



Fairy Tales

Twelve beloved tales by Perrault, Grimm, and
Andersen

CLASSIC STORY SHELF · THE ACTIVE HOME

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Cinderella



There was once a kind young girl whose stepmother made her work all day and sleep by the fire. Because of the cinders, everyone called her Cinderella. Her two stepsisters were proud and unkind, but Cinderella stayed gentle.

One day the king's son gave a great ball. The stepsisters went in their finest dresses, while Cinderella stayed home in rags. She was crying in the garden when her fairy godmother appeared.

“You shall go to the ball,” said the godmother. She touched a pumpkin with her wand — it became a golden coach! She turned mice into horses, and

Cinderella's rags into a gown of gold and silver, with tiny glass slippers. "But be home by midnight, or all will turn back."



At the ball, no one had ever seen so lovely a guest. The prince danced with her all evening. But as the clock began to strike twelve, Cinderella ran — down the palace steps and away, leaving one glass slipper behind.

The prince sent the slipper to every house in the kingdom. The stepsisters squeezed and squeezed, but it would not fit. Then Cinderella said, "May I try?" It slipped on like it was made for her — because it was.

The prince married Cinderella. And Cinderella, who had a kind heart, forgave her stepsisters and gave them rooms in the palace. Kindness had been its own magic all along.

Lesson: Be kind and gracious — kindness is its own magic.

Words to know: **godmother** — a kind older woman who helps and watches over a child · **midnight** — twelve o'clock at night

Puss in Boots



A miller died and left his three sons his mill, his donkey, and — for the youngest — only a cat. “What use is a cat?” sighed the young man. But the cat said, “Give me a bag and a pair of boots, and you shall see.”

In his fine boots, Puss caught a rabbit and carried it to the king. “A gift,” he said, “from my master, the Marquis of Carabas.” Day after day Puss brought gifts, until the king longed to meet this marquis.



One day Puss heard the king would ride by the river. “Master, bathe in the river today,” he said. As the king passed, Puss cried, “Help! The Marquis of Carabas is drowning — and robbers stole his clothes!” The king sent fine clothes at once, and the young man looked so grand that the king's daughter smiled at him.

Then Puss ran ahead to a great castle where a fearsome ogre lived. “They say you can turn into a lion,” said Puss. “Watch!” roared the ogre, becoming a lion. “And into something small — a mouse?” squeaked Puss. “Easier still!” said the ogre — and the moment he became a tiny mouse, Puss pounced. That was the end of the ogre.

When the king arrived, Puss bowed low. “Welcome to the castle of the Marquis of Carabas!” The king was so impressed that the young man married the princess — and Puss became a great lord, who never chased mice again except for fun.

Lesson: Quick wits and confidence can open doors.

Words to know: **mill** — a building where grain is ground into flour · **ogre** — a big, scary giant in fairy tales

The Fairies



A widow had two daughters. The elder was proud and rude, like her mother. The younger was sweet and kind — and so her mother sent her to do all the work.

Twice a day the younger girl carried water from a far-off well. One day an old woman asked her for a drink. “Of course, good mother,” said the girl, and gave her the freshest water in her best cup. But the old woman was a fairy in disguise! “For your kindness,” she said, “every word you speak will come out as flowers and jewels.”



When the girl got home, roses and diamonds fell from her lips as she talked. Her mother was thrilled — and sent the elder sister to the well at once, with the finest bottle.

At the well, a grand lady appeared and asked for a drink. “Do you think I came here to serve you?” snapped the elder sister. But the lady was the same fairy. “For your rudeness,” she said, “every word you speak will come out as toads and snakes.” And so it did!

The younger sister went out into the world, and a prince, passing through the forest, heard her story as pearls fell from her lips. He brought her to the

palace, where her kind words were treasured all her life.

Lesson: Kind words bring gifts; rude words bring trouble.

Words to know: **fairy** — a magical person with special powers · **rude** — not polite or kind

The Elves and the Shoemaker



There was once a shoemaker who had become so poor that he had only enough leather left for one pair of shoes. He cut the leather in the evening and went sadly to bed.

In the morning — wonder of wonders! — the shoes stood finished on his table, stitched perfectly. A rich customer bought them for double the price, and the shoemaker bought leather for two pairs more.

Every night the same thing happened: shoes finished by morning, finer than any he could sew.

Soon the shoemaker was no longer poor. “We must see who is helping us,” said his wife.



So one night they hid and watched. At midnight, in crept two tiny elves, no taller than a hand, with no clothes at all. They hopped onto the bench and stitched and hammered — tap tap tap — until the shoes were done, then skipped away.

“The poor little things have no clothes!” said the wife. “Let us thank them.” She sewed tiny shirts, coats, and trousers, and the shoemaker made tiny shoes. On Christmas Eve they laid the little clothes on the bench and hid again.

The elves found the clothes, dressed themselves with squeaks of joy, and danced out the door singing. They never came back — but the shoemaker and his wife were lucky and happy for the rest of their days.

Lesson: Kindness and thanks make good fortune grow.

Words to know: **shoemaker** — a person who makes and fixes shoes · **leather** — strong material used to make shoes and bags

Sweet Porridge



There was once a poor, kind girl who lived with her mother, and they had nothing left to eat. In the forest the girl met an old woman who gave her a little pot.

“When you say, ‘Cook, little pot, cook,’” said the old woman, “it will cook sweet porridge. When you say, ‘Stop, little pot, stop,’ it will stop.” The girl carried the pot home, and she and her mother were never hungry again.



One day, while the girl was out, her mother said, “Cook, little pot, cook.” The pot cooked and cooked, and she ate a fine bowl of porridge. But she had forgotten the words to stop it!

The porridge rose over the edge. It filled the kitchen, spilled into the street, and flowed into the next house, and the next — a great river of porridge, and still the pot cooked on!

At last the girl came home. “Stop, little pot, stop!” she cried — and the pot stopped. The whole town came with spoons and bowls, and anyone who wanted to get home had to eat their way through the sweet porridge streets.

Lesson: Learn how to stop a good thing before it overflows.

Words to know: **porridge** — a soft, hot food like oatmeal
· **overflow** — to spill over the edge

The Bremen Town Musicians



A donkey who had worked hard all his life was growing old, and his master had no more use for him. So the donkey ran away. "I will go to Bremen," he said, "and be a town musician."

On the road he met an old hunting dog, panting. "Come with me to Bremen," said the donkey. "You can beat the drums." Next they met a cat with a face as long as a rainy week. "You can sing at night." And a rooster, crowing for all he was worth. "You can wake the town!"



At evening they came to a cottage with light in the windows — but inside sat a band of robbers, feasting! The animals held a council. The donkey stood on his hind legs at the window. The dog climbed on the donkey, the cat on the dog, and the rooster flew to the top.

Then — hee-haw! bow-wow! meow! cock-a-doodle-doo! — they crashed through the window with the mightiest music the robbers had ever heard. The robbers thought a monster had come and fled into the forest, never to return.

The four musicians ate the feast, blew out the lights, and settled in. They never did reach Bremen — but

they had a cozy home, good friends, and music every evening for the rest of their days.

Lesson: Good friends together can do what none could do alone.

Words to know: **musician** — a person — or animal! — who makes music · **robber** — a person who steals things

The Golden Goose



A man had three sons. The two elder sons were sent to cut wood, and each met a little gray man who begged for a bite of cake. “Keep it all for myself!” they said — and each hurt himself and had to go home.

Then the youngest son went, with only a plain cake baked in the ashes. When the little gray man asked, the boy said, “It isn't much, but sit down and share it with me.” They ate together, and the old man said, “Because you have a kind heart, I will give you good luck. Cut down that old tree.”



In the roots of the tree sat a goose with feathers of pure gold! The boy carried it to an inn for the night. The innkeeper's three daughters each tried to pluck just one golden feather — and the moment they touched the goose, they stuck fast!

In the morning the boy tucked the goose under his arm and marched off, with the three girls trotting behind whether they liked it or not. The parson tried to pull them free — and stuck. The sexton grabbed the parson's sleeve — and stuck. Two farmers touched the sexton — and stuck too!

Now in that city lived a princess who had never, ever laughed. The king promised her hand to anyone who could make her laugh. When she saw seven

people trotting one behind another behind a boy and his goose, she laughed until the tears ran. And so the kind youngest son married the princess.

Lesson: Sharing what you have brings good luck.

Words to know: **inn** — a small hotel where travelers eat and rest · **feather** — one of the soft, light coverings of a bird

The Frog Prince



A princess loved to play with a golden ball beside a cool fountain in the forest. One day the ball rolled from her hands — plop! — into the deep water. The princess cried and cried.

A frog poked his head out. “I will fetch your ball,” he said, “if you promise to be my friend: let me eat from your plate, drink from your cup, and sleep on your pillow.” “I promise,” said the princess — but she was thinking, “Silly frog! He can never leave his fountain.”



The frog dove and brought the ball up. The princess snatched it and ran home without a backward look. But the next day, at dinner — splish, splash, splish — something hopped up the marble stairs and knocked at the door.

Her father the king said, “What you have promised, you must keep.” So the princess let the frog eat from her golden plate and drink from her cup. That night she set him on her pillow, wished him a kind goodnight, and gave the ugly little frog a gentle kiss for keeping his promise.

And in the morning, where the frog had been, stood a handsome prince! A wicked spell had turned him into a frog, and only a friend who kept her promise

could set him free. They became the dearest of friends — and in time, much more.

Lesson: Keep your promises, even when it's hard.

Words to know: **fountain** — a deep pool of water in a garden or forest · **promise** — to say you will truly do something

Little Red Riding Hood



Once there was a sweet little girl who always wore a red riding hood her grandmother had made her. One day her mother said, "Take this cake and a bottle of grape juice to your grandmother, who is sick. Go straight there, and don't stray from the path."

In the forest, Red Riding Hood met a wolf. "Where are you going, little girl?" he asked in his smoothest voice. "To Grandmother's house, under the three big oaks." The wolf smiled a sly smile. "And look at all these pretty flowers! Why don't you pick a bunch for her?"



While Red Riding Hood gathered flowers, the wolf ran straight to Grandmother's house, knocked, and gobbled Grandmother up in one gulp! Then he put on her nightcap, climbed into her bed, and waited.

Soon Red Riding Hood arrived. "Oh, Grandmother, what big ears you have!" "All the better to hear you with." "What big eyes you have!" "All the better to see you with." "What a big mouth you have!" "All the better to eat you with!" — and the wolf gobbled her up too.

Just then a huntsman passed and heard the wolf snoring. He snipped open the wolf's tummy with his scissors — and out stepped Grandmother and Red Riding Hood, safe and sound! The wolf woke, saw

the huntsman, and ran away into the forest, never to bother them again. And Red Riding Hood promised herself: never again would she stray from the path.

Lesson: Stay on the path, and don't dawdle with strangers.

Words to know: **dawdle** — to waste time going slowly ·
hood — a soft covering for the head, often attached to a cloak

The Princess and the Pea



There was once a prince who wanted to marry a real princess, but though he traveled the whole world, he could never be quite sure he had found one. One stormy night, there came a knock at the castle gate.

Outside stood a girl, soaked through by the rain, with water running from her hair and her shoes. "I am a real princess," she said. The old queen thought, "We shall soon see about that!"



The queen went to the guest room and laid a single pea on the bedstead. Then she piled twenty mattresses on top of the pea, and twenty soft quilts on top of the mattresses. There the princess was to sleep.

In the morning they asked how she had slept. “Oh, terribly!” said the princess. “I hardly closed my eyes all night. I lay on something so hard that I am black and blue all over!”

Everyone gasped. Nobody but a real princess could be so tender as to feel a pea through twenty mattresses and twenty quilts! The prince married her, and the pea was put in a museum, where you may see it still — if nobody has taken it.

Lesson: Even the smallest thing can reveal the truth.

Words to know: **mattress** — the soft, thick pad you sleep on in a bed · **pea** — a tiny, round, green vegetable

The Emperor's New Clothes



An emperor loved new clothes more than anything in the world. One day two cheats came to his city and said they could weave the most wonderful cloth ever seen — cloth so magical that anyone who was foolish or unfit for his job could not see it at all!

The emperor gave them gold and silk and set them to work at two big looms. The cheats pretended to weave day and night — but the looms were empty. The silk and gold went straight into their own bags.



The emperor sent his wisest minister to look. The minister saw... nothing! "Oh no," he thought, "am I a fool? I must not let anyone know." So he praised the beautiful colors. So did the next official. So did everyone.

At last the emperor himself went, and saw nothing at all. But he thought, "Am I a fool? The whole city must never know!" So he praised the cloth loudest of all, and agreed to wear his new suit in a grand parade.

The day of the parade came. The courtiers carried the train of the invisible suit high in the air. The emperor marched proudly — in nothing but his long underclothes — while everyone cried, "What a

magnificent suit!” Everyone except one little child, who said, “But he hasn't got anything on!” And then all the people whispered it, and the emperor held his head higher and marched on.

Lesson: Speak up when something isn't true — even if everyone else pretends.

Words to know: **emperor** — a ruler, like a king, over many lands · **invisible** — cannot be seen

The Ugly Duckling



In the warm summer, a mother duck sat on her eggs. One by one they hatched — cheep, cheep! — all but the biggest egg. When it finally cracked, out tumbled a big, gray, awkward duckling, quite unlike the others.

“He is too big and too ugly,” said the farmyard animals. The ducks nipped him, the hens pecked him, and even his brothers and sisters were unkind. At last the poor duckling ran away.



He hid in the marsh with the wild ducks, but hunters came. He stayed with a cat and a hen, but they laughed at him for wanting to swim. So he went on alone, and the cold winter came, and he very nearly froze in the ice.

Spring came at last. In a beautiful garden, three white swans glided across a pond. The duckling's heart beat fast. "I will go to those royal birds, even if they peck me for my ugliness."

He bowed his head toward the water — and oh! What did he see in the clear stream? His own picture: no longer a gray, clumsy bird, but a swan, white and graceful. The children on the bank clapped and cried, "The new swan is the most

beautiful of all!” And he rustled his feathers and thought, “I never dreamed of such happiness when I was the ugly duckling.”

Lesson: Growing up takes time — you may belong somewhere you haven't found yet.

Words to know: **duckling** — a baby duck · **reflection** — the picture you see of yourself in water or a mirror

About this book

These twelve fairy tales come from Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen, in translations that are in the public domain. A few of the sterner moments in the oldest versions have been softened for young readers. These retellings, and the illustrations, are original to The Active Home.

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