

Book Anthology/ Collection Choices

by Pia Dewar

There are a great many reasons why collections and annotated anthologies of fairy tales would have uses to a modern young adult, beyond the simple pleasure of “being still,” and enjoying the story (Sale, 1977, p. 393). It is true that fairy tales are interesting in themselves, but developing young adults benefit from reading annotated collections because they aid in the development of a young mind beginning to question and to analyze. Zipes comments that a fairy tale succeeds best when, “it provokes the reader to stand back, take a second look, doubt, and reflect” (Zipes, 2009, p. 83). While children may be happy to accept fairy tales at face value, young adults are often not. As teens develop more complex analytical skills they can see that “meaning and entertaining do not exclude each other” (Simonsen, 1985, p. 29). This article examines some of the more important reasons for collecting anthologies of fairy tales for teens as they look beyond surface meanings of fairy tales. The annotated list provided at the end of this article will also provide some primary examples of fairy tale collections, annotated anthologies and guides to interpretations that young adults might find useful.

The prolific availability of modern day fairy tale accounts, such as those told by Walt Disney, which has led many people to think of fairy tales “as romances for children and misread the ancientness of the tales into fantasies of some paradise,” but it is crucial to remember that up until the twenty-first century, fairy tales served a different purpose other than just telling

stories (Sale, 1977, p. 374). Fairy tales, in many ways reflected local beliefs and superstitions that Christianity had “tamed” but were present in the cultural consciousness. Indeed, Jackson points out “it was not so long ago that these tales reflected widespread beliefs” (1973, p. 120). These beliefs were dark and frightening and came out of a time period when living was a lot harder and precarious. “It is sheer romanticism to think of ages past being happier than our own, it was grimmer than we care to imagine” and fairy tales of ages past reflect that (Jackson, 1973, p. 138). Annotated anthologies would put that context into perspective for a teen reader.

Fairy tales were not in fact written for children.

Neither were fairy tales purely meant as entertainment for the very young. Rather, “fairy tales in particular and folk tales in general have among their many functions that of imparting moral instruction” (Jackson, 1973, p. 138). Fairy tales were originally quite a bit darker and dealt “very specifically with incest, female mutilation and dismemberment,” rather than tooth fairies, and Father Christmas (Hariss, 2011, p. 1; Jackson, 1973, p. 140). Annotated anthologies and collections of fairy tales as they were originally meant to be understood would allow a teenager to really perceive that great depth and analyze the work in context. In this way, a teen broadens their understanding of popular culture entertainment and moves away from the “distortion caused when fairy tale literature became thought of as children’s literature” (Sale, 1977, p. 374).

Annotated collections and anthologies of fairy tales would also be really useful tools for teens that want to find connections, similarities, variations, and

patterns between stories. In this way, “patterns of relationships can be established,” (Jackson, 1973, p. 125). It is especially important with fairy tales because they often blur into related fields such as myths, legends, realistic folk fables, and cautionary tales (Sale, 1977, p. 372). It is only through a comparison of multiple sources or versions of something that we are able to discern the qualities or characteristics of a topic like fairy tales because there is so much material, and the “variety of readings and interpretations” are what sharpens a young adult’s analytical skills (Zipes, 2009, p. 83; Simonsen, 1973, p. 36; Sale, 1977, p. 382). For example, one only has to read fairy tales from the Middle East and Africa to realize that magical objects are more central to the plot lines of fairy tales from that region of the world as opposed to more Western European stories that put more stock in magical people (Sale, 1977, p. 382). It is only through multiple readings of something that, “we can become better readers, able to recognize the familiar repeated actions or characters, able thus to see how each individual story works” and fairy tale collections and anthologies are crucial to the development of that understanding (Sale, 1977, p. 384).

Aside from being useful as academic tools, fairy tale collections also have the added benefit of being a link to one’s childhood. Fairy tales remind us of simpler times and a “nostalgic longing for simplicities,” and they become “a symbol for the boundary between childhood and adulthood” (Wood, 2006, p. 282). Fairy tale collections can have really attractive pictures that complement the stories and add to the overall appeal of the genre. Images can be really crucial to creating an engaging experience and some

of the collections that have been included at the bottom of this article exemplify those characteristics. People enjoy novelty, but they also gravitate towards familiarity. For people who grew up with fairy tales, they become a way of reconnecting to that childhood and, “it is through the fictive projections of our imaginations based on personal experience that we have sought to grasp, explain, alter, and comment on reality” (Zipes, 2009, p. 78). Fairy tale anthologies are basically collections about the adventures of everyday life for ordinary men and women and teens can relate those stories to their own lives and experiences (Jackson, 1973, p. 124; Simonsen, 1985, p. 30). Collections of these stories create links between the past and future and this permits the “recognition of similarities and differences between the situation described in the tale and the life of the listener, which permits the working out of real problems and at the same time, distancing from them” (Simonsen, 1985, p. 29).

It is important for an intellectually and emotionally maturing audience to be able to question roots of stories and to go beyond popular or mainstream culture representations. However, it is also important to remind young adults of the simple joy that reading a well-loved tale can bring. All fairy tales tell us something about how people thought, what their concerns were, and what sort of lives they led; stories unify us in our past. As Sale said, “I read a collection of fairy tales with absorption and pleasure, never obliged to accept or reject a story because it is or isn’t as good as some other, knowing that all are necessary, the testimony of an older time” (Sale, 1977, p. 393). It is good to remember, and reconcile that memory with annotated versions in anthologies that might alter one’s perspective of old tales.

References

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Collection Suggestions

Haugaard, E.C. (Ed). (1974). *Hans Christian Andersen: The Complete Fairy Tales and Stories*. Anchor Books: USA.

This collections has 156 tales, making it a truly complete collection and certainly valuable to a person collecting fairy tales! Hans Christian Andersen is one of the most famous writers of fairy tales in the Western tradition, so his works definitely belong on this list. His fairy tales have been translated into several languages and have been in print since they were written in the mid nineteenth century. This collection is a prime example of a book with really attractive images that complement the stories therein.

Mondschein, K.C., & M. Hunt (Ed). (2011). Grimm, J., & W. Grimm. *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales*. Baker & Taylor: California, USA.

A total of 201 fairy tales is in this edition, along with a comprehensive and informative introduction. Mondschein discusses the context and times of the Brothers' Grimm, which is important information for studying fairy tales in their original setting. There is also a section discussing the modern interpretation of fairy tales and considerations for modern readers that I think a teen would find particularly useful.

Holme, B. (Ed). (1979). *Fairy Tales of the Brothers' Grimm*. Viking Press: New York.

This edition contains 12 fairy tales, and some of the more popular Grimm fairy tales, such as Snowdrop (11), Hansel and Gretel (19), and Rumpelstilskin (59). What is special about the Grimm collections is that they were amongst the very first children's picture books to be illustrated, "in the modern sense," by illustrator George Cruikshank. This edition is illustrated by Kay Neilsen in imitation of those larger-than-life colored images (p. 6 and 7). This inclusion would be valuable to a teen trying to survey a broader range of visual images associated with fairy tales and the work of the brothers' Grimm is among the most iconic in the fairy tale tradition in connection with those visual descriptions.

Minard, R. (Ed). (1975). *Womenfolk and Fairy tales*. Holt, Rinehart, & Winston Co: USA.

"This collection of outstanding folk and fairy tales is focused on a unique and special theme: in every story there is a girl or a woman who is the moving force. No passive Sleeping Beauties here, waiting meekly for Prince Charming

This book is peopled with active, intelligent, capable and courageous human beings who happen to be female” (Jacket Flap). This is a collection of fairy tales from cultures around the world: Celtic, European, Scandinavian, Japanese, Chinese, Persian, and African. Teens should see what else is taught around the world in terms of a literary tradition and it is helpful to study the genre from a gendered perspective. This book would aid in that capacity. It is a uniquely selective publication that represents many diverse backgrounds with a rather unique feminist perspective. This collection would be improved, however, if there were some color illustrations.

Foss, M. (Ed). (1986). *Treasury of Fairy tales: With Classic Illustrations*. DoubleDay Canada: Canada.

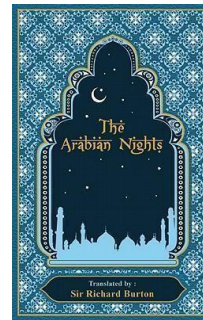
This is a comprehensive collection of the more famous fairy tales, 24 in all. Some of the titles include Goldilocks and the Three Bears (7), Cinderella (38), The Princess and the Pea (55), Jack the Giant Killer (72), and Snow White (126).

Nearly every other page has a beautiful, hand drawn color picture on the whole page, related to the story across from it. It is a very engaging way of reading the stories. This book needs to be a part of a fairy tale collection because it is a prime example of what Western European tends to classify as fairy tales for children.

Although this edition is not annotated, it is still a useful source as an example of what the western tradition has come to treasure as “classic” fairy tales and a teen can use that for comparative analysis.

Burton, R. (Translator), & K. Mondschein (Ed). (2011). *The Arabian Nights*. Baker & Taylor: San Diego, USA.

This collection contains the most popular Arabian Nights stories such as Sinbad the Sailor (120), Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (408), and Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp (289), and many more. Mondschein’s introduction explains the context of the tales and the continued western fascination with them. This is a good book to include because it provides a contrast between fairy tales from different cultures. There are no images which is a drawback, but it is still an artfully made book bound in leather with gilt edges.



Tatar, M. (Ed). (2003). *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Princeton University Press: Oxford, England.

This is the expanded edition (originally published in 1987) with some beautiful illustrations. This edition discusses the darker and macabre side of fairy tales that may appear intended to delight children but are not. Fairy tales are about sex, violence, victims, and terrible injustice (3). The method of presentation is what has sanitized these stories, but this edition discusses these darker meanings in the first section. Then author Tatar goes on to analyze the real meanings of heroes and villains (85-179), followed by a very useful section of annotated nursery and household tales (195). This edition also contains images that complement the text nicely.

Zipes, J. (2012). *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*. Princeton University Press: Oxford, UK.

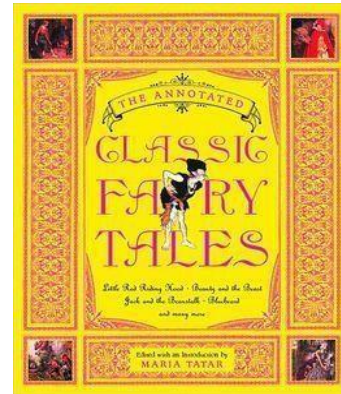
This particular publication might be more technical and abstract than a teenager might need, but the subject matter it discusses is very relevant to the interpretation of fairy tales from a cultural and social perspective. Zipes' opening chapter immediately discusses, "The Cultural Evolution of Storytelling and Fairy Tales" (Zipes, 2012, p. 1), and provides more detailed analyses of some fairy tales as examples, such as Bluebeard (Zipes, 2009, p. 41). This book would take a careful read, but it would certainly be useful to teens that are "unpacking" fairy tale meanings.

Author Jack Zipes is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on fairy tale lore and the cultural meaning and evolution of them. He has published prolifically on the subject and many other topics surrounding fairy tale lore, and has written a translation of the Brothers' Grimm fairy tales himself.

Tatar, Maria. (2002). *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*. Norton and Co: New York, USA

This collection is useful to a teen because it includes famous fairy tales by authors such as Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers' Grimm, Charles Perrault, and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont. These authors are recognized as being the primary authors of fairy tales, so the inclusion of them in such a publication is appropriate. Tatar sets the context with an opening chapter on, "scenes of storytelling," to give the young reader some context (Tatar, 2002, p. 3), and each fairy tale is annotated as it is told so the reader can compare the analysis in-text. Maria Tatar is an academic expert on children's literature, specifically in folklore.

She has published many books on the subject of fairy tales and their meanings and is considered one of the foremost authorities in her field. Her expertise would certainly be a help to a young adult reader learning about fairy tales.



Betts, C. (Ed). (2009). *The Complete Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault*. Oxford University Press: New York, USA.

Charles Perrault, a French author from the seventeenth century, is often regarded as the founder of fairy tales as a genre and created his works based on fairy tales already told. Some of his more famous tales include Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Puss in Boots, and Bluebeard (Betts, 2009, p. 99, 104, 115, 130), all of which have been included in this comprehensive collection. As a crucial writer of fairy tales, an edition focusing on Perrault's contributions to the genre should certainly be included in this list of sources. As an additive to the text, this edition also includes a few well-chosen full-page drawings as they would have been depicted in Perrault's time period. There is also a helpful appendices included that provides details on some of the related tales and a section on explanatory notes that a teen would find very useful (Betts, 2009, p. 167).