

## Once upon a time

- 1 Match the words in the boxes to create the names of fairy tales from around the world. What other names do you know these stories by?

Magic • Golden • Little • Runaway • Little Briar • Gingerbread

Sandal • Girl • Rose • Goldenhood • Mirror • Rice cake

- 2a Read the text about fairy tales around the world. How do the versions of Cinderella and the Gingerbread Man change in different countries? Do you know any other versions?



# Fairy Tales



Hans Christian Andersen

Cinderella is perhaps the most famous of all fairy tales. Everyone knows the story of a poor girl who is treated badly by her stepmother and two stepsisters. Then she catches the eye of a Prince and all ends happily ever after. The first written record of this story appeared in 1634 in a collection of folk tales compiled by a Neapolitan courtier. In 1697, Charles

Perrault published his version in France, adding details such as the pumpkin carriage, fairy godmother and glass slipper.

However, there are worldwide variations of the same fairy tale. Yeh-Shen is a **Chinese** story dating back to the ninth century which has striking similarities. In this version, a girl at the mercy of her stepmother befriends a fish in a nearby lake. Sadly her stepmother finds out, catches the fish and serves it at dinner. Later, a spirit appears to Ye-Shen and tells her to bury the fish bones. The fish bones take on the role of the fairy godmother and the story continues in more or less the same vein as the Cinderella of the Western world.

*The Golden Sandal*, which is a **Middle-Eastern** story, shares the essential Cinderella items: stepmother and ugly sister. It also has a magic fish, like the Chinese version. However, the women don't attend a party; instead, they are invited to a wedding preparation where the bride is being painted in Henna. The bride's brother finds a lost sandal in the river and asks his mother to search for the owner.

*Raisel's Riddle* is a **Polish** version of Cinderella. Here, Raisel is raised by her grandfather but they are poor. When he dies, she finds work in a wealthy man's kitchen and faces harsh treatment from the cook. At the start of a local festival she is granted three wishes by an old lady.

She goes to the festival and intrigues the wealthy man's son with a riddle. He has to search for the girl with the riddle, not the shoe, and when he finds her he has to answer the riddle before she will marry him.

Storytelling evolved from putting together everyday occurrences, so universal themes and emotions such as love, hate, courage and kindness appear in tales from around the world. As Hans Christian Andersen said, "Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale." The natural movement of people and the opening up of trade routes probably aided the spread of stories around the world. The tales that were relevant to families, tribes, villages or cities were kept in memory and passed down to future generations. Over the years, as different cultures developed, the stories varied as specific realities and customs were included. Most communities have a protagonist that needs to undergo a quest to combat a fierce monster, or an unhappy situation they need rescuing from. On top of these, specific social situations are applied to make it real for the audience.

Another example of a story with numerous variations is *The Gingerbread Man* (US), also known as *The Pancake Boy* (Norway), *The Runaway Rice Cake* (China) and *The Runaway Radish* (Mexico), to name but a few. They all follow the same basic story of a food item running away to avoid being eaten by a clever animal. The different versions of fairy tales teach an important lesson about the cultural differences across the world.

Next time you hear, read or see a fairy tale. think about how it might differ if it were written or recorded in another part of the world.



**2b Read the text again and match the two halves of the sentences.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Charles Perrault added details like the pumpkin carriage .....             | a stories would have been heard in different areas.               |
| 2 In <i>Yeh-Shen</i> the magic fish assumes .....                            | b often ends up being eaten by a clever animal.                   |
| 3 As people moved around and trade extended, .....                           | c to his version of Cinderella in the seventeenth century.        |
| 4 As fairy tales are based on stories about human nature, .....              | d they are bound to have similarities around the world.           |
| 5 As stories were told over the generations, .....                           | e details specific to one culture or area were added to the tale. |
| 6 In the <i>Gingerbread Man</i> stories, the food that is running away ..... | f the role of the fairy godmother.                                |

**2c Read the text again and record the details of the different versions of Cinderella.**

	Western	Asian	Middle Eastern	Polish
Main characters				
Cinderella's saviour				
Event Cinderella attended				
Item Prince needs to find				

**Gateway to culture****3a Work with a partner and discuss the questions.**

- Did you enjoy reading fairy tales as a child? Why/Why not?
- Did you read fairy tales in a book or did someone tell you the stories?
- Why do you think it's important to encourage children to read or listen to stories?

**PROJECT****3b You are going to work on a presentation about the different versions of a fairy tale. Read the questions and prepare your research.**

- Work in pairs and brainstorm different fairy tales.
- Choose one story and find out how the tale varies in at least three countries. Answer the following questions:
  - Who are the main characters?
  - What are the main events in the story?
  - What are the variations in different countries? Can you think of reasons for the variations?
  - What can you learn about the cultural differences of each country through the fairy tale?

**3c In pairs, use your notes to give a presentation to the rest of the class on your fairy tale. Your presentation should be around three minutes long. Make sure you point out the variations in the different versions and how this reflects on the culture of that country.**