the oxford companion to fairy tales

the oxford companion to fairy tales serves as an essential reference work for scholars, students, and enthusiasts interested in the rich and diverse world of fairy tales. This comprehensive guide provides detailed entries on the origins, themes, motifs, and cultural significance of fairy tales from around the globe. Covering a vast array of folklore, myth, and legend, the companion explores how these stories have evolved and influenced literature, art, and popular culture over centuries. It also offers critical insights into the work of key collectors, storytellers, and theorists who have shaped the study of fairy tales. This article delves into the structure, content, and impact of the oxford companion to fairy tales, highlighting its role in both academic research and general understanding of fairy tale traditions. The following sections outline the book's background, thematic coverage, editorial approach, and its importance within the broader field of folklore studies.

- Overview and Background
- Content and Structure
- Key Themes and Topics
- Editorial Approach and Contributors
- Significance and Influence

Overview and Background

The oxford companion to fairy tales was published as a scholarly resource aimed at consolidating knowledge about fairy tales from diverse cultural contexts. It emerged from the growing academic

interest in folklore and storytelling traditions, which gained momentum in the 20th century. This companion volume is part of Oxford University Press's renowned series of reference works, designed to offer authoritative and accessible information on specialized subjects. The book compiles contributions from experts in folklore, literature, anthropology, and cultural studies, ensuring a multidisciplinary perspective. Its publication marked a significant step in legitimizing fairy tale studies within the academy, emphasizing the importance of these narratives beyond mere children's stories.

Content and Structure

The oxford companion to fairy tales is organized alphabetically, featuring entries that cover a wide range of topics related to fairy tales. These include individual tales, recurring motifs, influential authors, and theoretical concepts. The entries vary in length, from concise definitions to in-depth analyses, allowing users to gain both quick reference information and detailed scholarly insights.

Types of Entries

The content includes:

- Summaries and interpretations of classic fairy tales from different cultures
- Biographical profiles of key collectors like the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault
- Discussions of motifs such as magic, transformation, and quests
- Examinations of fairy tale genres and narrative structures
- Explorations of theoretical frameworks applied to fairy tales

Organization and Accessibility

The alphabetical arrangement facilitates easy navigation, making it useful for both researchers seeking specific topics and readers exploring general fairy tale knowledge. Cross-references within entries enhance the interconnectedness of the material, guiding readers through related concepts and stories.

Key Themes and Topics

The oxford companion to fairy tales covers a multitude of themes that are central to understanding the complexity and cultural richness of fairy tales. These themes reflect the universal human experiences encoded within these narratives and the variations that arise from different cultural backgrounds.

Common Motifs and Symbols

Motifs such as enchanted objects, magical creatures, transformation, and moral lessons are extensively analyzed. The companion explains how these elements function within stories to convey cultural values, fears, and aspirations.

Cultural and Historical Contexts

Entries contextualize fairy tales within their historical periods and cultural milieus, illustrating how these stories adapt over time and geography. This approach highlights the dynamic nature of fairy tales as living traditions.

Influential Storytellers and Collectors

The companion profiles important figures who have preserved and popularized fairy tales. These include folklorists, writers, and translators whose work has been pivotal in disseminating fairy tales worldwide.

Editorial Approach and Contributors

The editorial strategy behind the oxford companion to fairy tales emphasizes scholarly rigor combined with accessibility. The editorial team curated contributions from a diverse group of specialists, ensuring comprehensive coverage of both Western and non-Western fairy tale traditions.

Multidisciplinary Perspectives

The contributors bring expertise from folklore studies, literary criticism, anthropology, and history, allowing the companion to address fairy tales from multiple angles. This multidisciplinary approach enriches the analysis and situates fairy tales within broader cultural and academic contexts.

Quality and Reliability

Each entry is carefully reviewed for accuracy and clarity, making the companion a trusted source for academic research and casual inquiry alike. The inclusion of bibliographic references and suggested further readings supports deeper investigation.

Significance and Influence

The oxford companion to fairy tales has become a foundational text in the study of folklore and fairy tales. It is widely used in academic courses, research projects, and by general readers interested in the genre’s history and meaning.

Impact on Fairy Tale Studies

The companion has contributed to the recognition of fairy tales as a serious subject of study, paving the way for new research methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches. Its comprehensive scope has helped standardize terminology and conceptual frameworks within the field.

Broader Cultural Importance

By documenting and analyzing fairy tales from around the world, the companion fosters appreciation for cultural diversity and the shared human heritage embodied in storytelling. It also illuminates the ongoing relevance of fairy tales in contemporary media and popular culture.

Uses in Education and Research

The oxford companion to fairy tales is a valuable tool for educators teaching literature, folklore, or cultural studies. It provides authoritative content that supports curriculum development and student learning. Researchers rely on it for accurate historical data, thematic insights, and comprehensive bibliographies.

1. Comprehensive alphabetical entries covering a wide spectrum of fairy tale topics
2. Multidisciplinary contributions from leading experts
3. Detailed exploration of motifs, themes, and cultural contexts
4. Profiles of key figures in fairy tale collection and analysis
5. Accessible yet scholarly presentation suitable for diverse audiences

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales'?

'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales' is a comprehensive reference book that provides detailed information on the history, themes, motifs, and cultural impact of fairy tales from around the world.

Who edited 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales'?

The book was edited by Jack Zipes, a renowned scholar in fairy tale studies and folklore.

When was 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales' published?

'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales' was published in 2015 by Oxford University Press.

What types of entries are included in 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales'?

The book includes entries on fairy tale characters, authors, themes, motifs, cultural contexts, and critical interpretations.

Who would benefit from reading 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales'?

Scholars, students, writers, and anyone interested in the study and appreciation of fairy tales will find this companion a valuable resource.

How does 'The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales' contribute to fairy tale scholarship?

It offers authoritative and up-to-date scholarship that contextualizes fairy tales within cultural, historical, and literary frameworks, making it an essential tool for research and education.

Additional Resources

1. *The Oxford Dictionary of Folklore*

This comprehensive reference work delves into the rich traditions of folklore from around the world. It covers myths, legends, customs, and fairy tales, providing detailed explanations and cultural contexts. The dictionary is an essential resource for understanding the origins and variations of many fairy tale motifs.

2. *The Classic Fairy Tales* by Maria Tatar

Maria Tatar's collection presents some of the most enduring fairy tales from the Western tradition, accompanied by insightful commentary. The book explores the historical and cultural significance of these stories, illuminating their deeper meanings and societal functions. It is a valuable resource for both casual readers and scholars interested in fairy tale studies.

3. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* by Jack Zipes

Jack Zipes examines how fairy tales have been used to challenge and critique societal norms and power structures. The book explores the transformative power of storytelling and how these narratives reflect cultural and political shifts. Zipes' work is critical for understanding the dynamic nature of fairy tales in modern contexts.

4. *The Annotated Brothers Grimm* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, edited by Maria Tatar

This edition of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales includes extensive annotations that provide historical background, cultural analysis, and interpretations of the tales. Maria Tatar's commentary helps readers appreciate the complexity and dark origins of these classic stories. It is a definitive version for anyone studying fairy tales in depth.

5. *Women Who Run with the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés

While not a traditional fairy tale collection, this influential book explores the archetypal stories and myths that shape the feminine psyche. Estés interprets fairy tales and folk narratives through a psychological lens, emphasizing their role in personal growth and healing. The book offers a unique perspective on the power of storytelling.

6. *The Fairy Tale World* by Glen Cavaliero

Glen Cavaliero's work surveys the history and development of fairy tales across different cultures. The book discusses key themes, motifs, and the evolution of storytelling traditions. It provides a broad overview suitable for readers interested in the global scope of fairy tales.

7. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* by Bruno Bettelheim

Bruno Bettelheim's classic psychological analysis argues that fairy tales are crucial for children's emotional development. The book explores how these stories help address complex feelings and moral dilemmas. Bettelheim's insights have sparked much debate but remain influential in fairy tale scholarship.

8. *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* by Marina Warner

Marina Warner investigates the relationship between fairy tales and myth, highlighting their shared symbols and cultural functions. The book includes essays that explore the narrative structures and societal roles of these stories. Warner's work enriches the understanding of fairy tales as a vital part of mythic storytelling.

9. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, edited by Donald Haase

This multi-volume encyclopedia offers an extensive survey of folktales and fairy tales from around the world. It includes entries on motifs, themes, cultural variations, and key figures in folklore studies. The work is an indispensable reference for researchers and enthusiasts of fairy tale literature.

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