the destructive nature of the goat. It also explains why these animals have stubby tails and devil's eyes. The explanation bears no scientific basis; it is simply an entertaining tale.

The Beam

The Beam Summary

A magician has a rooster that carries a heavy beam. A girl sees that the beam is only a straw. She ridicules the man and the crowd drives him away in disgrace. The magician decides to get revenge on the girl on her wedding day. As she goes to the church, she reaches a swollen creek and lifts her dress so she can wade across. The magician has enchanted the creek and it is really only a field of blue flowers the girl walks across with her lifted dress. All the townspeople ridicule the girl and chase her away.

The Beam Analysis

In this story a girl learns she doesn't always have to tell everything she knows. The magician was simply entertaining the people and doing them no harm. Her revelation of his art caused him to be angry with her. In turn, he used his powers to embarrass her on one very important day in her life.

The Old Beggar Woman

The Old Beggar Woman Summary

A boy allows a beggar woman to warm herself by the fire. Her clothes begin to burn. Instead of extinguishing the flames, the boy stands and watches.

The Old Beggar Woman Analysis

This tale is a story that shares the need to help others. It points out the boy should have helped the woman by doing anything in his power to put out the flames on her clothes.

The Three Sluggards

The Three Sluggards Summary

A king decides to grant his kingdom to his laziest son. All three sons make up stories about how lazy they are. The kingdom is awarded to the third son because he carried the tale the furthest.

The Three Sluggards Analysis

In this story the kingdom is not necessarily granted to the laziest child, but to the one with the greatest imagination and ability to take his story to the edge.



The Twelve Idle Servants

The Twelve Idle Servants Summary

Twelve servants share stories of how lazy they are and to what extremes they will go to avoid working.

The Twelve Idle Servants Analysis

This amusing dialogue displays the ultimate in laziness.



The Shepherd Boy

The Shepherd Boy Summary

A shepherd boy is famous for wise answers. The king tells the boy if he is pleased with the boy's answers to three questions, he will adopt the boy and regard him as his own son. The boy gives wise answers and the king adopts him.

The Shepherd Boy Analysis

In all his answers, the shepherd boy does not necessarily give a correct answer so much as he gives an answer that proves how impossible it is to answer the question. Sometimes wisdom is shown by knowing what can and can't be accomplished.



The Star-Money

The Star-Money Summary

A girl's parents die and she is left alone. Various beggars ask her for the few possessions she has. As she stands there without anything, money falls from the sky. She gathers the money and is rich for the rest of her life.

The Star-Money Analysis

This story teaches that by giving away what you have, you set yourself up to be richly rewarded.



The Stolen Farthings

The Stolen Farthings Summary

The ghost of a dead child tries to remove two farthings from the floorboards of its home. The child was supposed to give the farthings to a poor man but instead kept them for herself. The child is unable to rest in its grave until the farthings are found and given to the beggar.

The Stolen Farthings Analysis

The idea behind this story is that the wrongs done in this life will haunt a person even after they are dead. In this particular tale, the child is unable to rest until the wrong she has done is made right.

Looking for a Bride

Looking for a Bride Summary

A shepherd boy's mother suggests a test to determine which of three sisters he should take for his wife. The mother says the boy is to watch as the three eat cheese. The one who is careful and not wasteful with the cheese is the one chosen to be his wife.

Looking for a Bride Analysis

Through a simple test, a boy discovers the nature of three different sisters. The one who cuts the rind from the cheese and is neither wasteful nor lazy is his best choice for a wife.

The Hurds

The Hurds Summary

A girl who is pretty but lazy wastes much flax. An industrious poor girl gathers the lazy girl's waste pieces until she has enough to make herself a beautiful dress. On the day of her wedding, the lazy girl comments to her husband the industrious girl is happy, even though she is wearing a dress made of flax the lazy girl had thrown away. The husband leaves the lazy girl and marries the industrious one.

The Hurds Analysis

This story warns against laziness and wastefulness. The characteristics of being industrious and hardworking are sometimes more powerful than outward good looks.

The Sparrow and His Four Children

The Sparrow and His Four Children Summary

Four young sparrows are knocked out of their nest by boys but escape without harm. The father sparrow is sad that he did not teach the sparrows how to take care of themselves. When they are reunited later, he questions them about their chosen lifestyles. One sparrow lives in a garden, another in the stables, and one near the highway. The fourth and youngest sparrow has taken up residence in a church where he has learned about the provision and love of God. The father admits this fourth sparrow has found the best refuge, a place where he will always be cared for properly.

The Sparrow and His Four Children Analysis

This story teaches readers to trust in the provision and safety of God. Although the world is full of dangers, it is only those who put their faith in God who can be sure of protection from all the evils of the world.



The Story of Schlauffen Land

The Story of Schlauffen Land Summary

A stream of unconnected impossibilities and lies make up the bulk of this story.

The Story of Schlauffen Land Analysis

This is merely an entertaining story made up of impossible circumstances and amazing feats.

The Ditmars Tale of Wonders

The Ditmars Tale of Wonders Summary

Included in this tale of lies are three disabled people who catch a hare as well as a man who drowns on dry land.

The Ditmars Tale of Wonders Analysis

Like "The Story of Schlauffen Land", this tale is told for its ability to entertain. There is not discernible plot or story line.



A Riddling Tale

A Riddling Tale Summary

A woman is turned into a flower in the daytime but allowed to be home at night. She asks her husband to go out in the morning and pick her so she can stay at home always. How did the husband know which flower to pick? Because she was at home at night, she was the one with no dew on her.

A Riddling Tale Analysis

This brief tale causes readers to think about the situation the story teller has proposed. Note also the magical circumstances of a woman being transformed into a flower, a trade mark of the fairy tale.



Snow-White and Rose-Red

Snow-White and Rose-Red Summary

A woman has two daughters named Snow-White and Rose-Red. These two girls are beautifully behaved and loved by all the animals of the forest. They also help their mother and take immaculate care of the house. They care for a bear, which saves them from a dwarf. This bear turns into a prince's son who was bewitched by the dwarf and unable to regain his human form until the dwarf was killed. Snow-White is married to the prince and Rose-Red to his brother.

Snow-White and Rose-Red Analysis

This story teaches that those who do good will ultimately be rewarded and those who do evil will ultimately be punished. Note the use of magical characters such as the dwarf and the enchanted, talking bear.



The Wise Servant

The Wise Servant Summary

A master sends his servant to look for his cow. Instead the boy chases blackbirds.

The Wise Servant Analysis

This short tale is told from the view of the sarcastic. In this way it makes the point that disobedience is not the proper road to choose.



The Glass Coffin

The Glass Coffin Summary

A tailor becomes lost in the woods and finds a room where a miniature castle made in great detail is stored in a glass box. Vases full of a bluish vapor line the walls of the room. There is also a glass case where a beautiful maiden lies sleeping. As he looks at her, she opens her eyes and asks him to unbolt the glass case. She tells him she was placed under a curse because she refused to marry a certain man. The maid asks the tailor to help her move the glass box containing the castle to a rock where it will be lifted to ground level. As soon as it is on the ground and the box opened, the castle returns to its proper size. The bottles of bluish vapor are opened and people who were the maid's servants come to life. The maid marries the tailor as promised.

The Glass Coffin Analysis

Magical art is the foundation for this story. A magician first enchants the girl as he tries to persuade her hand in marriage, then he puts a spell over her entire kingdom. A frightened little tailor acts as the unlikely hero in this story as he frees the maiden and her kingdom from the curse.



Lazy Harry

Lazy Harry Summary

A lazy man tries to find some way to keep from having to keep watch over his goat all day long. He finally decides to marry his neighbor's daughter who also watches a goat. His thinking is that she can watch both the goats and he can rest. Trina soon becomes tired of herding both goats and asks her husband if they can trade the goats for a beehive. Her reasoning is they wouldn't have to watch the beehive or care for the bees. The husband consents and the trade is made. The couple keeps the honey pot in their bedroom so they don't have to worry about it being stolen. One day as they are talking in bed, the wife makes a gesture with a stick and the pot falls and breaks. The two decide to enjoy the honey off the broken bits of the pot and rest after their scare.

Lazy Harry Analysis

In this story Harry hopes to meet a wife who will do all of his work for him. However, he winds up meeting a woman as lazy as he. Note in the story the wife's father notes that the couple are made for each other because of their similarities. Although the reader may assume he means they are similar because they herd goats, the man may actually be referring to the fact they are both lazy.

The Griffin

The Griffin Summary

A king's daughter is sick and no one is able to cure her. The king learns that if his daughter eats an apple, she will be cured. The one who brings the apple will be married to her, the king says. Hans gets an apple to the princess and she is healed. The king will not let Hans marry his daughter but instead puts him to the test. Hans passes all the tests and also even gets riches in the process. The king is drowned in the river and Hans marries the king's daughter and inherits the kingdom.

The Griffin Analysis

In this tale it is the youngest and stupidest brother that outsmarts his siblings and even outsmarts a king. This story shows that a person's ability should not be judged by their age, intelligence, or social standing.



Strong Hans

Strong Hans Summary

Two-year-old Hans and his mother are kidnapped by robbers. After they are set free, Hans goes traveling. He sets up housekeeping with two other strong men in an abandoned castle. They decide to rotate duties, with one staying home to cook while the others go out to hunt. Each day a dwarf comes to the castle and the men decide to follow the dwarf into a crevice. Hans finds the dwarf sitting next to a princess. Hans kills the dwarf and sends the princess up to the other men. The other men leave Hans in the underground chamber. He finds a ring which calls spirits that take him out of the underground chamber. Hans rescues the maiden again and the two are married.

Strong Hans Analysis

This is a story of superhuman strength and power. As a twelve-year-old, Hans is able to overcome a band of robbers and free himself and his mother. By the end of the story Hans has also killed a dwarf and rescued a maiden.



The Peasant in Heaven

The Peasant in Heaven Summary

A peasant and a rich man die and go to heaven at the same time. St. Peter lets the rich man in but seems to overlook the peasant. While waiting outside the gates, the peasant hears much singing and rejoicing at the rich man's entrance into heaven. When St. Peter opens the gates again, he sees the peasant and lets him in. The peasant is welcomed warmly but there is no singing or rejoicing. The peasant assumes heaven is no different than earth, with the rich preferred over the poor. St. Peter tells him the rejoicing was because peasants were admitted every day while rich people came only rarely.

The Peasant in Heaven Analysis

This story has a twist when the peasant learns heaven rejoices when rich men come not because they are thought more highly of, but because they don't come very often.



Lean Lisa

Lean Lisa Summary

Lean Lisa is as industrious as Lazy Harry and Fat Trina are idle. Lisa works all day long and even at night she does not sleep because she is thinking about how she can get money to buy a cow. Lisa's husband thinks if they buy a cow he will get to drink the milk. Lisa, however, has other plans and her husband finally has to hold Lisa down to make her go to sleep.

Lean Lisa Analysis

This story teaches the lesson that too much work can be as bad for a person as too little work.



The Hut in the Forest

The Hut in the Forest Summary

A woodcutter's daughter gets lost in the forest and spends the night in a hut. The hut is inhabited by three animals and an old man. The man asks the daughter to fix dinner for them. She does so but doesn't provide for the animals. She is locked in the cellar. The second daughter is sent out and she falls to the same luck. On the third day, the youngest daughter is sent with lunch. She too gets lost and stays at the hut. Instead of feeding only herself and the old man though, this youngest girl also brings food and water for the animals. About midnight, the girl is awakened from her sleep by terrible noises. When she awakes in the morning, the hut has been transformed into a royal palace and the old man into a young prince. The prince and palace had been under a spell that could not be broken until someone came to stay at the hut who cared not only for people, but also for animals.

The Hut in the Forest Analysis

This tale teaches the importance of caring not only for people, but also for animals. Only by caring for the animals could the girl break the spell. Also note the groupings of three in the story. There are three daughters as well as three animals. As in other fairy tales, there is a magical spell that cannot be broken until someone acts in a particular way.



Sharing Joy and Sorrow

Sharing Joy and Sorrow Summary

A hateful tailor is put in jail for beating his wife. After he serves some time, he is released with the promise he will not hit her again. Although he does not beat her, he tears out her hair and throws objects at her, such as a pair of scissors. The violence becomes so bad the neighbors come to the wife's aid. The husband tries to explain away his bad behavior by saying he was only trying to bring her back to her duty by throwing things at her. The judges see through the man's lame excuses and punish him according to his actions.

Sharing Joy and Sorrow Analysis

In this story the judges and the husband had two differing opinions of the way in which a husband and wife should share joy and sorrow. The husband tries to make the judges see things the way he does, but is unsuccessful and is punished for his violence toward his wife.



The Willow-Wren

The Willow-Wren Summary

In a time when machines and birds alike spoke in languages that could be understood, all birds of the world gathered together to decide which bird should be king. They first decide the bird that can fly the highest will be king. The eagle flies higher than all the other birds. Just as the eagle thinks he had won, a bird without a name climbs out of the breast feathers of the eagle and flies all the way up to heaven. The birds say this little fellow cannot be king because he won by trickery. Therefore, they devise another trial. They decide the bird who can go lowest will be king. This time the little bird with no name crawls down a mouse hole and therefore is lower than all the other birds. The other birds decided to set the owl in front of the mouse hole to keep the small bird a prisoner. The owl, however, goes to sleep and the little bird escapes. It is for this reason that the owl will not allow himself to be seen during the daytime. This story also explains why the owl pursues mice to keep them from digging holes. The little bird also keeps itself hidden for fear it will be killed by the other birds.

The Willow-Wren Analysis

This is a story told to describe a natural phenomenon. This tale explains why the owl only comes out at night and also why the little bird tends to hide. The moral of this story is that a title is only worth winning if it can be won fairly. If one has to cheat to win, they may wind up like the small bird and have to hide the rest of their life.



The Sole

The Sole Summary

The fish decide to have a race to see which fish is fastest. The fastest fish will be named the king of all fish. The herring wins the race. The sole cries out in jealousy and disbelief when the herring is announced the winner. Ever since that time, the sole has had it's mouth on one side as a punishment.

The Sole Analysis

Like some others, this fairy tales attempts to explain a natural phenomenon. This one tells why the sole has a mouth on one side of its body. The story is also a warning against jealousy and envy.



The Bittern and Hoopoe

The Bittern and Hoopoe Summary

An old cowherd explains why he chooses to graze his cows in pastures that are not too rich or too poor. The Bittern had formerly been a cowherd. He had pastured his cows on rich grass. The cows became so spirited from this rich grass they ran away and would not come when he called. The Hoopoe pastured his cows on highlands where the grass was not good. His cows became so weak they could not even stand. This is why the Bittern appears to be calling "Come, cows, come" and the Hoopoe "Up, up, up".

The Bittern and Hoopoe Analysis

This fairy tale explains why these two birds have the unique bird calls they have. There is no scientific basis for this story, it is only an amusing way to explain the birds' behavior.



The Owl

The Owl Summary

A great horned owl ventures into a barn in a small village. Daylight comes and the bird is afraid to leave the barn. The owner of the barn finds the owl inside the structure and is afraid of what he calls "the beast". All the people of the village are called together. No one, not even a strong man wearing armor, is brave enough to take on the bird. Finally the villagers decide to burn the barn and thus rid themselves of the bird.

The Owl Analysis

In this story frightened villagers take a situation to an extreme and burn a barn and all its contents in order to rid themselves of a scared bird. The moral of this story might be that one shouldn't overreact, even when a situation seems dire.

The Moon

The Moon Summary

A group of villagers visit a town with a fake moon hung in an oak tree. These villagers had never seen a moon before and decided they could use the moon to light their village at night. The villagers steal the moon and hang it in their own village. As the four men grow old and die, they each request their quarter of the moon be buried with them. When the last one dies, the village is dark again at night. The quarters of the moon reunite, however, and the dead wake and begin to roam the earth. St. Peter goes down to earth from heaven, forces the dead to lie back in their graves, then takes the moon and hang it in the heavens.

The Moon Analysis

This story explains how the moon came to be hung in the heavens. It is based on the premise that at one time there was no light at night and that humans created the original moon.

The Duration of Life

The Duration of Life Summary

God speaks to several creatures to determine what their span of life will be. He asks the donkey if thirty years is satisfactory, to which the donkey replies that thirty years is much too long the bear the burdens he will have to bear. God takes this into consideration and shortens the span by eighteen years. Next the dog also begs for a shorter life, so God knocks twelve years off the span of the dog's life. Finally the monkey also doesn't want to be on earth where he will be made fun of for thirty years. Therefore, God shortens the monkey's life span by ten years. Next, God approaches man. Thirty years is much too short a lifetime according to the man. For this reason, God adds to the man's life the years he removed from the other animals' life spans. For the first thirty years of his life man will be happy. For the donkey's eighteen years man will have to carry around burdens for others. For the dog's twelve years man will sit in the corner with no teeth and growl. For his final ten years which he inherited for the monkey, man will be a silly old creature who will be laughed at by children.

The Duration of Life Analysis

Although man wanted a longer life, he probably didn't count on inheriting problems along with his extra years. This story attempts to explain not only why animals have such short life spans and humans such long ones, but also why the human's life progresses in the stages that it does.



Death's Messengers

Death's Messengers Summary

An unknown man stops a giant on the highway. The man identifies himself as death and insists the giant must obey him. They fight and the giant overcomes death and goes on his way. As death lays thinking what might happen if he were not able to get up again, a young man comes by who helps death restore his strength. Because of these kind actions death tells the youth he will not come for the youth unexpectedly but will send messengers beforehand. Feeling confident he will know when it is time for him to die, the youth lives a carefree life. Soon, however, the youth suffers with a variety of illnesses. After he has recovered and has begun to live happily again, death taps him on the shoulder. The youth argues that death's messengers were never sent. Death replies the messengers came in the form of the sicknesses that tormented the young man. Also, the nightly act of sleeping is a reminder of death. The youth cannot refute this answer and goes with death.

Death's Messengers Analysis

The youth expects an audible warning his time on earth is almost finished. However, death reminds him in the form of sicknesses and even sleep that nobody lives forever. Note the personified image of death as presented in this story.

Master Pfriem

Master Pfriem Summary

Master Pfriem is a cobbler by trade who has the annoying habit of criticizing everything. He is not able to sit still long enough to finish a single shoe because he constantly feels obliged to go out and tell others what they are doing wrong. One night, Master Pfriem dreams he dies and goes to heaven. At the gate, the apostle Peter warns Master Pfriem that in heaven he must not criticize what he sees or else he will experience bad luck. At first, Master Pfriem sees things that irk him in heaven, but he manages to keep his mouth shut. Finally, however, when he sees angels harnessing horses to both the front and back of a cart, Master Pfriem cannot hold back any longer. He criticizes the angels for their stupidity in harnessing the horses this way. The angels grab him and throw him from heaven. As he falls, he looks back to see that the horses have wings and are lifting the cart straight up. Even though he admits to himself things are different in heaven, Master Pfriem has still not learned his lesson about his judgmental and overbearing personality.

Master Pfriem Analysis

This story teaches a lesson that one should not judge others sharply, especially when they do not know the other person's motives.



The Goose-Girl at the Well

The Goose-Girl at the Well Summary

A count meets an old woman in the woods and speaks to her. The old woman asks the count if he will carry her baskets of fruit and bundles of grass home for her. He picks up the parcels and they become so heavy he can barely walk up the hill with them. To make matters worse, the old lady herself jumps up on the count's back and begins to whip him. As they approach the house, the old lady's ugly daughter comes walking behind the geese. The count lies down on a bench and goes to sleep. The old lady wakes him by giving him an emerald box which she says will bring him riches. At the nearest town, the count presents this box to the king and queen. The queen faints when she sees it, and then later explains the box holds a pearl. This pearl is the same size and shape as the jewels that formerly came from her youngest daughter's eyes when she cried. The daughter was made to leave the kingdom by her father when the daughter gave an undesirable answer to her father's question.

The count sees the goose girl at a well. She has taken off her ugly face and is the young princess. Later, at the old lady's house, the king, queen and count knock at a window. She lets them in and calls for her daughter. It turns out the girl is the king and queen's daughter. The old lady gives the girl all the pearl tears she has cried as well as the hut, which turns into a palace. The teller insinuates the girl and count are married. He also insinuates that the old lady who took care of the princess was not a witch but rather a wise lady who gave the girl her gift of pearl tears.

The Goose-Girl at the Well Analysis

Through a bit of luck and chivalry, an old lady manages to bring together a princess and a count. The old lady also uses the count to inform the king and queen their daughter is alive and well. Note the significant use of groupings of three in this tale. Not only are there are three daughters, there are also three years that pass between the time the princess is evicted from her home and the time she is reunited with her family.



Eve's Various Children

Eve's Various Children Summary

After they are thrown out of the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve are forced to build their own house and work for their own food. The Lord announces he plans to inspect their home. Eve prepares her beautiful children for the visit but hides her unattractive children. The Lord blesses the beautiful children richly. Since He is being so kind, Eve decides to bring out her ugly children. These the Lord blesses with the jobs and blessings of the common people. Eve is distraught that the Lord has given out gifts unequally among her children. The Lord reasons with her that her children must inhabit the entire world. They must perform duties both royal and mundane.

Eve's Various Children Analysis

This story refers to the different types of people in the world. Some are important and regal while others are more common, but they are all important. Royalty cannot exist without peasants to do needed labor.



The Nixie of the Mill-Pond

The Nixie of the Mill-Pond Summary

A rich miller finds that his luck turns sour and he loses all that he had. While walking around a mill pond, he sees a water nixie. This nixie promises to restore his wealth if he will give her the thing just born in his house. Not thinking it is a child she speaks of, the man agrees. He returns home to find his wife has given birth to a baby boy. Years pass and the water nixie does not come for the boy. He grows older, becomes a huntsman, and is married. One day he is hunting near the mill-pond. Although he has been warned of the nixie, he dips his hands in the water to wash them. As soon as he touches the water, the nixie grabs him and draws him into the pond. When the huntsman does not return home, his wife goes out looking for him. She sees his hunting bag lying on the banks of the pond and knows what has happened. The wife keeps vigil at the pond until she goes to sleep from fatigue. As she sleeps, she dreams she climbs a mountain to an old lady's cottage. When she wakes, she seeks out this cottage. The lady gives her a gold comb which she lays on the bank of the pond. A wave comes up and takes the comb. Her husband's head is exposed above the surface of the pond. The girl is then given a golden flute. This time half her husband's body is shown. The old lady gives the wife a golden spinning wheel. When the waves come, her entire husband's body is exposed above the water. She is able to reach out and pull him out of the pond. The nixie becomes angry when she realizes she has lost her man. She causes the pond to overflow its banks. The wife and her husband are turned into a frog and a toad. In this form they survive the flood but are swept miles from each other. When the waters recede, they revert to their human form. Both take up shepherding. One day while herding, they meet up with each other but one doesn't recognize the other. It is not until the man plays a song on a flute and the wife begins to cry that the man recognizes her as his wife. She in turn recognizes her husband.

The Nixie of the Mill-Pond Analysis

The moral of this story might be to be very careful about the promises one makes. The consequences of these promises might be far reaching. Note the use of grouping of three in this story. The wife travels to the old lady's cottage three times. She also makes three offerings to the nixie before she is able to steal her husband away.



The Little Folk's Presents

The Little Folk's Presents Summary

As a tailor and a goldsmith travel together they hear music. They find the source of the music and are surprised to see a group of little people dancing happily in a circle. An old man in the center of the circle beckons them to come into the circle. When they do, the old man shaves their heads clean. The old man then motions for the goldsmith and tailor to fill their pockets with coal lumps. The next morning when the two awake, they are surprised to find the coal has turned into pure gold. Their hair has also regrown. The tailor is satisfied with his gold, but the goldsmith decides to go back one more night. Things go as they did the night before, except the goldsmith fills a whole bag with coal. Much to his disappointment, the goldsmith's coal is still coal when he wakes the next morning. In addition, his hair has not grown back and his gold from the night before has turned back into coal. The hump-backed goldsmith has also grown a lump on his breast. He cries as he realizes these misfortunes are all punishments for being so greedy.

The Little Folk's Presents Analysis

This story is a warning against greediness. There is no real violence in this tale. The worst action that happens is that the men have their heads shaved. The story is based on the magical happenings of a group of dancing little people. These people also give away coal that has the power to turn into gold.

The Giant and the Tailor

The Giant and the Tailor Summary

A boasting tailor meets a giant. The giant asks what the man wants and he responds he wants a piece of bread. The giant proposes the man work for him. The tailor agrees but secretly seeks some way to get away from the giant. His first task is to bring the giant a drink. The tailor sarcastically mentions he should bring the entire spring and well. The giant is troubled at this saying. Next the giant asks the tailor to cut down a few blocks of wood. The tailor again mocks the giant and says he will cut the entire forest down. Finally the giant asks for the tailor to kill a wild boar for supper. The tailor boasts he will kill one thousand boars with one shot. Here the giant suggests they just go to bed. The next morning the giant has the tailor sit on the bough of a willow tree to see the tailor is heavy enough to make the bough bend. The giant bends the bough himself and then lets go. The tailor flies through the air far away from the giant.

The Giant and the Tailor Analysis

Here is the story of one who looks big, and one who talks big. Both these "big" people are actually scared of one another. The tailor is afraid of the giant's size while the giant is afraid of the tailor's big talk. Neither realizes that the other will do no harm.



The Nail

The Nail Summary

A merchant is on the way home from the fair with his gold. As he stops for rest, a stable boy mentions the merchant's horse is missing a nail in one of his shoes. Instead of taking care of the problem, the merchant decides to go on home. At the next stop, the stable boy warns the merchant his horse is missing a shoe. The merchant ignores the problem and continues on. Soon his horse begins to limp, then stumbles and falls. In the fall, the horse breaks a leg and must be left behind. The man is forced to carry his chest of gold on his own back.

The Nail Analysis

The merchant is in such a hurry to get home that he will not take the time to care for his horse. As a result, his horse is injured. The merchant spends more time getting home than he would have if he had just fixed the small problem .



The Poor Boy in the Grave

The Poor Boy in the Grave Summary

A orphaned boy is placed in the care of a rich family. This family does not care for the boy, does not feed him enough, and punishes him often. Once the boy is put in charge of taking a basket of grapes and a letter to a judge. The boy is so hungry that he eats two grapes out of the basket. When the boy arrives with the grapes the judge counts them and finds two are missing. The boy admits he ate the grapes. A second time the boy is sent to the judge with the basket of grapes. Again he eats two along the way. Again he is honest in admitting he ate the grapes. The judge writes the rich family that they should feed the boy better and should teach him right from wrong. The rich man sets the boy at cutting hay and tells him he must finish the task in five hours. The boy is so intent on his work he does not notice he has also cut his coat into tiny pieces. He is so afraid he will be punished that he drinks a pot of honey under the rich family's bed that he believes to be poison. The boy drinks a jug of wine which he also believes is poison. He goes to the graveyard and lies down in a newly dug grave where he passes out and dies. When the rich farmer hears of the boy's death he is afraid he will be punished. Soon after the death, the man's house is burned to the ground and he and his wife find themselves in poverty. They also live with the pain of their guilty conscious.

The Poor Boy in the Grave Analysis

The main character of this story is treated so poorly that he finally decides to take his own life. Although it is the fault of the rich man that the boy felt so poorly about himself, the man does not feel guilty about his actions until it is too late to do anything about them. As a result of his hatefulness, the man and his wife live out the remainder of their lives in poverty and misery.

The True Bride

The True Bride Summary

A girl is abused and given impossible tasks by her evil stepmother. The first task she is given is to pick twelve pounds of feathers in one day. Luckily a magical old lady comes and completes the task. The next task is to empty a pond with a spoon full of holes. The old lady also completes this task. Next the stepmother asks the girl to build her a castle complete with furnishings. Again the old lady completes the task. As the stepmother inspects the castle, she falls in the cellar and is killed. The girl is wooed by many suitors. She finds only one whom she would like to marry. This king's son goes home to gain his father's approval. The girl says she will wait for him beneath a lime tree. She waits for three days but he never returns. Finally she goes and seeks him herself. She is unable to find him and finally has to hire herself out of a cowherd. One day she hears the daughter of the area king is about to be married. She catches sight of the bridegroom and recognizes her own love. In order to get her lover back, she dresses up and attends the three day festival. Finally, on the third day of the festival, the bridegroom recognizes the true bride. The two are married.

The True Bride Analysis

This story contains many of the elements of the fairy tale. There is a cruel, evil stepmother, a forsaken lover, and finally a reunion of the lovers. Things in this story are grouped into groups of three. For instance, the girl is given three impossible tasks, the girl also waits three days for her lover, and then there are three days of the festival where she is reunited with her lover.



The Hare and the Hedgehog

The Hare and the Hedgehog Summary

One day while a hare and hedgehog are out walking, the hare makes a snide comment about the hedgehog's legs. They decide to run a footrace to see which animal can outrun the other. The hedgehog goes home and employs his wife, who looks just like him, to help him. The hedgehog sets up the race track in the two ruts of a road. The wife is to stand at the end of one rut. When the hare calls out he has run the race, she is to cry out that she is already at the finish line. In this manner, the hedgehog "wins" the first race. Not wanting to be outdone, the hare decides to turn around and run the race again. This time it is the husband hedgehog who calls out that he is the winner. The hare runs this race seventy-four times. On the seventy-fifth race, he falls down dead.

The Hare and the Hedgehog Analysis

The moral of this story is neatly lined out for the reader. First, don't make fun of anyone. Second, one should always marry a person who looks similar to themselves.



The Spindle, the Shuttle and the Needle

The Spindle, the Shuttle and the Needle Summary

A girl is taken in by her godmother when the girl's mother and father both pass away. The godmother teaches the child all she needs to know in order to live. When it is time for the godmother to die, she leaves the girl her house, as well as her spindle, shuttle, and needle. A king's son enters the country looking for a bride. He asks to be pointed to the home of the richest girl in the country and also the poorest girl in the country. He rides his horse past the home of the richest girl and finds her sitting out in front of her house. The poor girl is inside her home industriously spinning. She looks up in time to see the prince looking through her window and blushes. The girl sings a song to her spindle that her godmother taught her. At once the spindle jumps from her hand and follows the prince. The girl then sings a song to her shuttle. At once it begins to weave a beautiful rug at the door of the house. The girl also sings another song to her needle. This needle begins to decorate the house in fine silks and velvets. The spindle brings the prince back to the house, as it was directed to do in the song, and the prince sees the girl standing in the midst of her house. He declares she is the richest poor girl he has found. They are married.

The Spindle, the Shuttle and the Needle Analysis

This is a typical fairy tale with the poor orphan girl being married to the handsome prince. Note the way things are grouped into sets of three. There are three magical sewing apparatuses in the story as well as three charms.



The Peasant and the Devil

The Peasant and the Devil Summary

A peasant is working in his field when he sees a devil sitting on a heap of burning coals. The devil is sitting on a treasure that the peasant may have if gives the devil one-half of everything his garden produces for two years. This first year the devil wants his half to contain everything that grows above the ground, while the peasant will keep what grows below the ground. The peasant agrees and plants turnips that year. Seeing that he has been outsmarted, the devil asks for everything that grows below the ground the next year, so the peasant grows wheat. The devil is cheated and goes away angry.

The Peasant and the Devil Analysis

This smart peasant uses his brain to outsmart a devil and wind up with a full crop for two years as well as a treasure. This story shows that brain power is sometimes the most powerful tool available.



The Crumbs on the Table

The Crumbs on the Table Summary

George pesters his chickens until they finally give in and eat crumbs off their mistress' table. As soon as they eat, they are caught by the mistress who beats them.

The Crumbs on the Table Analysis

This story teaches that one should never let anyone talk them into doing something they know they shouldn't do.



The Sea-Hare

The Sea-Hare Summary

In her castle a princess has a set of twelve windows that allow her to see everything in her kingdom. She has proclaimed she will only marry the man who can successfully hide from her sight. The youngest brother of a set of three brothers decides to try the task. He asks for a day to think about the task, then three chances to complete the task before he is killed. The princess agrees to these terms. While he is thinking, the boy goes out hunting. He encounters a raven, a fish, and a fox, all three which tell him if he will spare their lives they will later help him. The next day he asks the raven to help him hide from the princess. The raven hides him in one of her eggs but the princess finds the boy there. Next the boy goes to the fish who swallows him up. The princess has more difficulty finding the boy but is successful. The final day the boy goes to the fox. The fox turns himself into a merchant and the boy into a sea-hare. The merchant-fox sells the boy-sea-hare to the princess. When the princess goes to look for the boy he climbs up into her hair and hides. In this spot, she cannot see the boy from any of her windows. She is angry and knows she has been beaten. The boy turns himself back into a boy and goes to meet the princess. She marries him and respects him because she believes him to be smarter than herself.

The Sea-Hare Analysis

This story teaches that there are some things that are better keep to oneself. Had the boy told the princess he'd had help hiding from her, she would not have had the level of respect that she did for him. As in other stories, note there are main facets of the action grouped into sets of three. For instance, the boy has three tries to successfully hide from the princess, he frees three animals, and is the youngest of three brothers.



The Master-Thief

The Master-Thief Summary

A peasant man and his wife are approached by a rich man who asks them to cook supper for him. As supper is cooking the peasant man talks with the rich man. He discovers the rich man is actually his son. The man is disappointed when the son tells him he is a master thief. The man is afraid for his son and warns him to stay away from the count who is also the boy's godfather. The boy says the count will not harm him and goes to visit his old friend. The boy tells the count he got rich by becoming a master thief. The count tells the boy he will let him go if he can complete three tasks of thievery. First the boy must steal the count's saddle horse from the stable. Second he must steal the sheets from the count's bed while he and his wife are laying on them. Thirdly, the boy must steal the priest and clerk from the church. The boy successfully completes all these tasks. After he completes the tasks, his friend tells him never to return to that land unless he wants to be hanged.

The Master-Thief Analysis

This story holds the valuable lesson of teaching children right from wrong at a young age. Just like trees, when they are old it will be harder to make them straight.



The Drummer

The Drummer Summary

One night while walking by a lake, a drummer boy picks up a piece of linen. Later the voice of a girl asks for her shift back. She tells the drummer she is one of three daughters of a king. All three daughters have been placed under a curse. They live on glass mountain but must come to the lake to bathe. She cannot return to the mountain unless she has her shift. The boy gives it back to her then promises to rescue her. When he gets to the mountain, the boy cannot climb the slick sides. The boy sees two men fighting over a saddle, which they say will take its rider anywhere he wishes to be. The boy tricks the men into running away from the saddle then jumps onto it himself and wishes himself on top of the mountain.

Once on top of the mountain, the boy meets a witch who makes him complete three impossible tasks. A girl comes and helps the boy finish these tasks. She also tells the drummer boy how to destroy the witch. He does so and the princess is set free from the spell. He promises to marry the girl, but when he returns home he forgets the princess and agrees to marry another girl. The princess devises a scheme to get her lover back. On the three nights of the festival celebrating the boy's wedding, she wears three different beautiful dresses. The drummer boy's bride wants the dresses and allows the girl to sleep in the boy's bedchamber with him in exchange for the clothes. The first two nights the boy is given a sleeping medicine and does not hear the girl's crying. The third night he does not drink the medicine and hears her complaints. He remembers her as his true bride and marries her instead.

The Drummer Analysis

The man works hard and overcomes great danger to rescue his princess. Then he is separated from or forgets her. Finally, the girl is forced to engage in bartering her clothes for a chance to speak to the suitor in private. Finally on the third night, the suitor recognizes his true love and marries her.

The Ear of Corn

The Ear of Corn Summary

In olden times, hundreds of kernels of corn grew on one stalk instead of the fifty or sixty that grow today. One day the Lord witnessed a woman thoughtlessly tear off a handful of ears of corn to clean her child's dress. At that time the Lord commanded no more corn would grow. When the people prayed and begged for corn for food, the Lord allowed corn to grow, but only in the scanty ears on which it grows today.

The Ear of Corn Analysis

This story is a reminder not to be wasteful. These good things could be taken away at any time.



The Grave Mound

The Grave Mound Summary

A rich man hears a voice ask him if he shared his wealth wisely. He realizes he hasn't. He hears a knock on the door. It is his poor neighbor seeking some corn to feed his children. This rich man gives double the amount the man asks. He requests only that when he dies the poor man watch over his grave for three nights. Three days later, the rich man dies. As promised, the peasant watches the grave. On the third night there is a soldier who stops for rest in the graveyard. He promises to watch with the peasant. As the two are watching, the devil comes to get the soul of the rich man. The devil tries to bribe the soldier and peasant with money. They accept the bribe but trick the devil so that he must bring more and more gold. Just as the devil has almost brought enough gold, the sun comes up and he is forced to go back to hell. Thus the rich man's soul is saved.

The Grave Mound Analysis

This story shows that a turning away from evil, even if it occurs at the very end of one's life, can save one's soul from eternal hell.



Old Rinkrank

Old Rinkrank Summary

A king promises that anyone who can walk to the other side of the glass mountain without falling will be allowed to marry his daughter. One suitor decides to try the feat and the princess goes with him. It is she who falls. The mountain opens up and swallows her. Neither the king nor anyone else is able to rescue her. While in the mountain, the girl falls into the charge of a man named Rinkrank, who forces her to be his servant. She cleans his house while he climbs a ladder out of the mountain, then comes back with silver and gold. One day she tricks Rinkrank into giving her the ladder so she can leave the mountain. She goes back to her father's kingdom where she marries her suitor who is waiting for her. The king kills Rinkrank.

Old Rinkrank Analysis

This young lady's intelligence saved her from a life of servitude. Note she was not required to go with her suitor over the glass mountain; this action was her own choice.



The Crystal Ball

The Crystal Ball Summary

Fearing they will steal her power, an enchantress changes her sons into animals. One is turned into an eagle and the second a whale. The third son flees his mother and runs away. The youth makes up his mind to travel to the castle of the golden sun and rescue a princess who is being held captive there. He arrives at the castle using a cap he steals from some giants. He finds the princess. She is ugly. She tells him that if he looks at her in the mirror he will see her real beauty. The princess tells the youth that in order for him to rescue her and change her back into her real self; he must get a crystal ball and use it to destroy the power of the enchanter. The youth's brothers help him recover the crystal ball safely. He is then able to break the enchanter's power over the princess and his brothers.

The Crystal Ball Analysis

Although it was unfortunate that the youth's brothers were turned into animals, it was a good thing since they were able to help him get the crystal ball and break the spell. Therefore, this story teaches that even bad things can work out to be blessings in disguise.



Maid Maleen

Maid Maleen Summary

A princess refuses to marry the man her father has chosen for her. She instead wishes to marry a man of whom her father does not approve. In order to break her spirit, the king locks his daughter and her waiting maid in a dark tower for seven years. The two begin to work at the wall of the tower with knives until they manage to look out. They find the kingdom in ruins. They travel to another kingdom where they are hired to be kitchen maids. It just so happens this is the same kingdom where Maid Maleen's lover lives. He is about to be married to another woman who is so ugly she is afraid to let herself be seen. Instead of going to the wedding herself, she forces Maid Maleen to go in her place. Maid Maleen sets the man up so that he will realize who she is and that he should marry her instead of the ugly girl. Maid Maleen is successful and is married to her lover.

Maid Maleen Analysis

The ugly girl thought she could ensure herself a husband if she sent the beautiful Maid Maleen to her wedding in her place. Maid Maleen, however, regains her own lover and exposes the ugly girl for who she really is.



The Boots of Buffalo-Leather

The Boots of Buffalo-Leather Summary

A soldier and huntsman meet each other in the woods and decide to travel together. They stop at a house of robbers to find something to eat. The woman warns them they shouldn't stay, but hides them behind the stove and promises them any scraps. The soldier goes out from behind the stove, sits with the robbers, and eats. He puts a charm on them so they are immobile as he and the huntsman eat their fill. The old lady then shows them the way to the closest town. The soldier alerts his comrades that he has found a group of robbers. They bind the men and drive them back into town. As they come closer to the town, the soldier begins to hear sounds of a celebration. He learns the king has been away and is arriving back in town this day. To the soldier's surprise, the huntsman reveals that he is the king. The soldier is afraid he will be killed for treating the king as an equal, but the king reassures him and promises him that he will be taken care of the rest of his life.

The Boots of Buffalo-Leather Analysis

This is a story of hidden identity. The king poses as a common huntsman and joins a soldier on an adventure where a den of robbers is turned immobile when the soldier toasts their health. The king learns his lesson and asks the soldier never to drink to the king's health.

The Gold Key

The Gold Key Summary

A boy finds a golden key while collecting wood in the forest. He searches the forest floor and finds an iron door to which the key fits. The story ends before the boy opens the door.

The Gold Key Analysis

This story requires the reader to use their imagination as to what might be in the box.



St. Joseph in the Forest

St. Joseph in the Forest Summary

A woman has three daughters. The oldest is wicked, the second oldest not quite as bad as her older sister, and the youngest is very good. The mother dislikes the youngest daughter. She sends the girl away into the woods, hoping she will be lost. The girl reaches the home of St. Joseph. He gives her roots to scrape and use to make dinner. She makes dinner and allows Joseph to eat his fill before she eats. When it is time to sleep, the girl insists that St. Joseph take the bed and she sleep in the straw. The next morning St. Joseph is not there, but has left her a large bag of money which she takes back to her mother. The next day the second eldest daughter decides to go to St. Joseph's house also. After she cooks dinner, she only allows St. Joseph to have his share of food. She then suggests they share the bed. The next morning, there is only a small bag of money, out of which she takes two pieces before she gives it to her mother. The third day the eldest daughter goes to St. Joseph's home. She cooks dinner but does not allow St. Joseph to eat until she has finished. This eldest daughter takes the bed to herself and insists that St. Joseph sleep on the straw. The next morning there is no money for the girl. She is horrified to find another nose has grown onto her original nose. She cries to St. Joseph and begs him to take the second nose away. He feels sorry for her and does so. She goes home to her mother and claims she lost the money she was given. The mother makes the girl go back and look for it. Snakes come out of the woods and kill the girl with their venom.

St. Joseph in the Forest Analysis

In this story each child is rewarded for the kindness she has shown a stranger. This tale shows that kindnesses will be rewarded in the quantity they are shown. Note the story is grouped into elements of three. There are three sisters and three trips to St. Joseph's house.



The Twelve Apostles

The Twelve Apostles Summary

A woman with twelve sons is so poor that she finally feels she must send her children out one by one to look for bread. She prays only that all her children will be alive when the Lord is born. One by one the sons are all taken by a small boy angel to a cavern where they are rocked to sleep. The boys sleep for three hundred years until the time the Lord is born. At this time, they are awakened and serve Him as the twelve apostles.

The Twelve Apostles Analysis

This story attempts to explain and make some differentiation between the apostles and regular men. In this story, the apostles' mother prayed they would see the Redeemer of the world. Therefore, they are put to sleep by an angel and awakened three hundred years later.



The Rose

The Rose Summary

A girl goes to the forest to pick up wood and is assisted by a strange child. This child gives her a rose and tells her that when the rose is fully bloomed, he will come back. One day the mother finds the child in her bed, dead. At this point the rose is in full bloom.

The Rose Analysis

The child who helped gather the wood was death. The blooming of the rose specified how much time the girl had left before she died.



Poverty and Humility Lead to Heaven

Poverty and Humility Lead to Heaven Summary

A king's son asks a poor man what he can do to get to heaven. The poor man tells him he must live in poverty and humility for seven years. The king's son changes clothes with the poor man and starts his life of poverty. After seven years, the king's son goes back to his father's palace but no one there recognizes him. He writes a letter to the queen telling of his miserable life but does not include his identity. The queen gives him a place to stay under the stairs. She also gives him food, but one of the servants does not take the son the food as instructed. As a result, the son becomes sick and finally dies. When he is found, the man lies with a rose in one hand and a lily in the other. He has also written on a piece of paper a record of his life.

Poverty and Humility Lead to Heaven Analysis

A king's son seeks heaven and is told he can only get there by living a life of poverty and humility. This lifestyle leads to the man's untimely death, which in turn allows him to go to heaven.



God's Food

God's Food Summary

A rich sister refuses to share bread with her poor sister and her poor sister's five children. The rich sister's husband cuts himself a slice of bread and blood flows from the loaf. The rich sister is terrified and tells her husband what happened. The husband goes to help the poor sister. He finds her praying. Three of the children are already dead. She says God will now take care of them. As she says this, the two youngest children die along with their mother.

God's Food Analysis

This story is a chilling and dramatic representation of what can happen if those with money and food don't share with those who are poor and needy.



The Three Green Twigs

The Three Green Twigs Summary

A hermit lives his life carrying water to a high mountain. An angel goes with him each day and feeds the hermit when his work is finished. One day as he watches a criminal going to the gallows, the hermit thinks to himself that the man is getting his just punishment. From this time on the angel no longer brings food to the man. The hermit realizes God is angry with him. He finally discovers the reason for this anger is his judgment upon the man. Only God has the right to judge others. As his penance, the hermit is forced to beg for food and lodging until three green twigs grow from a piece of dead wood he is given. The hermit finds himself in the home of robbers. The robbers are told to leave the man alone because he is paying penance for a crime. When they ask the nature of his crime, the robbers are touched that the man is paying so severe a punishment for so small a crime. They wonder what the punishment for their crimes will be, and repent of their evil ways. The next morning, the hermit is found dead, but three green twigs have grown up out of the piece of dead wood.

The Three Green Twigs Analysis

This story teaches that even small sins are of great importance to God. The hermit is finally cleared of his sin when he helps three robbers transform their lives. Note the groupings of three in this story. For instance, there are three robbers and three twigs, one twig for each robber.



Our Lady's Little Glass

Our Lady's Little Glass Summary

A waggoner's wine cart is stuck. Our Lady comes by and tells the man that if he will give her a glass of wine, she will get his cart unstuck. He gladly offers the wine but has no glass. She picks a flower from the field into which he pours the wine. As Our Lady drinks the wine, the cart is unstuck. The flower has since been called Our Lady's Little Glass.

Our Lady's Little Glass Analysis

This tale describes how a particular flower got its nickname. It is assumed that Our Lady refers to the Virgin Mary. It is highly unlikely, however, that even Mary could have actually used one of these flowers as a wine glass.



The Aged Mother

The Aged Mother Summary

An old woman sits mourning because she is all alone. The woman is especially sad and angry with God because of the death of her sons. She hears the bells ring, telling her it is time to go the church for prayers. She notices the church is full of her dead relatives. They tell her to look at the altar if she wants to see her sons. One son is hanging from a gallows while the other is bound to a wheel. At once she realizes what extra sorrow she would have had to bear if her sons had actually died this way instead of dying in their youth. The old woman immediately thanks God for His divine care and timing.

The Aged Mother Analysis

The lesson taught in this story is although God's timing is not always understood, it is perfect. The old lady would have suffered much more sorrow if she had witnessed her sons being killed in violent ways rather than in youth. Note the dark tone of this story with ghosts as well as descriptions violent death.



The Heavenly Wedding

The Heavenly Wedding Summary

One day in church a poor boy hears a priest say that in order to get to heaven one must go straight forward. The boy starts out walking until he reaches a church which he believes to be heaven. The priest decides to let him stay there in exchange for work. While there, the boy notices how thin the wooden image of Mary and the Baby Jesus is. The boy begins to save half his food and offers it to the image, which begins to grow fat. The boy is sick for several days and cannot feed the image as usual. When he returns to health, he first goes to the statue and apologizes for not feeding it. The statue responds in a kind manner and explains the boy's good will was enough. Mary adds the boy will attend a wedding with her the following week. As he is preparing for the wedding, the boy dies and goes to the eternal wedding.

The Heavenly Wedding Analysis

This story teaches that the way to heaven is gained by continuing to do what is right and keeping a pure heart. This story contains the magical element of the fairy tale in that the wooden image of Mary and the Baby Jesus begins to grow fat with the food the boy gives it.

The Hazel Branch

The Hazel Branch Summary

While gathering strawberries for the Christ Child, Our Lady is surprised by an adder in the woods. She hides herself in a hazel-bush and waits until danger is passed. Our Lady blesses the bush, declaring from that time on the hazel-bush would protect others from snakes.

The Hazel Branch Analysis

This story explains why some people believe the hazel branch holds protective power against snakes.



Characters

The Princess appears in Various tales

The princess is a character that appears in many of these fairy tales. Sometimes this girl is a princess by birth and sometimes she becomes one by marriage. Although the princess in a fairy tale is usually associated with a character who has a trouble free and charmed life, these fairy tale princesses generally have to overcome some hurdle in order to claim their throne. For instance, in "Rapunzel" the prince falls in love with Rapunzel but the girl is locked in a tower. In order for her to become a true princess, she must find a way to get out of the tower. In "Cinderella", the girl must outsmart her stepmother in order to attend the ball where she meets her prince. In other stories, such as "The Skillful Huntsman", the princess is forced to marry the man who rescued her even though this man is sometimes undesirable. Everything generally always turns out well for the princess in the end of the story, however. Often it is learned the undesirable person lied about his heroic deeds and is killed while the true handsome hero is uncovered. Sometimes after the princess marries the undesirable person, he is transformed into her prince charming, such as in the story "Hans the Hedgehog". Some princesses, such as the one in "The Cunning Little Tailor", set themselves up for failure. This princess agrees to marry anyone who can answer her riddle. She does not believe the person who will achieve this feat is a small, insignificant tailor. When the tailor does answer the riddle, she is shocked and alarmed she will have to actually marry beneath her status.

The Evil Stepmother appears in Various tales

Many of these fairy tales contain an evil stepmother who is horribly cruel to her stepchildren. These evil stepmothers often double as witches and use their powers to harm their stepchildren and help their biological children prevail. This is so in the case of "Hansel and Gretel". Their stepmother forces their father to take the children into the woods and leave them so the parents can survive in the time of famine. Also consider "Cinderella", where the stepmother would not let Cinderella go to the festival even after she completed her assigned tasks. When the prince comes to see if the lost slipper fits any of the girls living there, the mother actually instructs her biological children to mutilate their feet so that they will fit in the shoe. Another evil stepmother appears in the story "The True Bride". This stepmother makes her stepdaughter work ceaselessly at tasks that are impossible to accomplish. The stepmother also constantly degrades and punishes the girl. Finally, which is the case with most stepmothers, this evil woman is killed and the girl is set free from her torment.



The Witch appears in Various tales

Another character who appears often in fairy tales is the wicked witch. These witches generally disguise themselves in some less evil form to lure their prey and then reveal their true nature. This occurs in the story "Hansel and Gretel", where the witch pretends to be a kind old woman until she has the children in her grasp. These witches are generally known for their cruel nature; however, other characters seem to find it hard to stay away from these witches. In the story "Rapunzel", the man knows the garden belongs to a witch but still steals from it twice because his pregnant wife desires a salad made with a plant that grows in the garden. Also in the story "The Blue Light", the soldier suspects the witch is up to no good and refuses to hand her the light until he is safely on the ground. The witch becomes angry and drops the man and the light back into the well to die. In other cases, the witch will use another character to implement her evil plans. This occurs in the story "Donkey Cabbages", where the witch forces her daughter to deceive her lover and take away both his bird's heart and his wishing-cloak. Some characters appear to be witches but in reality are not. For example, the old lady in "The Goose-Girl at the Well" is thought at first to be a witch. In reality, she is simply an intelligent old woman.

The King appears in Various tales

Although a symbol of nobility and power, the kings in fairy tales are generally always portrayed as weak and compromising characters. Although it might be considered a high honor to be in service for the king, kings are well known for not paying their soldiers well. This lack of adequate pay causes much unhappiness on the behalf of the soldiers. For instance, in the story "The Devil and His Grandmother", three soldiers desert the king's army for lack of pay. Soldiers released from the king's army are often sent away penniless, which causes them to retaliate against the king. This is seen in the story "The Blue Light", where the soldier commands the king be killed for his miserly ways. Kings also don't appear to be able to do anything for themselves. Whether it is locating a match for their daughter or finding the love of their own life, the king is always employing someone else to do the job for him. Often kings promise the one who fulfills these particular tasks a certain reward, and then goes back on this promise. This action is seen especially clearly in cases where the king promises his daughter in marriage to the man who can perform a certain task. When this man who performs the task turns out to be a common working man, the king almost always goes back on his word.

Thumbling appears in Various tales

Thumbling is a tiny character who appears in the story "Thumbling's Travels" as well as in "Thumbling". Thumbling has a habit of being eaten alive by animals and getting out of his troubles by offering the animals who want to have him for dinner food from his parents' home. The difference seen in Thumbling is that in one story he assists robbers in stealing from a king while in another he foils a group of robbers' plans to steal from a preacher. Thumbling also appears in the story "The Young Giant", where he is



transformed by a giant from a tiny man to a giant. In this story, Thumbling is unusually cruel as he voices a desire to hit and kick people.

Little Red-Cap appears in Little Red-Cap

Little Red-Cap is the nickname given to a girl who wears a red velvet cap given to her by her grandmother. The girl learns her lesson about talking to strangers when her discussion with a wolf leads her into a position that puts both herself and her grandmother into danger. Those familiar with the modern version of this fairy tale might recognize Little Red-Cap as Little Red Riding Hood.

Mercurius appears in The Spirit in the Bottle

This is the name of the spirit which the boy in "The Spirit in the Bottle" releases from the bottle. Mercurius is the Latin name for the god in Roman mythology who was considered to be a messenger. He was also a god of profit or trade. The use of this particular name for the spirit is appropriate since it is with the rag that Mercurius gives the boy that the boy is able to send himself back to school, become a famous doctor, and support himself and his father.

Little Briar-Rose appears in Little Briar-Rose

Because of her parents' mistake in not inviting one wise woman to a party, Briar-Rose is cursed to prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall asleep. The child is released from her curse when a prince with good timing shows up just as the curse is coming to an end. In her more modern form, this character is known as Sleeping Beauty.

Hans appears in Various tales

When a male character is actually given a name in these tales, odds are that the name will be Hans. Characters with this name appear in the story "Clever Hans" as well as "Clever Elsie" and "The Thief and His Master". Hans is also the main character in the tale "The Gnome", "Hans the Hedgehog", and "The Giant and the Tailor". In these stories Hans ranges from a king's son who is born with half the body of a hedgehog and half the body of a man to a giant who is afraid of most everything. In some stories Hans is a clever young man while in others he is the village idiot.

Gretel appears in Various tales

Like the name Hans for men, Gretel was a common name for females appearing in fairy tales. Gretel appears in the tale "Hansel and Gretel", where she is a poor young girl who is abused by her stepmother. Although she is taken care of by her older brother, it is Gretel who saves the day at the end of the story when she shuts the witch in the oven.



Gretel also appears in the story "Clever Gretel". This character is clever, but only in covering up her own sins. She eats a fowl intended for her master's guest, then covers up her wrongdoing by telling the guest her master plans to cut the guests ears off. Gretel then tells her master the guest ran off with the cooked fowls.



Objects/Places

The Wellappears in The Frog-King, or Iron Henry

This well is the place where the frog prince is imprisoned by a witch.

The Thirteenth Doorappears in Our Lady's Child

This thirteenth door is the door in heaven which the girl is instructed not to open.

Rampionappears in Rapunzel

Rampion is a plant that blooms with bluish flowers. This plant has an edible root which is often used in salads.

A House Made of Candy and Cakesappears in Hänsel and Gretel

This house is an important fixture in the story "Hänsel and Gretel" as it is this structure that lures the two children into the witch's power.

Blood-stained Eggappears in Fitcher's Bird

It is this egg that will not come clean that clues the wizard in this story that the women he has kidnapped have not been obedient while he was away.

The Juniper Treeappears in The Juniper Tree

It is under this magical tree that the woman originally wishes for a child, which she receives. The woman dies in childbirth, however, and is buried beneath the tree. Later the sister lays the bones of her dead brother beneath this tree where the bones come back to life as a bird.

Starwortappears in The Six Swans

The sister in this story must use sew this aquatic plant into six shirts in order to turn her brothers back into humans. Starwort may also be called chickweed.



The Stoveappears in The Gnome and The Goose-Girl

In these stories the stove is the appliance to which the king tells the princess to tell her secrets. In both cases, the princess gives away the identity of the people who have sworn her to secrecy.

The Golden Castle of Strombergappears in The Raven

This castle is the spot where the man in the story "The Raven" must travel in order to set the king's daughter free from her curse.

Göckerli Hillappears in Old Hildebrand

This hill is the location where the parson tells a man to go and buy a bag of laurel leaves in order to heal his sick wife.

The Shroudappears in The Shroud

In the story "The Shroud", the dead child is unable to rest comfortably in his grave because his mother's tears continue to wet his burial shroud. When he stops crying and his shroud dries, he is able to rest in his grave.

The Sack of Wisdomappears in The Turnip

It is with this term that the poor brother tricks a student into letting him out of a sack hung in a tree.



Themes

The Supernatural

One motif that is often seen in fairy tales is the use of magic or the supernatural. Examples of this include talking animals such as in the story "The Strange Musician" and "Snow-White and Rose-Red". There are also other unnatural aspects included in the stories. An example of this is hair that is strong enough to be climbed by a full-grown human without breaking, as in "Rapunzel". Magical characters are also able to produce guns that hit their targets each time they are shot, such as in the story "The Jew Among Thorns". Characters in these fairy tales travel to places such as the moon, the sun, heaven, and hell, all of which are places that the common human cannot travel to with natural means. Often characters are also able to transform themselves into inanimate objects such as churches, chandeliers, or ponds.

Emphasis on the Use of the Number Three

The use of the number three is an important theme that recurs in many fairy tales. In many of these stories things tend to happen in groups of three. For instance, in the story "Our Lady's Child", the girl is asked three times by the Virgin Mary if she opened the thirteenth door. In the same story, three children are taken from the girl before she admits her guilt.

The number three is meaningful in many ways. First, the number three is the number of parts of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Also in the Bible, the number three is seen as the number of perfection. In a more universal view, the trinity can refer to the connection of the body, mind, and spirit. It also can refer to the interconnected relationship between art, science, and religion as these institutions impact culture.

Three is also the number that symbolizes the solid in geometrical terms. It takes three lines to form a complete planar object. Therefore, three is seen as the number of completeness in math as well as religion. It also requires the three dimensions of height, depth, and length to create a solid object. From these mathematical deductions, it is seen how the number three is seen as a symbol of completeness and unity even in secular belief.

Another much simpler reason why these story tellers may have grouped things together in groups of three is that it made their stories easier to remember and to retell. When each story is based on three main characters or a series of actions or occurrences that happen exactly three times, it is much easier to remember the story than if things occurred a random number of times in different stories.



The Theme of Darkness

Common belief connects fairy tales with stories appropriate for young children. In their original form, however, these stories generally have a dark tone rather than the happy "all ends well" feeling that is generally expected from a fairy tale. Although the stories do generally end on a happy note, this happiness usually does not happen before someone is almost burned at the stake, as in "The Twelve Brothers" and "Our Lady's Child".

Characters in the fairy tales are often cruel to one another and sometimes to themselves. In "Hänsel and Gretel", for example, there is a kind old lady in the story who turns out to be a witch who likes to eat children. Also, the witch is burned alive in a hot oven, a rather painful death. In other stories, characters are hanged, their heads are chopped off, their eyes gouged out, and bodies mutilated. These are not the actions one would expect to find in a children's story.

Teaching of a Moral

A theme visited in the majority of the fairy tales is the attempt to teach a moral. The stories are often told with the intention of teaching a moral lesson. Lessons taught by the stories include the importance of never giving up on a dream, never underestimating oneself, and never taking advantage of other people. Readers of the tales are also taught the potential pitfalls of trying to trick a person or blame someone else for a crime they did not commit. Some stories teach children, even grown ones, to have respect for their parents. This is seen in the story "The Toad", where the grown son is forced to wear a toad on his face after he refuses to feed his elderly father. "The Stolen Farthings" teaches that wrongs done on earth will continue to haunt a person even after they die. The most important aspect of these stories is that they teach these lessons in a way that is entertaining and humorous. Those listening to the tales are often having so much fun listening they don't realize they are also being taught a valuable lesson.



Style

Point of View

These stories are all told from the third person point of view. In each case, the narrator of the story is omniscient and knows the thoughts and emotions of each of the characters in the story. This collection of stories was originally passed from generation to generation orally; therefore, they were told by a storyteller. Since the stories were told by a third person and passed along by a storyteller, it makes sense they would be presented in the third person point of view.

The bulk of these stories are told half in the form of exposition and half in the form of dialogue. The exposition allows the storyteller to tell part of the story while the dialogue allows the characters to speak for themselves. It seems the storyteller would have altered the tone of their voice to give each character its own unique voice. The majority of these stories are told through exposition. In addition to the dialogue and the exposition, there are also bits and pieces of poetry and verse. This poetry and verse is most often used in stories told merely for entertainment purposes. Sometimes the bits of poetry are silly rhymes or lines of a charm that are repeated throughout the story. Many of the stories contain other elements of the story and the action that are repetitive, an aspect that makes the stories easy to remember and repeat.

Setting

The settings of these stories are generally unspecified places in some fictional kingdom or another. Some of the stories, however, are set in places that really exist. For instance, one story is set in East India. In addition to these real and imagined settings, there are also settings included that could not be reached without non-human means. These places include spots like the sun, moon, and stars. Sometimes the characters in these stories travel to places that can't be reached by living humans at all. These settings include heaven and hell. The fictional and unrealistic characteristics of the settings for these fairy tales mimic the unrealistic content of the stories themselves. Palaces, castles, poor men's huts, locked towers, and enchanted forests all make up the backdrops for these fairy tales.

Language and Meaning

When collecting these stories, the Grimm brothers wrote them down as they were being told. Because these are translations of oral stories, the language is very informal and relaxed. The language used to tell the stories is the common language of the days in which the stories were told. Even though many of the tales do teach a moral lesson, they are mostly meant to entertain. In the dialogue of the story, one can almost hear the voice of the storyteller stressing some sections and emphasizing some words and phrases. Dialogue is included in which each character is allowed to voice their opinion,

thoughts, and emotions. Although the stories deal with some supernatural or unusual topics, the language they are written in makes them very easy to understand.

Structure

This book is divided into two hundred fairy tales and ten children's legends. The tales range in length from one page to ten pages. The average is about four pages in length. Each tale has a title that generally either names the main character of the story or gives the reader some idea about what the story will be about. Although there are two hundred fairy tales, some of the tales are very similar in content. Some appear to be more developed translations of other stories while others just share a few common points or themes.

The tales are widely varied in reference to plots. Some of the stories are only short riddles or rhymes and really have no discernible plot at all. An example of this type of story is "My Household". Some of the stories, such as "The Shroud", have very simple plots. More complex plots can be seen in stories like "Hansel and Gretel". A few stories, such as "The Griffin", have a main plot and also a subplot

The stories are very easy and enjoyable to read. Many of the stories contain similar elements and similar plots. The majority of the stories also do not give names to the characters. These stories generally merely refer to the characters as "the girl", "the boy", or "the princess." After reading several of the stories at one sitting, they may seem to run together because of these similar story lines and similar characters with no specified names.



Quotes

"The miller thought to himself, the wolf wants to deceive someone, and refused, but the wolf said, if you will not do it, I will devour you. Then the miller was afraid, and made his paws white for him. Truly, this is the way of mankind." *The Wolf and Seven Kids*, p. 40

"The wedding was held with great magnificence and small joy, and out of a tailor a king was made." *The Valiant Little Tailor*, p. 120

"'But why did the fox get the poor chickens to eat?' 'Oh, you silly, your father would surely love his child far more than the fowls in the yard!'" *Thumbling's Travels*, p. 216

"'It is you,' said the aged King, 'and you have pronounced your own sentence, and thus shall it be done unto you.'" *The Goose-Girl*, p. 411

"But the dwarf bewitched him, and he, like the other, rode into a ravine, and could neither go forwards nor backwards. So fare haughty people." *The Water of Life*, p. 450

"'It seems to me,' said he, 'just as if I had won the highest prize. My mother was right after all, she always said that whoever trusts in God and only has good luck, can never fail.'" *The Two Travelers*, p. 496



Topics for Discussion

Take one of the original versions of the fairy tale and compare and contrast it with its modern day version. Stories you might choose include "Rapunzel", "Little Red-Cap", or "Cinderella".

Why are the majority of characters in these fairy tales not given names? Often they are simply referred to as "the boy" or "the girl". What impact, if any, does this lack of names have on the story as well as the emotions of the reader? For what reasons might the characters not have been given names?

Consider the roles of social status in the fairy tales. For instance, the poor but beautiful young maiden is generally always rescued from her poverty from the rich king's son.

Explore the tradition of passing stories from generation to generation by oral means. What makes these stories easy to remember and pass along by mouth? Are stories still passed along by this means today? Why or why not?

Explore the idea of marriage to the king's daughter being used a form of reward in many of the stories. How would this practice be viewed in modern day society? Why was the king's daughter such a desirable match? Why was the value of social status placed above affection?

Consider the idea of the grotesque and the cruel as it is presented in these fairy tales. How did the storytellers justify telling stories that often included such violent aspects as cutting people up and eating them? Formulate your answer using specific examples from several stories. Tell why or why not the violence is appropriate.

Discuss the timeliness of these stories. Most of these tales date back hundreds of years. Are they still as appropriate today as they were when they were first told or have these stories become dated?

In your opinion, for which audience - children or adults - were these stories intended? Explain your answer.