Five Famous Fairy Tales

Retold by Jane Rollason

SUMMARY

'The Table, the Donkey and the Stick'
There are three brothers. Two of them are cheated out of magic possessions – a table that makes food and a donkey that makes gold – by a jealous old man, and made to look foolish in front of their neighbours when they try to demonstrate the magic. The third brother hears about this and, when he encounters the same old man, he uses his magic possession – a stick which beats people on command – to regain the magic table and the magic donkey. All ends happily.

'The Prince and His Servants'
A poor prince gathers a group of servants around him who each have one amazing power. Fat Man can eat anything. Long Arms can reach anything. Quick Eyes can see anything. Big Ear can hear anything and Cold Man can cool anything. All of these special powers come in useful when a jealous queen sets the prince some seemingly impossible tasks before he can win the hand of her daughter.

'The Glass Box'
When Hans meets an old woman, and tells her he wants money, she shows him how to get money, gold and jewels in return for a glass box. However, because she is impatient, he does not give her the glass box but keeps it for himself. He learns how to use the glass box to summon one of three large dogs that ensure he will never be poor again. Later, he uses the magic powers of the box to help him to meet Princess Anna who has been imprisoned by her unhappy father. He uses it again to save himself when he is sentenced to die for presuming to woo the young woman. Even the old king is happy when Hans and Anna marry and become the new king and queen.

'The Fisherman and the Giant'
A poor fisherman releases a giant from a gold jar where he has been imprisoned for over 300 years. At first the angry giant wants to kill the fisherman but later agrees to help him to get rich. He shows the fisherman where beautiful fish swim in a blue and gold sea, and is paid handsome for them by the king. But when the king tries to cook them, strong people appear and destroy the fish. The king insists on seeing where the fish come from and finds, near the blue and gold sea, a king imprisoned by the man's queen. He tricks the queen into releasing the king, and then kills her. The two kings become friends and send beautiful things to the fisherman and his family.

'The White Birds'
When ten sons are banished by their stepmother and changed into birds, their sister, Elisa, sets out to find them. She learns that she can break the spell if she makes coats for the birds from golden flowers, but only on condition that she doesn’t speak until she has finished the coats.

She follows these instructions and, while she is making the coats, she meets a king who takes her back to his country. The king’s jealous younger brother plots against her and persuades the people that her silence is sinister, and her search for the special flowers is connected with a plot to kill the king. However, one of the birds warns the king of his brother’s plans to burn his wife to death, and returns in the nick of time to save her and throw his brother from the city walls. Elisa, meanwhile, has finished the coats and, when she puts them on the birds, they change back into her fine brothers.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859) were German brothers and scholars. They were educated at the University of Marburg. Jacob was interested in medieval literature and language, while Wilhelm was a literary critic. After several years in Kassel, the brothers worked at the University of Gottingen. They then moved to Berlin, where they spent the rest of their lives. Both brothers wrote numerous academic works as well as fairy stories, and Jacob Grimm’s contribution to linguistic theory (Grimm’s law of sound shift) was a major development in the study of dead languages.

Hans Christian Anderson (1805–1875) was born in Odense in Denmark. His childhood was one of poverty and neglect and at the age of 14 he ran away from home to join the theatre. His first poetry and prose was published in 1822 and he travelled extensively throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. He wrote more than 150 stories for children, including The Ugly Duckling, The Emperor's New Clothes, The Snow Queen and The Little Mermaid. The
Thousand and One Nights is a collection of stories from Arabia. The king hates women. He marries a new woman every day and killed her the next morning. But then he married Sheherazade. She told him a different story every night but not the ending so he had to wait until the next night. After a thousand and one nights, she had no more stories, but by then the king loved her and did not kill her.

B A C K G R O U N D  A N D  T H E M E S

These five fairy tales, from at least three different countries, share common themes. All involve a search, either for love or money, or both. All end happily, at least for the main characters. Kindness is also present throughout the stories—men, women, fairies, strange creatures, all show kindness to the hero or heroine. Where kindness is shown, it is usually, although not always, repaid. Jealousy is also present throughout. A mother is jealous of her daughter, a man is jealous of the magical possessions of his lodgers, a servant is jealous of her mistress, a king is jealous of his brother, a king is jealous of his wife’s lover. Jealousy usually leads to punishment.

So love and money, kindness and jealousy. The raw material of life plus a sprinkling of magic to make everything come right for the kind people in the end.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises coveting shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student’s Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/group work activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Put students into small groups and ask them:
1. to make a list of people and things they expect to find in fairy stories.
2. to work together to retell a fairy story they know well.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

‘The Table, the Donkey and the Stick’

Put students into groups of six to act out the story. The characters are:

- Tom
- Bob
- Jack
- The mother
- The jealous man

Tell students that there is one extra character—a friend of the jealous man—with whom he plans the tricks.

‘The Prince and His Servants’

Put students into small groups and ask them to think up a challenge for the prince and his servants. If possible, the challenge should be impossible, even with their special powers. Then ask the groups to describe their challenges and choose the best (i.e. most impossible) one.

‘The Glass Box’

Remind students that Hans defeats the first plan by the jealous servant by writing Xs on hundreds of houses. Put students into pairs to think of a way to defeat the second trick—the stones.

‘The Fisherman and the Giant’

Put students into pairs to role play the scenes between the king and the queen—pages 28 and 29.

‘The White Birds’

Put students into pairs to role play a scene between Elisa and the king. He wants her to tell him the story of her life but she cannot speak. She has to mime everything while he tries to understand.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students to decide which story they like most and then to work in groups with people who chose the same story. In their groups, they must make a list of reasons why the liked their story and why they thought it was better than the others. Each group must then appoint a spokesman to give the reasons for choosing their story and you, the teacher, decides which set of reasons is the best.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the Before You Read sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

- ‘The Table, the Donkey and the Stick’ and ‘The Prince and His Servants’ appear (v) to begin to be seen
- donkey (n) a grey or brown animal like a small horse with long ears
- fairy tale (n) a story for children in which magical things happen
- gold (n) a valuable soft yellow metal
- ice (n) water that has frozen and become solid
- jealous (adj) feeling angry or unhappy because someone else has something that you wish you had
- jewel (n) a valuable stone such as a diamond
- king (n) the male ruler of a country
- magic (n) a special power used to make strange or impossible things happen
- once (adv) at one time in the past
- poor (adj) having very little money and not many possessions
- prince (n) the son of a king or queen
- princess (n) the daughter of a king or queen
- queen (n) the female ruler of a country
- servant (n) someone whose job is to live in another person’s house and do such jobs as cleaning and cooking
- stick (n) a long thin piece of wood, especially one that has fallen from a tree
- ‘The Glass Box’ stone (n) a small rock or piece of rock
- ‘The Fisherman and the Giant’ and ‘The White Birds’ fisherman (n) a man who catches fish as a job or a sport
- giant (n) an extremely tall, strong man in children’s stories
- jar (n) a round glass container with a lid, used for storing food
Penguin Readers Factsheets

Student’s activities

Five Famous Fairy Tales

Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

Activities before reading the book

Work in groups of three. Each person must read one section of the Introduction then talk about the information to the other two people in the group.

Activities while reading the book

‘The Table, the Donkey and the Stick’

1 Complete Tom’s story with a suitable word from the box in each space.

| back | bed | food | house | journey | letter | man | mother | night | nothing | son | table | town | village | year |
|------|-----|------|-------|---------|--------|-----|--------|-------|---------|-----|-------|------|---------|

(a) Tom worked for a kind man in the next ...
(b) Tom worked very hard for one ....
(c) The kind man gave him a ....
(d) When he said to the table ‘I am hungry,’ , wonderful ... appeared.
(e) He carried the table on his ...
(f) One day he thought ‘I would like to see my ... again.’
(g) On the last night of his ... , –
(h) – he came to an old ...
(i) An old ... lived there.
(j) When Tom was asleep that ... , he took the magic table.
(k) He put a new table next to Tom’s ....
(l) Tom’s mother was happy when she saw her youngest ...

2 Work in pairs. Tell Bob’s story. Use some of the sentences from Exercise 1.

(e) ‘the stick will jump out and hit you.’
(f) Jack took the book and started his journey home.
(g) He came to the house of the kind old man.
(h) When Jack went to bed, he put the box on the door.
(i) The jealous man came into the room and put his head on the box.
(j) Suddenly, Jack jumped out of the box.
(k) The stick helped the jealous old man.
(l) Jack took the table, the donkey and the man to his mother’s house.

‘The Prince and His Servants’

1 Complete the names of Jack’s servants.

(a) Fat
(b) Big
(c) Quick
(d) Long
(e) Cold

2 Which servant ...?

(a) can hear the birds singing in a country over the sea
(b) can make the sun disappear
(c) can eat ten chickens and a hundred cakes
(d) can see through buildings
(e) has arms as long as trees

3 Who ...?

(a) wanted to marry the princess
(b) saw the jewel in the river
(c) drank the water in the river
(d) got the jewel and gave it to the prince
(e) ate thirty chickens
(f) put something in the prince’s glass of wine
(g) fell asleep
(h) heard the princess calling
(i) jumped into the river
(j) made a great fire under the prince’s room
(k) opened his coat and made the room colder
(l) opened the door of the room
(m) ran out of the room
(n) lived happily with the prince and the princess

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‘The Glass Box’

1. Match the things from the first part of the story. Make three lists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Door</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td>eggs</td>
<td>money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second</td>
<td>oranges</td>
<td>jewels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third</td>
<td>plates</td>
<td>gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Tell the first part of the story. Use your lists from Exercise 1.

3. Where did Hans put ...?
   (a) the money
   (b) the gold
   (c) the jewels

4. What happened when Hans ... ?
   (a) hit the box once
   (b) hit the box two times
   (c) hit the box three times

5. How did Hans ... ?
   (a) bring the princess to him the first time
   (b) find out about the X on his door
   (c) get the glass box when he was in the king’s house

6. Work in pairs. Tell the last part of the story. What did each dog do?

‘The Fisherman and the Giant’

1. Match the adjectives and nouns to make phrases from the story.

   (a) poor (i) cups
   (b) dead (ii) daughter
   (c) old (iii) feet
   (d) gold (iv) fish
   (e) white (v) fisherman
   (f) great (vi) giant
   (g) youngest (vii) hair
   (h) rich (viii) horse
   (i) red, white and gold (ix) jar
   (j) strange (x) man
   (k) red (xi) sea
   (l) blue and gold (xii) smoke
   (m) stone (xiii) water
   (n) magic (xiv) woman

2. Work in pairs. Tell the story, using phrases from Exercise 1.

‘The White Birds’

1. Put these events from the first part of the story in order.

   (a) A fairy came to Elisa and told her to make ten coats from gold flowers.
   (b) A man with dogs came to Elisa’s house.
   (c) Elisa followed the river to the sea.
   (d) Elisa met an old woman.
   (e) Elisa ran away from the king’s house.
   (f) Elisa saw ten white birds.
   (g) Once there was a king who sent away his ten sons.
   (h) That night, Elisa’s brother came to her.
   (i) The man took Elisa, the flowers and the coats to his country.
   (j) The old woman took Elisa to the river.
   (k) The queen changed the ten boys into ten white birds.
   (l) The ten white birds changes into ten young princesses.

2. Are these sentences from the second part of the story true or false?

   (a) The king had a jealous older brother.
   (b) One day the king left the city.
   (c) Elisa, the queen, went with him.
   (d) Elisa found a place with gold flowers.
   (e) The king’s brother followed Elisa to the place.
   (f) Elisa planned to kill the king.
   (g) One of the birds flew to the king.
   (h) The king killed the bird.
   (i) The people from the city brought sticks and built a large fire.
   (j) They put Elisa on the fire.
   (k) Elisa put the coats on the birds.
   (l) The ten white birds changes into ten young princesses.

Activities after reading the book

All these stories include at least one jealous person. In which story is:

(a) a mother jealous of her daughter?
(b) a man jealous of the things that people have?
(c) a servant jealous of her mistress?
(d) a king jealous of his brother?
(e) a king jealous of his wife’s servant?