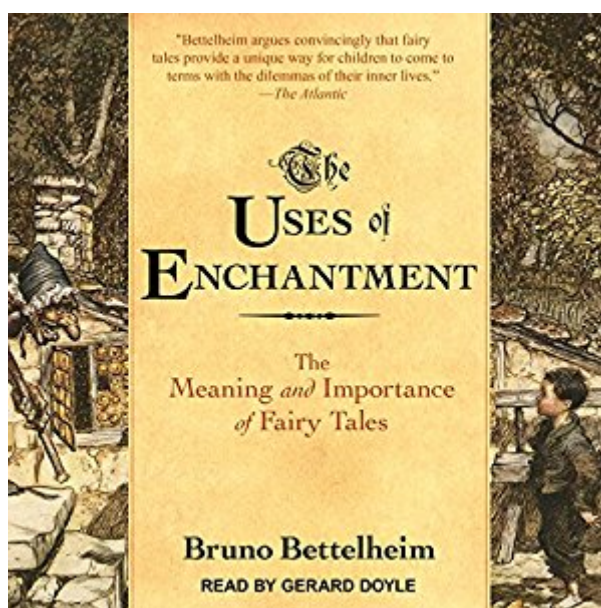


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# The Uses Of Enchantment: The Meaning And Importance Of Fairy Tales



## Synopsis

Bruno Bettelheim was one of the great child psychologists of the twentieth century and perhaps none of his books has been more influential than this revelatory study of fairy tales and their universal importance in understanding childhood development. Analyzing a wide range of traditional stories, from the tales of Sindbad to "The Three Little Pigs", "Hansel and Gretel", and "The Sleeping Beauty", Bettelheim shows how the fantastical, sometimes cruel, but always deeply significant narrative strands of the classic fairy tales can aid in our greatest human task, that of finding meaning for one's life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an important book for the healthy psychological development of children (and adults, too). It offers insight into the lasting value of these old tales, which were created and have been passed along for reasons far beyond, and infinitely more enriching, than merely entertainment. Even having been a fan of fairy tales and myths as vehicles for growth and transformation for years, I learned much through reading this thoughtful book.

I met this famous man and have always respected his idea about the fairy tale figures and their deeper meaning in the minds of children. I'll never look at fairy tales quite the same way anymore. But don't tell your children what Bruno said was the meaning of the story. Let their imaginations go to work and take them where they need it to go.

Needed this for a class but was actually interested in it so I read more than required . He makes very interesting arguments. Love his psychoanalysis of childrens fairytales and it's impact on children as they develop. Would recommend.

Wow. Often disturbing but so insightful into the hidden possibilities of the meanings of original fairy tales. I found a lot of inspiration in this book to use with my classes. I would highly recommend this for anyone who enjoys learning about another perspective of some of the most famous stories ever told.

It is well known that storytelling is an innate expression of civilization, in an effort to define who we are and to make sense of the world. The fairy tale is an important part of this tradition that has a long and rich history spanning thousands of years. First published in 1975, Bruno Bettelheim, one of Sigmund Freud's followers and an important contributor to psychoanalysis, has written an incredible book, suggesting that the fairy tale has a pedagogical use, educating the child about the struggles in life, that these struggles are an intrinsic aspect of existence. Following Plato, he believes that the literary education of children should begin with the telling of myths. In other words, the fairy tale can present models for behaviour, providing meaning and value to our lives. This wonderful book expresses this view extremely well and also provides a frame of reference towards the child's overall psychological development. I have read Freud for some years, and nowhere, including Freud himself, have I read a more succinctly expressed view on the ultimate purpose of psychoanalysis, than in this book by Dr. Bettelheim, he writes, "Psychoanalysis was created to enable man to accept the problematic nature of life without being defeated by it, or giving in to escapism. Freud's prescription is that only by struggling courageously against what seems like unwieldy odds can man succeed in wringing meaning out of existence." (P.8) Fairy tales inform us about life's struggles, hardships and the reality of death. From Bettelheim's point of view, the fairy tale is a "manifold form" that communicates to the child, educates them, against life's vagaries and realities, which are the unavoidable aspects of our existence. More specifically, the fairy tale is an educational tool to help children grow and develop into adults. He goes on to say that the child needs to be given "...suggestions in symbolic form about how he may deal with these issues and grow safely into maturity." (P.9) Bettelheim adeptly sets out to prove his theses by analysing well known fairy tales in the context of psychoanalytic theory, persuasively arguing the value of these tales towards the child's psychological development. If you are interested in psychoanalysis and would like to know

more about the profound positive effects the telling of fairy tales can have on our young, this incredible book is indispensable.

Myths, Legends, Folklore, and Fairy Tales comprise the historical frame of reference for all our organized beliefs, theories, and speculations about the nature of man and our place in the cosmos. Bruno Bettelheim, with his thorough academic background and his ability to organize and explain the material, gives us a key piece of the puzzle which has fascinated scholars, theologians, philosophers, poets, writers, and story tellers since the beginnings of our civilization. His orientation is psychoanalytic, which at first glance might seem pedantic and overly specialized. It should not. The discipline itself is based in Ancient Greek literature which deals with the many wanderings of the human soul. Making sense of those wanderings, together with the admonition, "Know thyself," is the aim of psychoanalysis. It is also the aim of those early repositories of wisdom who first spun the yarns we have come to know as Fairy Tales. These stories have meaning which is specifically designed to guide us down the paths of our lives with courage, wisdom, compassion, heroism, and a sense of the eternal hope of success. Bettelheim does a remarkable job in driving these points home. For the lover of knowledge and wisdom, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* is a valuable tool, to put it mildly.

I'm still working on the introduction - and it's work, let me tell you. The author apparently knows the subject matter and I have great expectations for assimilating the knowledge.

Excellent overview and psychological analysis of the meaning of fairy tales. I especially appreciated the Cinderella chapter, useful for my research and fiction character development.

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