

In defense of fairy tales

[Business](#)



Fairy tales seem to get a bad rap very often these days. “ They’re so cliché. Every single one has a beautiful princess and a handsome prince and a happily-ever-after ending.” “ They’re positively ridiculous. Like anyone would believe a pumpkin could become a coach!” “ I’m tired of princesses looking so perfect.

Modern girls are so insecure about their looks already.” “ Everyone knows ‘ happily ever after’ doesn’t happen in real life, and it’s dangerous to give kids the idea that it does.” These statements might be true enough; but to my mind each is a very simplistic way to view the time-honored fairy tale. Let’s take a closer look at this set of stories and see if we can find anything in them today’s world might be missing. First of all, fairy tales are not meant to be taken literally.

This point is crucially important if we want to get at the heart of what fairy tales really mean. No one really believes that a fairy godmother is going to pop up out of nowhere and fix all a girl’s problems just because she’s been so good. No one expects the prince to fall in love with the first virtuous peasant girl he meets. And if anyone’s hair ever grew so long it could be used as an elevator to pull people up into a high tower, I’m pretty sure she’d be all over the news. Fairy tales aren’t meant to be believable in the way most modern fiction is. Often, this throws modern readers for a loop.

After all, even our fantasy and science fiction novels are brim full of reasons explaining the rationality behind the heroes’ marvelous adventures. When fairy tales don’t do the same – when the stepmother’s jealousy seems unfounded or the presence of Seven Dwarves in a wood remains unexplained

- we feel cheated and think the author of the story must have been inept. This is all because we forget that fairy tales are an entirely different genre from what our world soaks up so eagerly today. The glory of the fairy tales lies in this difference – rather like a scullery maid whose genuine beauty is overlooked because she does not dress in fluttering silk and flashing jewels. Fairy tales are not meant to be taken literally. Oh, it is true that they are amusing and beautiful stories in themselves, in a certain simple sense, but their true wonder and genius lies in the hidden meanings of the story, meaning which, though they make themselves subtly felt, are not blatantly obvious to the undiscerning eye.

Fairy tales speak to us of another world, of a spiritual realm more glorious than fairyland, and more perilous – and ten thousand times more real. In fairy tales we see reflections of the yearnings that are placed within every human heart, shadows of the fulfilment of each person's dreams. The images in fairy tales speak right to our inmost being, because they are somehow familiar to us. In the mistreated little scullery maid we see a hardworking and long-suffering soul, a soul which so often groans beneath the truth that "this world isn't fair." In the ugliness of the witch we recognize the ugliness of sin, and in the beauty of the heroine we realize the beauty of virtue even when it is masked by a coat of grime.

In the deep sleep of the precious princess, we see the ruin of a soul in sin, lovely as ever but trapped in a total unawareness of everything that matters. Enter Prince Charming. Oh, how often has he been criticized and misunderstood! Yet this is perfect, for he represents one who truly was criticized and misunderstood unjustly. He is the hero who comes to save his

<https://assignbuster.com/in-defense-of-fairy-tales/>

beloved, the perfect man who alone can fulfil the heroine's deepest longing: her longing for love and purpose. If the damsel in distress represents, not merely a model young lady, but each struggling human soul, then the Prince represents He who alone can save and make happy that suffering heart within each of us - not merely "the perfect match" everyone knows too good to be true, but the loving Savior whom many disregard.

And the happily ever after? We all know this world has none to offer; but, in our heart of hearts, we also hope that we can find one elsewhere. It is a human yearning, illustrated through ages of mythology and religion, to have some perfect world where the good are rewarded - and also where the evil are punished. It is this hope of the afterlife which the happily ever after represents, that faith in final justice which is spoken of so blithely at the conclusion of every fairy tale. That, my dear friends, is my take on fairy tales, and why I love them so. They are not merely stories - they are lessons, truths packaged in gauzy silk and given to children as their earliest playthings.

Wise children, by playing with these toys and turning them over in their bright little brains, will eventually grope beyond the packaging and find the jewels beneath, the treasures which will be of use to them evermore on their journey of life. Perhaps you disagree with me. That's alright. But as long as there is a deeper, truer, and more beautiful explanation to fairyland than the one the world accepts, it is the one I shall accept. It may be that there is more to fairy tales than meets the eye.