THE TRUTH ABOUT FAIRY TALES

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“If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales.

….If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.”
CAN YOU RECALL YOUR FAVOURITE FAIRY TALE?
WHAT DO FAIRY TALES HAVE IN COMMON?
• Hope
• Moral judgement – and moral comfort
• Criticality
• Conflict resolution and unconscious anxiety
• Hero role models (often flawed!)
• Teach resilience – help us to deal with adversity
• Emotional interpretation and management (Bruno Bettelheim)
• Justice – the underdog
“Fairy tales are more than true; not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.”

~G.K. Chesterton
ORIGINS

- Oral storytelling as far back as we can possibly know about our ancestors
- Incorporated into all cultures and religions
- Matriarchal

- In printed form from 1600s onwards
- More patriarchal
BUT ALSO – THESE ARE MORAL TALES

• Represent the cultures and mores in which they exist

Examples:

• Obey your elders
• Do not stray from the path of righteousness
• Girls should be meek, mild and virtuous
• Boys – be brave and heroic
The True Meanings...

• Over time, fairy tales have become sanitised and westernised. Plenty of evidence from original versions.

“Rook di goo, rook di goo!

There’s blood on her shies.

The shoe is too tight – the bride is not right!”

• In Cinderella, the step-sisters’ eyes are plucked out by birds!
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

• Red – indication that Little Red Riding Hood has reached puberty. This is a cautionary tale.
• Real title is ‘Little No-Cap’ She wears a red cloak without a cap – her hair is uncovered.

• She strays from the path – she is naïve and easily fooled
• The wolf is a sexual predator – this is a story about the loss of virginity (elle avait vu le loup – she has seen the wolf)
The young girl falls asleep – under a spell, to save her from death.
After a while, a travelling King finds her asleep – and rapes her.
She gives birth to twins whilst asleep
One of the babies sucks at her finger whilst she is asleep, removing the splinter, and she awakes

The Queen finds out about her husband's infidelity and demands the babies are killed, cooked and served to him.
The good cook substitutes lamb
The King chooses the virtuous sleeping beauty – burns his nasty wife instead

“Lucky people, ‘tis so said, are blessed by fortune whilst in bed”
Modern books and films emphasise different aspects of fairy tales.

They can be said to be a representation of current culture.

May be we can even see how this is changing, even now…
Angela Carter
The Curious Room

Mothers Grimm
Wickedly dark, astonishingly funny, happy endings not guaranteed

Danielle Wood
Award-winning author of The Alphabet of Light and Dark
WANT TO KNOW MORE?


AFTER CLASS….

• Find an opportunity to volunteer to read to a group of children – about 7 years old is good.

• See if you can discover ‘enchantment’ with them!

• **Tip** – practice dramatic reading first. Think about the point of the book.
OR WHY NOT WRITE YOUR OWN....