

A collection of objects is arranged on a light-colored surface. On the left, there is a portion of a chessboard with a blue and brown checkered pattern and several chess pieces. Below the chessboard are two medals: one with a red ribbon and a white star, and another with a blue ribbon and a white star. A silver compass is visible in the bottom left corner. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses with thin temples is positioned in the center. The text 'Indexing Fairytale' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Indexing Fairytale

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Definition of a Fairytale

- ◆ *A fairytale is a story featuring folkloric characters such as fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, giants, anthropomorphic (talking) animals, and others.*
 - A sub-class of the folktale
 - Often involving royalty
 - Superficial references to religion and actual places, persons, and events.
 - Part of an oral tradition¹

¹ [Fairy tale – Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairytale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairytale)



History of Indexing Fairytales

- ◆ Early on commonalities were found in fairytales.
 - Commonalities also know as motifs:
 - Most significant action described by the text (Plotlines, morals, characters, etc.)
- ◆ Two folklorists created classifications to better study and locate certain fairytales.
 - Sorted by overall plot (Aarne-Thompson type)
 - Updated by Hans-Jorg Uther in 1961
 - Sorted by function of each character and action on the story (Propp type)²

² Shinya Kawakami, Yoko Sato, Masaki Nakagawa and Bipin Indurkha: "On modeling conceptual and narrative structure of fairytales," Pre-Proc. 13th European-Japanese Conference on Information Modelling and Knowledge Bases (13EJC), Kokura, pp.266-283 (2003).



Problems with Indexing Fairytales

- ◆ There are exceptions to the rule
 - Although many fairytales have similar characteristics they are not all the same and that can be problematic
- ◆ Should every variation and version be indexed?
 - Ex. Cinderella
 - Also known as The Wonderful Birch, Aschenputtel, Kattie Woodencloak, Cap O' Rushes, Catskin, Fair, Brown and Trembling, Finette Cendron, Allerleirauh, and Tattercoats.³
- ◆ Should the whole tale be indexed as opposed to parts or characters?
 - How does one ascertain the most important part of the text?

³ Marian Emily Roalfe Cox. Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-Five Variants of Cinderella, Catskin, and Cap O'Rushes, (London, England: The Folk-lore Society), 1893.

Fairytales Indexes

Availability & Use

- ◆ Theme lists of characters and storylines
 - No comprehensive professional index of primarily fairytales exists
 - There are children's indexes of fairytales only
 - Folktales and fairytales are indexed as though they are the same type of story rather than a part of the whole.
- ◆ Sociology Connection
 - Folklore indexing is very close to the indexing of fairytales
 - Indexed according to motifs rather than the tale itself.
- ◆ Library Connection
 - The indexing of fairytales gives librarians and researchers the tools to understand and use the different variations of fairytales.





Relationship of Fairytales to Folklore

◆ Fairytales as Folklore

- Folklore or in this case folktales are the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a people, transmitted orally.
- Folklorists and Structuralists study oral stories
 - Fairytales are a subset of folklore and are specific type of folklore.



Classification Connection

- ◆ Use of classification in indexing
 - Assigning values for the plotlines of each tale for easier access.
- ◆ Aarne-Thompson system
 - Assigns numbers to certain plot points
 - Ex. 1-99 Wild Animals
 - 300-749 Tales of Magic
- ◆ Propp system
 - Ex. *aa*⁵*D*¹*E*¹*MF*¹*Ta*⁵*BKNT**oQW**
- ◆ In order to index such a vast number of tales it would be helpful to have an accepted standard indexing system.
 - Two camps exist those who use an Aarne-Thompson inspired and those who use the Propp system.

Indexing Folklore

Antti Aarne

vs.

Vladimir Propp

◆ Finnish Folklorist

- (1867-1925)
- Created an classification system and index for folklore (1910)
 - Focused on the motif of tales and limited to tales that were once oral
 - Classification of simple plots
- Included tales of Europe, West Asia, and the Lands settled by these peoples⁴

◆

Russian

structuralist/folklorist

Created competing classification system and index for folklore (1928)

- Looked at function of each character and the action in tale
- Criticized Aarne-Thompson type for its limited focus.
- Included folk tales from Russia only⁵

⁴ Antti Aarne. The Types of the Folktale (Helsinki, Finland: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961), 5-9.

⁵ V. Propp. Morphology of the Folktale. (Texas: University of Texas Press), 1968.



Online Fairytale Indexes

- ◆ “OCLC FictionFinder”
 - Online index of fiction by Genre, Subject, Character, and a search engine
- ◆ “Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts” by D. L. Ashliman
 - E-Library of folktales, folklore, fairy tales, and mythology indexed by subject (with Aarne-Thompson tale types)



Conclusions

- ◆ There are many different approaches to indexing fairytales: subject, place of origin, genre, main characters, plot, theme, and many others.
 - The use of each approach creates complete indexes
- ◆ No one single index of fairytales will complete the task.
- ◆ Indexing fairytales is intrinsically tied to classifying fairytales
 - With so many variants and variations a system of organization is needed to understand the terms
- ◆ By taking both into account the Propp and Aarne-Thompson method of indexing folklore one can create a consistent and reliable index of fairytales.



Suggested Readings

- ◆ Aarne, Antti, and Stith Thompson. The Types of the Folktale. Helsinki, Finland: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961.
- ◆ The British Folklore Society. "The Motif Index: What It is, and What it Does." 2000. www.folklore.bc.ca/Motifindex.html> (31 October 2006).
- ◆ "Fairy Tale." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. n.d. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairytale/>> (29 October 2006).
- ◆ "Fairy Tales and Folktales: Adaptations and Variants." Education Library. n.d. <<https://library.usask.ca/files/education/fairy2005.pdf/>> (14 October 2006).
- ◆ Index to Fairy Tales. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973-1994.
- ◆ Kawakami, Shinya, Yoko Sato, Masaki Nakagawa and Bipin Indurkhya: "On modeling conceptual and narrative structure of fairytales," Pre-Proc. 13th European-Japanese Conference on Information Modelling and Knowledge Bases (13EJC), Kokura: Pre-Proc, 2003. <http://www.tuat.ac.jp/~nakagawa/publication/2003/pdf/kawakami0306a-e.pdf> (5 November 2006).
- ◆ "OCLC FictionFinder—Genres." 2006. <<http://fictionfinder.oclc.org/WebZ/html/kor/browse.html>> (28 October 2006).



Suggested Readings Con't

- ◆ Propp, V. Morphology of the Folktale. Texas: University of Texas Press, 1968.
- ◆ "Theory." Fairytales Generator. n.d.
<http://www.brown.edu/Courses/FR0133/Fairytales_Generator/theory/> (29 October 2006).
- ◆ Thompson, Stith. Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955
- ◆ Uther, Hans Jorg. "Classifying Folktales: The Third Revision of the Aarne-Thompson Tale Type Index (FFC 184)." Folklore Fellows 20 (2000): 11-13.
<<http://folklorefellows.fi/netw/ffn20/classifying.html>> (29 October 2006).
- ◆ Uther, Hans-Jorg. Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, edited by Sabine Dinslage, Sigrid Fahrman, Christine Goldberg, and Gudrun Schwibbe. Helsinki, Finland: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 2004).
- ◆ "Vladimir Propp." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. n.d.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Propp/> (29 October 2006).
- ◆ "Vladimir Propp's Theories." Fairytales Generator. n.d.
<http://brown.edu/Courses/FR0133/Fairytales_Generator/propp/> (29 October 2006).