

The power of storytelling



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Power of Storytelling People have been telling stories, writing poems, and drawing and painting pictures for others since the beginning of man. Since then many things have changed, and I will focus on three of these differences today. To start, I will discuss the differences between the views people had on hierarchy in the time of the Brothers Grimm, compared to the views the author of " Sir Patrick Spens" had. The next topic is the difference of middle class attitudes towards women found in some of the Grimm's tales, compared to the attitudes today. Finally, the third topic of this essay will discuss the similarities and differences of the way men were viewed in the Grimm's tales and the same aspect toward men today. The role of a woman in society today has almost been turned completely around compared to the views when the Selected Tales were written. As well, it is clear that the media has created these idolized figures that a woman should be tall and beautiful and a man should be big and strong. However, this idea of a man being big and strong was not always the case, which is the most noticeable difference between the time of the Grimm's fairy tales and now. The reason for this essay is to bring attention to the change we have seen over the many years since the Brothers Grimm wrote their stories. The Aristocratic views found in the Selected Tales by the Brothers Grimm are quite comparable to the views found in the poem " Sir Patrick Spens". It is apparent in the fairy tales that Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm had negative views on hierarchy, because the evil characters in many of the tales is a royal or authoritative figure. The author of " Sir Patrick Spens" was also opposed to the hierarchy that he lived under as well, we can tell with the lines, " And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens, Wi' the Scots lords at his feet" (Sir Patrick, 43-44). The words " at his feet" sort of imply that the Scottish nobles were

cowering and begging Sir Patrick Spens to save them. The difference in these negative attitudes towards hierarchy is that in "Sir Patrick Spens" the author and the main characters in the poem find the king to be a tyrant, but no one will do anything about it. However, in the Grimm's Tales the stories usually end with the protagonist underdog becoming the king or queen. We can also say that the author of "Sir Patrick Spens" saw the king as this powerful dominating figure, while the Brothers Grimm found the king to be a useless man who always depends on his servants, making them do everything for him. This attitude portrayed by the Brothers Grimm in their stories inspires the reader think about the middle class overthrowing the tyrannical royal figures. In the Grimm's Fairy Tales, the female characters who are beautiful, obedient, and naïve are always the characters that live happily ever after, while the evil females are those who are ugly, aggressive, smart, and are usually killed at the end of the story. The Grimm's tale "The Three Little Men in the Forest" is a perfect example of how they portray these views, as the beautiful, obedient, almost stupid stepdaughter of the mean woman had always done as she was told. One of the most significant parts of this story is how the evil woman always gives the stepdaughter some impossibly difficult task where there is a good chance that the girl will die, and the stepdaughter always does as she is told. For example, the first task that the woman conspires is that the stepdaughter should gather a basket of strawberries in the middle of winter, and the young girl knows how difficult this will be, but "the girl was obedient and put on her paper dress and set out with the basket" (Grimm2, 99). Of course the young girl completes the task with the aid of three elves in the forest, and in doing so ends up marrying a king while the woman and ugly sister are given a terribly painful death. Women in the

Grimm's time were brought up to be obedient and nice, and it was ugly to be aggressive or controlling. When these views are compared to the present views, these "ugly" traits are basically encouraged by society and beauty and ugliness is now completely based on physical appearance. When the Brothers Grimm wrote their stories, the views people had on men were comparable to the views we have today, with a few exceptions. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm portrayed the men in their tales as the underdogs; the main male characters were usually the youngest brother, or a soldier or the smallest man in a group. As well, the men were never rewarded when they tried to use their brute strength, so they were required to use their wits and trickery in order to be successful. A great example of this is the tale "The Sea-Rabbit" because the youngest and smallest brother is the protagonist who must find a way to hide from the princess. The man indeed uses his wits in collaboration with the sly fox and the princess "believed that he had done everything by his own skill, and held him in respect, for she thought to herself: He's a match for me after all" (Grimm1, 186). Furthermore, we also discussed in class that the characters who share are always the ones who end up with good fortunes, which was noticed in this story as well since the man spared the lives of the raven, the fish, and the fox. When these views of men are compared to today's views towards men, we can see that present men are much more pressured to being the big strong man who beats his enemies into a pulp instead of the clever little guy who outsmarts his opponents in order to achieve success. The main topics discussed in this essay were how we have changed our views on hierarchy between the times of the Brothers Grimm, compared to the views in the era of "Sir Patrick Spens". I then moved on to the different attitudes towards women found in

the Grimm's tale "The Three Little Men in the Forest", compared to the attitudes today. Next, I discussed how different a man is supposed to be in today's society compared to the way men were viewed in "The Sea-Rabbit" by the Brothers Grimm. In this essay I have proved that the media has taken the attitudes and views people had in the Grimm's era and turned these views right around. Women are now "supposed" to be aggressive/outgoing and more involved in the work force than in the Grimm's time, and men are "supposed" to be very big, strong and tough. Since the time of the Brothers Grimm, it is fairly obvious that we now have very different views on the different people in society today.

References "Sir Patrick Spens." Abrams, Meyer H. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. New York: Norton, 2000. (Print) Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "The Sea Rabbit." Trans by Luke, David. *Selected Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1982. 184-186. (Print) Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "The Three Little Men in the Forest." Trans by Luke, David. *Selected Tales*. London: Penguin Books, 1982. 98-103. (Print)