

ENGLISH 1CP

SUMMER READING 2019

In this packet, you will find a collection of fairytales that you are likely familiar with, from having heard them as a child or seen them turned into a cartoon or film. These stories are hundreds of years old and have evolved over those centuries in very strange ways.

This summer, you will be traveling through different versions of these stories and witnessing the strange events in them that have shaped many of our modern tales. You will encounter:

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“Beauty and the Beast” Study Questions

1. What happens to change the daughters' prospects of marriage?
2. How is Beauty's reactions to their prospects different from that of her sisters, and what does this contrast say about all of them?
3. How are the older sisters opposite of Beauty? What do they say or do that would show the contrast in character?
4. What does the father do on his way home that angers the beast? What deal does Beast make with the father? What heroic action is Beauty willing to take to save her father's life?
5. During their first dinner, how does Beauty describe Beast? How does Beast describe himself?
6. What does Beauty tell Beast will make her happy? What agreement do they make?
7. How do the sisters react to Beauty's arrival? What scheme do they create?
8. When Beauty returns to Beast, what has happened to him? What does she promise him?
9. How does Beast change afterward? What does the reader learn about Beast's past?
10. How does the tale end? What happens to Beauty? Her sisters?

Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, "La Belle et la Bête," in *Le Magasin des Enfants* (London: Haberkorn, 1756). Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 by Maria Tatar.

Beauty and the Beast

Once upon a time there was a very wealthy merchant who lived with his six children, three boys and three girls. Since he was a man of intelligence and good sense, he spared no expense in educating his children and hiring all kinds of tutors for them. His daughters were all very beautiful, but the youngest was admired by everyone. When she was little, people used to refer to her as "the beautiful child." The name "Beauty" stuck, and, as a result, her two sisters were always very jealous. The youngest daughter was not only more beautiful than her sisters, she was also better behaved. The two older sisters were vain and proud because the family had money. They tried to act like ladies of the court and paid no attention at all to girls from merchant families. They chose to spend time only with people of rank. Every day they went to balls, to the theater, to the park, and they made fun of their younger sister, who spent most of her time reading good books.

Since the girls were known to be very wealthy, many prominent merchants were interested in marrying them. But the two older sisters always insisted that they would never marry unless they found a duke or, at the very least, a count. Beauty (as I noted, this was the name of the youngest daughter) very politely thanked all those who proposed to her, but she told them that she was still too young for marriage and that she planned to keep her father company for some years to come.

Out of the blue, the merchant lost his fortune, and he had nothing left but a small country house quite far from town. With tears in his eyes, he told his children that they would have to live in that house from now on and that, by working there like peasants, they could manage to make ends meet. The two elder daughters said that they did not want to leave town and that they had many admirers who would be more than happy to marry

them, even though they were no longer wealthy. But the fine young ladies were wrong. Their admirers had lost all interest in them now that they were poor. And since they were disliked because of their pride, people said: "Those two girls don't deserve our sympathy. It's quite satisfying to see pride take a fall. Let them play the ladies while tending their sheep."

At the same time, people were saying: "As for Beauty, we are very upset by her misfortune. She's such a good girl! She speaks so kindly to the poor. She is so sweet and sincere."

There were a number of gentlemen who would have been happy to marry Beauty, even though she didn't have a penny. She told them that she could not bring herself to abandon her poor father in his distress and that she would go with him to the country in order to comfort him and help him with his work. Poor Beauty had been upset at first by the loss of the family fortune, but she said to herself: "No matter how much I cry, my tears won't bring our fortune back. I must try to be happy without it."

When they arrived at the country house, the merchant and his three sons began working the land. Beauty got up every day at four in the morning and started cleaning the house and preparing breakfast for the family. It was hard for her at first, because she was not used to working like a servant. At the end of two months, however, she became stronger, and the hard work made her very healthy. After finishing her housework, she read or sang while spinning. Her two sisters, by contrast, were bored to death. They got up at ten in the morning, took walks all day long, and talked endlessly about the beautiful clothes they used to wear.

"Look at our sister," they said to each other. "She is so stupid and such a simpleton that she is perfectly satisfied with her miserable lot."

The good merchant did not agree with his daughters. He knew that Beauty could stand out in company in a way that her sisters could not. He admired the virtue of his daughter, above all her patience. The sisters not only made her do all the housework, they also insulted her whenever they could.

The family had lived an entire year in seclusion when the merchant received a letter informing him that a ship containing his

merchandise had just arrived safely in its home port. The news made the two elder sisters giddy with excitement, for they thought they would finally be able to leave the countryside where they were so bored. When they saw that their father was ready to leave, they begged him to bring them dresses, furs, laces, and all kinds of baubles. Beauty did not ask for anything, because she thought that all the money from the merchandise would not be enough to buy everything her sisters wanted.

"Don't you want me to buy anything for you?" asked her father.

"You are so kind to think of me," Beauty answered. "Can you bring me a rose, for there are none here?"

It was not that Beauty was anxious to have a rose, but she did not want to set an example that would make her sisters look bad. Her sisters would have said that she was asking for nothing in order to make herself look good.

The good man left home, but when he arrived at the port he found that there was a lawsuit over his merchandise. After much trouble, he set off for home as impoverished as he had been on his departure. He had only thirty miles left to go and was already overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his children again when he had to cross a dense forest and got lost. There was a fierce snowstorm, and the wind was so strong that it knocked him off his horse twice. When night fell, he was sure that he was going to die of hunger or of the cold or that he would be eaten by the wolves that he could hear howling all around. All of a sudden he saw a bright light at the end of a long avenue of trees. The bright light seemed very far away. He walked in its direction and realized that it was coming from an immense castle that was completely lit up. The merchant thanked God for sending help, and he hurried toward the castle. He was surprised that no one was in the courtyard. His horse went inside a large, open stable, where he found some hay and oats. The poor animal, near death from hunger, began eating voraciously. The merchant tied the horse up in the stable and walked toward the house, where not a soul was in sight. Once he entered the great hall, however, he found a warm fire and a table laden with food, with just a single place setting. Since the rain and snow had soaked him to the bone, he went over to the fire to get dry. He thought to himself:

"The master of the house, or his servants, will not be offended by the liberties I am taking. No doubt someone will be back soon."

He waited a long time. Once the clock struck eleven and there was still no one in sight, he could not resist the pangs of hunger and, trembling with fear, he took a chicken and ate it all up in two big bites. He also drank several glasses of wine and, feeling more daring, he left the great hall and crossed many large, magnificently furnished apartments. Finally, he found a room with a good bed. Since it was past midnight and he was exhausted, he took it upon himself to close the door and go to bed.

When he got up the next day, it was already ten in the morning. He was greatly surprised to find clean clothes in the place of the ones that had been completely ruined by the rain. "Surely," he thought to himself, "this palace belongs to some good fairy who has taken pity on me."

He looked out the window and saw that it was no longer snowing. Before his eyes a magnificent vista of gardens and flowers unfolded. He returned to the great hall where he had dined the night before and found a small table with a cup of hot chocolate on it. "Thank you, Madame Fairy," he said out loud, "for being so kind as to remember my breakfast."

After finishing his hot chocolate, the good man left to go find his horse. Passing beneath a magnificent arbor of roses, he remembered that Beauty had asked him for a rose, and he plucked one from a branch with many flowers on it. At that very moment, he heard a loud noise and saw a beast coming toward him. It looked so dreadful that he almost fainted.

"You are very ungrateful," said the beast in a terrible voice. "I have saved your life by sheltering you in my castle, and you repay me by stealing my roses, which I love more than anything in the world. You will have to pay for your offense. I'm going to give you exactly a quarter of an hour to beg God's forgiveness."

The merchant fell to his knees and, hands clasped, pleaded with the beast: "My Liege, pardon me. I did not think I would be offending you by plucking a rose for my daughter, who asked me to bring her one or two."

"I am not called 'My Liege,'" said the monster. "My name is Beast. I don't like flattery, and I prefer that people say what they

think. So don't try to move me with your compliments. But you said that you have some daughters. I am prepared to forgive you if one of your daughters consents to die in your place. Don't argue with me. Just go. If your daughters refuse to die for you, swear that you will return in three days."

The good man was not about 'to sacrifice one of his daughters to this hideous monster, but he thought: "At least I will have the pleasure of embracing them one last time."

He swore that he would return, and Beast told him that he could leave whenever he wished. "But I don't want you to leave empty-handed," he added. "Return to the room in which you slept. There you will find a large empty chest. You can fill it up with whatever you like, and I will have it delivered to your door."

The beast withdrew, and the good man thought to himself: "If I must die, I will at least have the consolation of leaving something for my poor children to live on."

The merchant returned to the room where he had slept. He filled the great chest that Beast had described with the many gold pieces he found there. After he found his horse in the stable, he left the palace with a sadness equal to the joy he had felt on entering it. His horse instinctively took one of the forest paths, and in just a few hours, the good man arrived at his little house. His children gathered around him, but instead of responding to their caresses, the merchant burst into tears as he gazed on them. In his hand, he was holding the branch of roses he had brought for Beauty. He gave it to her and said: "Beauty, take these roses. They have cost your poor father dearly."

Then the merchant told his family about the woeful events that had befallen him. Upon hearing the tale, the two sisters uttered loud cries and said derogatory things to Beauty, who was not crying: "See what the pride of this little creature has brought down on us!" they said. "Why didn't she ask for fine clothes the way we did. No, she wanted to get all the attention. She's responsible for Father's death, and she's not even shedding a tear!"

"That would be quite pointless," Beauty replied. "Why should I shed tears about Father when he is not going to die. Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters, I am prepared to risk all his fury. I feel fortunate to be able to sacrifice myself

for him, since I will have the pleasure of saving my father and proving my feelings of tenderness for him."

"No, sister," said her three brothers. "You won't die. We will find this monster, and we are prepared to die under his blows if we are unable to slay him."

"Don't count on that, children," said the merchant. "The beast's power is so great that I don't have the least hope of killing him. I am moved by the goodness of Beauty's heart, but I refuse to risk her life. I'm old and don't have many years left. I will only lose a few years of my life, and I don't regret losing them for your sake, my dear children."

"Rest assured, Father," said Beauty, "that you will not go to that palace without me. You can't keep me from following you. I may be young, but I am not all that attached to life, and I would rather be devoured by that monster than die of the grief which your loss would cause me."

It was no use arguing with Beauty. She was determined to go to the palace. Her sisters were delighted, for the virtues of their younger sister had filled them with a good deal of envy. The merchant was so preoccupied by the sad prospect of losing his daughter that he forgot about the chest he had filled with gold. But as soon as he repaired to his room to get some sleep, he was astonished to find it beside his bed. He decided not to tell his children that he had become rich, for his daughters would then want to return to town, and he was determined to die in the country. He did confide his secret to Beauty, who told him that several gentlemen had come during his absence and that two of them wanted to marry her sisters. Beauty begged her father to let them marry. She was so kind that she still loved her sisters with all her heart and forgave them the evil they had done her.

When Beauty left with her father, the two mean sisters rubbed their eyes with an onion in order to draw tears. But the brothers cried real tears, as did the merchant. Only Beauty did not cry at all, because she did not want to make everyone even more sad.

The horse took the road to the palace, and, when night fell, they could see that it was all lit up. The horse went by itself to the stable, and the good man went with his daughter into the hall, where there was a magnificently set table with two place

settings. The merchant did not have the stomach to eat, but Beauty, forcing herself to appear calm, sat down and served her father. "You see, Father," she said while forcing a laugh, "the beast wants to fatten me up before eating me, since he paid so dearly for me."

After they had dined, they heard a loud noise, and the merchant tearfully bid adieu to his poor daughter, for he knew it was the beast. Beauty could not help but tremble at the sight of this horrible figure, but she tried as hard as she could to stay calm. The monster asked her if she had come of her own free will and, trembling, she replied that she had.

"You are very kind," said Beast, "and I am very grateful to you. As for you, my good man, get out of here by tomorrow morning and don't think of coming back here ever again. Goodbye, Beauty."

"Goodbye, Beast," she replied. Suddenly the monster vanished.

"Oh my daughter!" cried the merchant, embracing Beauty. "I am half dead with fear. Believe me, you have to let me stay," he said.

"No, Father," Beauty said firmly. "You must go tomorrow morning and leave me to the mercy of heaven. Heaven may still take pity on me."

They both went to bed thinking that they would not be able to sleep all night long, but they had hardly gotten into their beds when their eyes closed. While she was sleeping, Beauty saw a woman who said to her: "I am pleased with your kind heart, Beauty. The good deed you have done in saving your father's life will not go unrewarded."

Upon waking, Beauty recounted this dream to her father. While it comforted him a little, it did not keep him from crying out loud when he had to leave his dear daughter. After he had left, Beauty sat down in the great hall and began to cry as well. But since she was courageous, she put herself in God's hands and resolved not to bemoan her fate during the short time she had left to live. Convinced that Beast planned to eat her that very evening, she decided to walk around the grounds and to explore the castle while awaiting her fate. She could not help but admire the castle's beauty, and she was very surprised to find a door

upon which was written: "Beauty's Room." She opened the door hastily and was dazzled by the radiant beauty of that room. She was especially impressed by a huge bookcase, a harpsichord, and various music books. "Someone does not want me to get bored!" she said softly. Then she realized: "If I had only one hour to live here, no one would have made such a fuss about the room." This thought lifted her spirits.

She opened the bookcase and saw a book, on the cover of which was written in gold letters: "Your wish is our command. Here you are queen and mistress."

"Alas," she sighed, "I only wish to see my poor father again and to know what he's doing now."

She had said this to herself, so you can imagine how surprised she was when she looked in a large mirror and saw her father arriving at his house with a dejected expression. Her sisters went out to meet him, and, despite the faces they made in order to look as if they were distressed, they were visibly happy to have lost their sister. A moment later, everything in the mirror vanished. Beauty could not help thinking that Beast was most obliging and that she had nothing to fear from him.

At noon, Beauty found the table set and, during her meal, she heard an excellent concert, even though she could not see a soul. That evening, as she was about to sit down at the table, she heard Beast making noises, and she could not help but tremble.

"Beauty," said the monster, "will you let me watch you dine?"

"You are my master," said Beauty, trembling.

"No, you are the only mistress here," replied Beast. "If I bother you, order me to go, and I will leave at once. Tell me, don't you find me very ugly?"

"Yes, I do," said Beauty. "I don't know how to lie. But I do think that you are very kind."

"You are right," said the monster. "But in addition to being ugly, I also lack intelligence. I know very well that I am nothing but a beast."

"You can't be a beast," replied Beauty, "if you know that you lack intelligence. A fool never knows that he is stupid'."

"Go ahead and eat, Beauty," said the monster, "and try not to be bored in your house, for everything here is yours, and I would be upset if you were not happy."

"You are very kind," said Beauty. "I swear to you that I am completely pleased with your good heart. When I think of it, you no longer seem ugly to me."

"Oh, of course," Beast replied. "I have a kind heart, but I am still a monster."

"There are certainly men more monstrous than you," said Beauty. "I like you better, even with your looks, than men who hide false, corrupt, and ungrateful hearts behind charming manners."

"If I were intelligent," said Beast, "I would pay you a great compliment to thank-you. But I am so stupid that all I can say is that I am very much obliged."

Beauty ate with a good appetite. She no longer dreaded the monster, but she thought that she would die of fright when he said: "Beauty, would you be my wife?"

It took her a moment to get to the point of answering. She was afraid to provoke the monster by refusing him. Trembling, she said to him: "No, Beast."

At that moment, the poor monster meant to sigh deeply, but he made such a frightful whistling sound that it echoed throughout the palace. Beauty felt better soon, however, because Beast, turning to look at her from time to time, left the room and said adieu in a sad voice. Finding herself alone, Beauty felt great compassion for poor Beast "Alas," she said, "it is too bad he is so ugly, for he is so kind."

Beauty spent three peaceful months at the castle. Every evening, Beast paid her a visit and, while she was eating, entertained her with good plain talk, though not with what the world would call wit. Each day Beauty discovered new good qualities in the monster. Once she began seeing him every day, she became accustomed to his ugliness, and, far from fearing his arrival, she often looked at her watch to see if it was nine o'clock yet. Beast never failed to appear at that hour. There was only one thing that still bothered Beauty. The monster, before leaving, always asked her if she wanted to be his wife, and he seemed deeply wounded when she refused.

One day she said to him: "You are making me feel upset, Beast. I would like to be able to marry you, but I am far too candid to allow you to believe that that could ever happen. I will

always be your friend. Try to be satisfied with that."

"I will have to," Beast replied. "I don't flatter myself, and I know that I'm horrible looking, but I love you very much. However, I am very happy that you want to stay here. Promise me that you will never leave."

Beauty blushed at these words. She had seen in her mirror that her father was sick at heart at having lost her. She had been hoping to see him again. "I can promise you that I will never leave you," she said to Beast. "But right now I am so longing to see my father again that I would die of grief if you were to deny me this wish."

"I would rather die myself than cause you pain," said Beast. "I will send you back to your father. Stay there, and your poor beast will die of grief."

"No," Beauty said, bursting into tears, "I love you too much to be the cause of your death. I promise to return in a week. You have let me see that my sisters are married and that my brothers have left to serve in the army. Father is living all alone. Let me stay with him for just a week."

"You will be there tomorrow morning," said Beast "But don't forget your promise. All you have to do is put your ring on the table before going to sleep when you want to return. Goodbye, Beauty."

As was his habit, Beast sighed deeply after speaking, and Beauty went to bed feeling very sad to see him so dejected. The next morning, on waking up, she was in her father's house. She pulled a cord at the side of her bed and a bell summoned a servant, who uttered a loud cry upon seeing her. The good man of the house came running when he heard the cry, and he almost died of joy when he saw his beloved daughter. They held each other tight for over a quarter of an hour. After the first excitement subsided, Beauty realized that she didn't have any clothes to go out in. But the servant told her that she had just discovered in the room next door a huge trunk full of silk dresses embroidered with gold and encrusted with diamonds. Beauty thanked Beast for his thoughtfulness. She took the least ornate of the dresses and told the servant to lock up the others, for she wanted to make a present of them to her sisters. Hardly had she spoken these words when the chest disappeared. When her

father told her that Beast wanted her to keep everything for herself, the dresses and. the chest reappeared on the spot.

While Beauty was getting dressed, her two sisters learned about her arrival and rushed to the scene with their husbands. Both sisters were very unhappy. The older one had married a remarkably handsome gentleman, but he was so enamored of his own looks that he spent all day in front of the mirror. The other one had married a man of great wit, but he used it to infuriate everybody, first and foremost his wife. Beauty's sisters were so mortified that they felt ready to die when they saw her dressed like a princess and more beautiful than the bright day. Beauty tried in vain to shower them with attention, but nothing could restrain their jealousy, which only increased when Beauty told them how happy she was. These two envious women walked down to the garden so that they could weep freely. They both asked themselves: "Why should this little beast enjoy more happiness than we do? Aren't we more likable than she is?"

"Dearest sister," the older one said, "I have an idea. Let's try to keep Beauty here for more than a week. Her stupid beast will get angry when he sees that she has broken her promise, and maybe he'll eat her up."

"You're right," the other one replied. "To make that work, we will have to shower her with affection and act as if we are delighted to have her here."

Having made this decision, the two nasty creatures returned to Beauty's room and showed her so much affection that she nearly wept for joy. When the week had gone by, the two sisters started tearing out their hair and performed so well that Beauty promised to stay another four or five days. At the same time, she felt guilty about the grief she was causing poor Beast, whom she loved with all her heart and missed seeing. On the tenth night she spent at her father's house, she dreamed that she was in a garden of the palace when she saw Beast lying in the grass, nearly dead and reproaching her for her ingratitude. Beauty woke up with a start and began crying. "Aren't I terrible," she said, "for causing grief to someone who has done so much to please me? Is it his fault that he's ugly and lacks intelligence? He is kind. That's worth more than anything else. Why haven't I wanted to marry him? I would be more happy with him than my sisters are with

their husbands. It is neither good looks nor great wit that makes a woman happy with her husband, but character, virtue, and kindness, and Beast has all those good qualities. I may not be in love with him, but I feel respect, friendship, and gratitude toward him. If I made him unhappy, my lack of appreciation would make me feel guilty for the rest of my life."

With these words, Beauty got up, wrote a few lines to her father to explain why she was leaving, put her ring on the table, and went back to bed. She had hardly gotten into bed when she fell sound asleep. And when she awoke in the morning, she was overjoyed to find herself in Beast's palace. She dressed up in magnificent clothes just to make him happy and spent the day feeling bored to death while waiting for the clock to strike nine. But the clock struck nine in vain. Beast was nowhere in sight.

Beauty feared that she might be responsible for his death. She ran into every room of the castle, crying out loud. She was in a state of despair. After having searched everywhere, she remembered her dream and ran into the garden, toward the canal where she had seen Beast in her sleep. She found poor Beast stretched out unconscious, and she was sure that he was dead. Feeling no revulsion at his looks, she threw herself on him and, realizing that his heart was still beating, she got some water from the canal and threw it on him. Beast opened his eyes and told Beauty: "You forgot your promise. The thought of having lost you made me decide to starve myself. But now I will die happy, for I have the pleasure of seeing you one more time."

"No, my dear Beast; you will not die," said Beauty. "You will live and become my husband. From this moment on, I give you my hand in marriage, and I swear that I belong only to you. Alas, I thought that I felt only friendship for you, but the grief I am feeling makes me realize that I can't live without you."

Scarcely had Beauty uttered these words when the castle became radiant with light. Fireworks and music alike signaled a celebration. But these attractions did not engage her attention for long. She turned back to look at her dear beast, whose perilous condition made her tremble with fear. How great was her surprise when she discovered that Beast had disappeared and that a young prince more beautiful than the day was bright was lying at her feet, thanking her for having broken a magic

“Bluebeard” Study Questions

spell. Even though she was worried about the prince, she could not keep herself from asking about Beast. “You see him at your feet,” the prince said. “An evil fairy condemned me to remain in that form until a beautiful girl would consent to marry me. She barred me from revealing my intelligence. You were the only person in the world kind enough to be touched by the goodness of my character. Even by offering you a crown, I still can't fully discharge the obligation I feel to you.”

Pleasantly surprised, Beauty offered her hand to the handsome prince to help him get up. Together, they went to the castle, and Beauty nearly swooned with joy when she found her father and the entire family in the large hall. The beautiful lady who had appeared to her in a dream had transported them to the castle.

“Beauty,” said the lady, who was a grand fairy, “come and receive the reward for your wise choice. You preferred virtue to looks and intelligence, and so you deserve to see those qualities united in a single person. You will become a noble queen, and I hope that sitting on a throne will not destroy your many virtues. As for you, my dear ladies,” the fairy continued, speaking to Beauty's two sisters, “I know your hearts and all the malice that is in them. You will be turned into two statues, but you will keep your senses beneath the stone that envelops you. You will be transported to the door of your sister's palace, and I can think of no better punishment than being a witness to her happiness. You will not return to your former state until you recognize your faults. I fear that you may remain statues forever. You can correct pride, anger, gluttony, and laziness. But a miracle is needed to convert a heart filled with malice and envy.”

The fairy waved her wand, and everyone there was transported to the great hall of the prince's realm where the subjects were overjoyed to see him. The prince married Beauty, who lived with him for a long time in perfect happiness, for their marriage was founded on virtue.

1. Describe the protagonist. Remember the three elements of characterization: what a character does, what he says, and what is said about him (either by other characters or by the narrator).
2. What did Bluebeard do to try and win one of his neighbors' hands in marriage?
3. Which sister started to believe that Bluebeard wasn't “so blue after all” and married him?
4. Before he goes away on business, what does Bluebeard give to his wife? What warning does Bluebeard give to his wife? How does she react?
5. What did the wife find in the forbidden room?
6. When the wife tried to clean the key, what happened? What was special about this key?
7. How did her husband react after she returned the small key? In order to save herself some time, what did the wife ask for? What did she then do?
8. Who arrived just in time to save the wife from death? What did they do? What does the wife do after Bluebeard is killed?

Charles Perrault, "Le Barbe bleue," in *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé. Avec des Moralités* (Paris: Barbin, 1697). Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 Maria Tatar.

Bluebeard

There once lived a man who had fine houses, both in the city and in the country, dinner services of gold and silver, chairs covered with tapestries, and coaches covered with gold. But this man had the misfortune of having a blue beard, which made him look so ugly and frightful that women and girls alike fled at the sight of him.

One of his neighbors, a respectable lady, had two daughters who were perfect beauties. He asked for the hand of one, but left it up to the mother to choose which one. Neither of the two girls wanted to marry him, and the offer went back and forth between them, since they could not bring themselves to marry a man with a blue beard. What added even more to their sense of disgust was that he had already married several women, and no one knew what had become of them.

In order to cultivate their acquaintance, Bluebeard threw a party for the two girls with their mother, three or four of their closest friends, and a few young men from the neighborhood in one of his country houses. It lasted an entire week. Everyday there were parties of pleasure, hunting, fishing, dancing, and dining. The guests never even slept, but cavorted and caroused all night long. Everything went so well that the younger of the two sisters began to think that the beard of the master of the house was not so blue after all and that he was in fact a fine fellow. As soon as they returned to town, the marriage was celebrated. After a month had passed, Bluebeard told his wife that he had to travel to take care of some urgent business in the provinces and that he would be away for at least six weeks. He urged her to enjoy herself while he was away, to invite her close friends and to take them out to the country if she wished. Above

all, she was to stay in good spirits.

"Here," he said, "are the keys to my two large store rooms. Here are the ones for the gold and silver china that is too good for everyday use. Here are the ones for my strongboxes, where my gold and silver are kept. Here are the ones for the caskets where my jewels are stored. And finally, this is the passkey to all the rooms in my mansion. As for this particular key, it is the key to the small room at the end of the long passage on the lower floor. Open anything you want. Go anywhere you wish. But I absolutely forbid you to enter that little room, and if you so much as open it a crack, there will be no limit to my anger."

She promised to follow the orders he had just given exactly. After kissing his wife, Bluebeard got into the carriage and embarked on his journey.

Friends and neighbors of the young bride did not wait for an invitation before coming to call, so great was their impatience to see the splendors of the house. They had not dared to call while the husband was there, because of his blue beard, which frightened them. In no time they were darting through the rooms, the closets, and the wardrobes, each of which was more splendid and sumptuous than the next. Then they went upstairs to the storerooms, where they could not find words to describe the number and beauty of the tapestries, beds, sofas, cabinets, stands, and tables. There were looking glasses, in which you could see yourself from head to toe, some of which had frames of glass, others of silver or gilded lacquer, but all of which were more splendid and magnificent than anyone there had ever seen. They kept on expressing praise even as they felt envy for the good fortune of their friend who, however, was unable to take any pleasure at all from the sight of these riches because she was so anxious to get into that room on the lower floor. So tormented was she by her curiosity that, without stopping to think about how rude it was to leave her friends, she raced down a little staircase so fast that more than once she thought she was going to break her neck. When she reached the door to the room, she stopped to think for a moment about how her husband had forbidden her to enter, and she reflected on the harm that might come her way for being disobedient. But the temptation was so great that she was unable to resist it. She took the little key and,

trembling, opened the door.

At first she saw nothing, for the windows were closed. After a few moments, she began to realize that the floor was covered with clotted blood and that the blood reflected the bodies of several dead women hung up on the walls (these were all the women Bluebeard had married and then murdered one after another).

She thought she would die of fright, and the key to the room, which she was about to pull out of the lock, dropped from her hand. When she regained her senses, she picked up the key, closed the door, and went back to her room to compose herself. But she didn't succeed, for her nerves were too frayed. Having noticed that the key to the room was stained with blood, she wiped it two or three times, but the blood would not come off at all. She tried to wash it off and even to scrub it with sand and grit. The blood stain would not come off because the key was enchanted and nothing could clean it completely. When you cleaned the stain from one side, it just returned on the other.

That very night, Bluebeard returned unexpectedly from his journey and reported that, on the road, he had received letters informing him that the business upon which he had set forth had just been settled to his satisfaction. His wife did everything that she could to make it appear that she was thrilled with his speedy return. The next day, he asked to have the keys back, and she returned them, but with a hand trembling so much that he knew at once what had happened.

"How is it," he asked, "that the key to the little room isn't with the others?"

"I must have left it upstairs on my dressing table," she replied. "Don't forget to bring it to me soon," Bluebeard told her.

After making one excuse after another, she had to bring him the key. Bluebeard examined it and said to his wife: "Why is there blood on this key?"

"I have no idea," answered the poor woman, paler than death.

"You have no idea," Bluebeard replied. "But I have an idea. You tried to enter that little room. Well, madam, now that you have opened it, you can go right in and take your place beside the ladies whom you saw there."

She threw herself at her husband's feet, weeping and begging his pardon, with all the signs of genuine regret for disobeying him. She looked so beautiful and was so distressed that she would have melted a heart of stone, but Bluebeard had a heart harder than any rock.

"You must die, madam," he declared, "and it will be right away."

"Since I must die," she replied, gazing at him with eyes full of tears, "give me a little time to say my prayers."

"I will give you a quarter of an hour," Bluebeard said, "but not a moment more."

When she was alone, she called her sister and said to her: "Sister Anne"—for that was her name—"I implore you to go up to the top of the tower to see if my brothers are on the way here. They told me that they were coming to visit today. If you catch sight of them, signal them to hurry."

Sister Anne went up to the top of the tower, and the poor distressed girl cried out to her from time to time: "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

Sister Anne replied: "I see nothing but the sun shining and the green grass growing."

In the meantime, Bluebeard took an enormous cutlass in hand and cried out at the top of his voice to his wife: "Come down at once or I'll go up there!"

"Just a moment more, I beg you," his wife replied and at the same time she called out softly: "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

And Sister Anne replied: "I see nothing but the sun shining and the green grass growing."

"Come down at once," Bluebeard called, "or I'll go up there!"

"I'm coming," his wife replied, and then she called: "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

"I can see a great cloud of dust coming this way," replied Sister Anne.

"Is it my brothers?"

"No, oh no, sister, it's just a flock of sheep."

"Are you coming down?" Bluebeard roared.

"Just one moment more," his wife replied, and then she called: "Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

"I see two horsemen coming this way, but they're still far away," she replied. "Thank God," she shouted a moment later, "it must be our brothers. I'll signal to them to hurry up."

Bluebeard began shouting so loudly that the entire house shook. His poor wife came downstairs, in tears and with disheveled hair. She threw herself at his feet

"That won't do you any good," said Bluebeard. "Prepare to die." Then, taking her by the hair with one hand and raising his cutlass with the other, he was about to chop off her head. The poor woman turned to him and implored him with a gaze that had death written on it. She begged for one last moment to prepare herself for death. "No, no," he said, "prepare to meet your maker." And lifting his arm . . .

Just at that moment there was such a loud pounding at the gate that Bluebeard stopped short. The gate was opened, and two horsemen, swords in hand, dashed in and made straight for Bluebeard. He realized that they were the brothers of his wife: the one a dragoon and the other a musketeer. He fled instantly in an effort to escape. But the two brothers were so hot in pursuit that they trapped him before he could get to the stairs. They plunged their swords through his body and left him for dead. Bluebeard's wife was as close to death as her husband and barely had the strength to rise and embrace her brothers.

It turned out that Bluebeard had left no heirs, and so his wife took possession of the entire estate. She devoted a portion of it to arranging a marriage between her sister Anne and a young gentleman with whom she had been in love for a long time. Another portion of it was used to buy commissions for her two brothers. She used the rest to marry herself to a very worthy man, who banished the memory of the miserable days she had spent with Bluebeard.

Moral

Curiosity, in spite of its many charms,
Can bring with it serious regrets;
You can see a thousand examples of it every day.
Women succumb, but it's a fleeting pleasure;
As soon as you satisfy it, it ceases to be.
And it always proves very, very costly.

Another Moral

If you just take a sensible point of view,
And study this grim little story,
You will understand that this tale
Is one that took place many years ago.
No longer are "husbands so terrible,
Demanding the impossible,
Acting unhappy and jealous.
With their wives they toe the line;
And whatever color their beards might be,
Ifs not hard to tell which of the pair is master.

“The Juniper Tree” Study Questions

1. When the first wife/mother sees her newborn son, she dies of joy, after having been sick for many months. Where is she buried?
2. Who kills the boy, and how? Who is *blamed* for killing the little boy, and why?
3. What does the father accidentally do to the body? Where do the bones end up?
4. Why does the juniper tree now have magical powers? (What is the source of the juniper tree's powers?)
5. What rises from the tree in a flash of light?
6. What three gifts does the bird receive for repeating its song? What does he do with each of the gifts in the last scene of the fairytale?
7. The bird's song is beautiful to almost everyone who hears it, with the exception of the second wife. What effect does the song have on her, and why?
8. At the end, who dies, and who returns from “the dead”? Where does this second person come from?

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, “Von dem Machandelboom,” in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 7th ed. (Berlin: Dieterich, 1857; first published: Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812). Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 by Maria Tatar.

The Juniper Tree

A long time ago, as many as two thousand years ago, there was a rich man who had a beautiful and pious wife. They loved each other dearly, but they had no children, even though they longed for them. Day and night the wife prayed for a child, but still they had no children.

Now in front of the house there was a garden, and in the garden there grew a juniper tree. Once in the Wintertime, the wife was peeling an apple under the tree, and while she was peeling it, she cut her finger. Blood dripped on the snow. “Ah,” said the woman, and she sighed deeply. “If only I had a child as red as blood and as white as snow!” Having said that, she began to feel better, for she had a feeling that something would come of it. Then she went back in the house.

A month went by, and the snow was gone. Two months passed, and everything was green. Three months went by, and the flowers sprouted from the ground. Four months passed, and all the trees in the woods grew tall, with their green branches intertwining. The woods resounded with the singing of birds, and the blossoms were falling from the trees. And so the fifth month went by. And when the woman was under the juniper tree, her heart leaped for joy because it smelled so sweet. She fell to her knees and was beside herself with joy. When the sixth month had passed, the fruit grew large and firm, and she became quite still. In the seventh month she picked the juniper berries and so gorged herself that she became sad and ill. After the eighth month went by, she called her husband and, weeping, said to him: “If I die, bury me under the juniper tree.” After that she felt better and was happy until the ninth month had passed. Then she bore a child as white as snow and as red as blood. When she saw the child she was so happy that she died.

Her husband buried her under the juniper tree, and he wept day after day. After a while he felt better, but he still wept from time to time. Eventually he stopped and then he took a second wife.

The man had a daughter with his second wife. The child from the first marriage was a little boy, as red as blood and as white as snow. Whenever the woman looked at her daughter, she felt love for her, but whenever she looked at the little boy, she was sick at heart. It seemed that wherever he went, he was always in the way, and she kept wondering how she could get the entire family fortune for her daughter. The devil got hold of her so that she began to hate the little boy, and she slapped him around and pinched him here and cuffed him there. The poor child lived in terror, and when he came home from school, he had no peace at all.

One day the woman went to the pantry. Her little daughter followed her and said: "Mother, give me an apple."

"All right, my child," said the woman, and she gave her a beautiful apple from a chest that had a big heavy lid with a sharp iron lock on it.

"Mother," said the little girl, "Can't brother have one too?"

This irritated the woman, but she said: "Yes, he can have one when he gets back from school."

When she looked out the window and saw the boy coming home, it was as if the devil had taken hold of her, and she snatched the apple out of her daughter's hand and said: "You can't have one before your brother." Then she tossed the apple into the chest and shut it.

The little boy walked in the door, and the devil got her to speak sweetly to him and say: "My son, would you like an apple?" But she gave him a look full of hate.

"Mother," said the little boy, "How dreadful you look! Yes, give me an apple."

Then she felt as if she had to keep leading him on. "Come over here," she said, and she lifted the lid. "Now pick out an apple."

And when the little boy bent down, the devil prompted her, and *bam!* She slammed the lid down so hard that the boy's head flew off and fell into the chest with the apples. Then she was

overcome with fear and thought: "How am I going to get out of this?" She went to her room and took a white kerchief from her dresser drawer. She put the boy's head back on his neck and tied the scarf around it so that you couldn't see anything was wrong. Then she sat him down on a chair in front of the door and put an apple in his hand.

Later on Little Marlene came into the kitchen to see her mother, who was standing by the fire, stirring a pot of hot water round and round. "Mother," said Little Marlene, "brother is sitting by the door and looks pale. He has an apple in his hand, and when I asked him to give me the apple, he didn't answer. It was very scary."

"Go back to him," the mother said, "and if he doesn't answer, slap his face."

And so Little Marlene went back to him and said: "Brother, give me the apple."

But he wouldn't answer. So she gave him a slap, and his head went flying off. She was so terrified that she began to howl and weep. Then she ran to her mother and said: "Mother, I've knocked my brother's head off!" And she cried so hard that she couldn't stop.

"Little Marlene," said her mother, "what a dreadful thing you've done! But don't breathe a word to anyone, for there's nothing we can do. We'll cook him up in a stew."

And so the mother took the little boy and chopped him up. Then she put the pieces into a pot and cooked him up into a stew. Little Marlene stood nearby and wept so hard that the stew didn't need salt because of all her tears.

When the father came home, he sat down at the table and said: "Where's my son?"

The mother brought in a huge dish of stew, and Little Marlene wept so hard that she couldn't stop.

"Where's my son?" the father asked again.

"Oh," said the mother, "he went off to the country to visit his mother's great uncle. He plans to stay there a while."

"What's he going to do there? He didn't even say good-bye to me."

"Well, he really wanted to go and he asked if he could stay for six weeks. They'll take good care of him."

"Oh, that makes me so sad," said the husband. "It's not right He should have said good-bye."

Then he began eating and said: "Little Marlene, why are you crying? Your brother will be back soon." Then he said: "Oh, wife, this stew tastes so good! Give me some more."

The more he ate the more he wanted. "Give me some more," he said. "No one else will get any. Somehow I feel as if it's all mine."

And he kept eating and threw the bones under the table until he had eaten everything. Meanwhile, Little Marlene went to her dresser and got her best silk kerchief. She picked up all the bones from beneath the table, tied them up in her silk kerchief, and carried them outside. Then she wept bitter tears. She put the bones down in the green grass under the juniper tree. When she had put them down, she suddenly felt much better and stopped crying. The juniper tree began stirring. Its branches parted and came back together again as though it were clapping its hands for joy. A mist arose from the tree, and in the middle of the mist burned a flame, and from the flame a beautiful bird emerged and began singing gloriously. It soared up in the air, then vanished. The tree was as it had been before, but the kerchief with the bones was gone. Little Marlene was as happy and relieved as if her brother were still alive. She returned home feeling happy and sat down at the table to eat.

Meanwhile the bird flew away, perched on a goldsmith's house, and began singing:

"My mother, she slew me,
My father, he ate me,
My sister, Little Marlene,
Gathered up my bones,
Tied them up in silk,
And put them under the juniper tree.
Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

The goldsmith was sitting in his shop, making a gold chain. He heard the bird singing on his roof and found its song very beautiful. He got up and, when he walked across the threshold, he lost a slipper. Still, he kept right on going out into the middle of the street with only one sock and one slipper on. He was also wearing his apron, and in one hand he had the gold chain, in the

other his tongs. The sun was shining brightly on the street He stopped to look at the bird and said: "Bird, you sing so beautifully. Sing me that song again."

"No," said the bird. "I never sing the second time for nothing. Give me that golden chain, and I'll sing it for you again."

"Here," said the goldsmith. "Here's the golden chain. Now sing the song again."

The bird came flying down. Taking the golden chain in its right claw, it perched in front of the goldsmith and began singing:

"My mother, she slew me,
My father, he ate me,
My sister, Little Marlene,
Gathered up my bones,
Tied them up in silk,
And put them under the juniper tree.
Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

Then the bird flew off to a shoemaker's house, perched on the roof, and sang:

"My mother, she slew me,
My father, he ate me,
My sister, Little Marlene,
Gathered up my bones,
Tied them up in silk,
And put them under the juniper tree.
Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

When the shoemaker heard the song, he ran out the door in his shirtsleeves and looked up at the roof. He had to put his hand over his eyes to keep the sun from blinding him. "Bird," he said, "You sing so beautifully." Then he called into the house: "Wife, come out here for a moment. There's a bird up there. See it? How beautifully it sings!"

He called his daughter and her children, apprentices, hired hand and maid. They all came running out into the street to look at the bird and see how beautiful it was. It had red and green feathers, and around its neck was pure gold, and the eyes in its head sparkled like stars.

"Bird," said the shoemaker, "sing that song again."

"No," said the bird, "I never sing the second time for nothing. You have to give me something."

"Wife," said the man, "go up to the attic. On the top shelf you'll find a pair of red shoes. Get them for me."

His wife went and got the shoes.

"Here," said the man. "Now sing that song again."

The bird came flying down. Taking the shoes in its left claw, it flew back up on the roof and sang:

"My mother, she slew me,
My father, he ate me,
My sister, Little Marlene,
Gathered up my bones,
Tied them up in silk,
And put them under the juniper tree.
Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

When the bird had finished the song, it flew away. It had the chain in its right claw and the shoes in its left, and it flew far away to a mill. The mill went "clicked-clack, clickety-clack, clickety-clack." Inside the mill sat twenty of the miller's men, hewing a stone, "hick hack hick hack hick hack." And the mill kept going "clickety-clack, clickety-clack, clickety-clack." And so the bird went and perched on a linden tree outside the mill and sang:

"My mother, she slew me,"
and one of the men stopped working,
"My father, he ate me,"
and two more stopped working and listened,
"My sister, Little Marlene,"
then four men stopped working,
"Gathered up my bones,
Tied them up in silk,"
now only eight kept hewing,
"And put them under . . . "
now only five,
". . . the juniper tree."
now only one.

"Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

The last one stopped to listen to the final words. "Bird," he said, "you sing so beautifully! Let me hear the whole thing too. Sing that song again."

"I never sing the second time for nothing. If you give me the

millstone, I'll sing the song again."

"If it belonged to me alone," he said. "I would give it to you."

"If the bird sings again," the others said, "it can have the millstone." Then the bird swooped down, and the miller's men, all twenty of them, set the beam to and raised up the stone. "Heave-ho-hup, heave- ho-hup, heave-ho-hup." And the bird stuck its neck through the hole, put the stone on as if it were a collar, flew back to the tree, and sang:

"My mother, she slew me,
My father, he ate me,
My sister, Little Marlene,
Gathered up my bones,
Tied them up in silk,
And put them under the juniper tree.
Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

When the bird had finished its song, it spread its wings. In its right claw was the chain, in its left claw the shoes, and round its neck was the millstone. Then it flew away, far away to the house of its father.

The father, mother, and Little Marlene were sitting at the table in the parlor, and the father said: "How happy I feel! My heart feels so easy."

"Not me," said the mother. "I feel frightened, as if a big storm were on its way."

Meanwhile, Little Marlene just sat there weeping. The bird flew up and, when it landed on the roof, the father said: "How happy I'm feeling. And outside the sun is shining so brightly! I feel as if I'm about to see an old friend again."

"I don't," said the woman. "I'm so scared that my teeth are chattering, and I feel as if there's fire running through my veins."

She tore at her bodice to loosen it, while little Marlene sat there weeping. She held her apron up to her eyes and wept so hard that it was completely soaked with tears. The bird swooped down to the juniper tree, perched on a branch, and sang:

"My mother, she slew me "

The mother stopped up her ears and closed her eyes, for she didn't want to see or hear anything, but the roaring in her ears was like the wildest of storms, and her eyes burned and flashed like lightning.

"My father, he ate me . . . "

"Oh, Mother," said the man, "there's a beautiful bird out there, and it's singing so gloriously. The sun is shining so warmly, and the air smells like cinnamon."

"My sister, Little Marlene . . . "

Little Marlene put her head in her lap and just kept crying and crying. But the husband said: "I'm going outside. I've got to see this bird close up."

"Oh, don't go," said the wife. "It feels as if the whole house is shaking and about to go up in flames!"

But the husband went out and looked at the bird.

"Gathered up my bones,

Tied them up in silk,

And put them under the juniper tree.

Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

After finishing its song, the bird dropped the golden chain, and it fell right around the man's neck, fitting him perfectly. He went inside and said: "Just see what a fine bird is out there! It gave me this beautiful golden chain, as beautiful as it is."

But the woman was so terrified that she fell full length on the floor, and the cap she was wearing came off her head. And the bird sang once again:

"My mother, she slew me . . . "

"Oh, if only I were a thousand feet under the ground so that I wouldn't have to hear this!"

"My father, he ate me . . . "

Then the woman fell down again as if dead.

"My sister, Little Marlene . . . "

"Oh," said Little Marlene, "I want to go outside and see if the bird will give me something too." And she went out.

"Gathered up my bones,

Tied them up in silk,"

And the bird tossed her the shoes.

And put them under the juniper tree.

Tweet, tweet, what a fine bird I am!"

Little Marlene felt lighthearted and happy. She put on the new red shoes and came dancing and skipping into the house.

"Oh," she said, "I was so sad when I went out, and now I feel so cheerful. What a fine bird is out there. It gave me a pair of red

shoes."

The woman jumped to her feet and her hair stood straight on end like tongues of flame. "I have a feeling that the world is coming to an end. Maybe I'd feel better if I went outside."

As she went out the door, *bam!* the bird dropped the millstone on her head and crushed her to death. The father and Little Marlene heard the crash and went outside. Smoke, flames, and fire were rising up from the spot, and when they vanished, little brother was standing there. He took his father and Little Marlene by the hand, and the three of them were overjoyed. Then they went into the house, sat down at the table, and ate.

“The Little Mermaid” Study Questions

1. What is the first indication, in her early childhood, that the littlest sea princess is fascinated with the sun and the world beyond the sea?
2. At what age are the sea princesses allowed to visit the surface of the ocean? Take note of what each princess, including the littlest, reports upon returning from this first visit.
3. What happens to the Prince's ship on the little mermaid's first night at the surface? What happens to the Prince, and how does he survive? Does he know any details about how he came to survive?
4. What happens to a mermaid when she dies, and in what way, according to the story, is this different than what happens to a human when he/she dies? What is the one way that a mermaid could gain an immortal soul?
5. List 3-5 ways in which the sea witch's domain is described as scary or dangerous.
6. According to the sea witch, what are the three consequences of the little mermaid's decision to transform her fish's tale into human legs?
7. Where is the little mermaid “allowed to sleep” as a sign of the Prince's fondness for her? What animal does this remind you of? What other details reveal that he does not have romantic feelings for her? How might this reality be a bad sign for her, given her goals in coming to him on land?
8. Why is the Prince overjoyed when he sees the Princess of the neighboring kingdom, and in what way is this a problem for the littlest mermaid?
9. What did the sea princesses get from the witch in exchange for their beautiful, long hair? What must the little mermaid do with that object, and what would she gain if she were to be successful? Does she follow through?
10. Rather than disappearing forever, as predicted, something else happens to the little mermaid. What does she become, and what opportunity does she have?

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The Little Mermaid

Far out at sea the water's as blue as the petals of the loveliest corn- flower, and as clear as the purest glass; but it's very deep, deeper than any anchor can reach. Many church steeples would have to be piled up one above the other to reach from the bottom of the sea to the surface. Right down there live the sea people.

Now you mustn't for a moment suppose that it's a bare white sandy bottom. Oh, no. The most wonderful trees and plants are growing down there, with stalks and leaves that bend so easily that they stir at the very slightest movement of the water, just as though they were alive. All the fishes, big ones and little ones, slip in and out of the branches just like birds in the air up here. Down in the deepest part of all is the sea King's palace. Its walls are made of coral, and the long pointed windows of the clearest amber; but the roof is made of cockle-shells that open and shut with the current. It's a pretty sight, for in each shell is a dazzling pearl; any single one of them would be a splendid ornament in a Queen's crown.

The sea King down there had been a widower for some years, but his old mother kept house for him. She was a clever woman, but proud of her noble birth; that's why she went about with twelve oysters on her tail, while the rest of the nobility had to put up with only six. But apart from that, she was deserving of special praise, because she was so fond of the little sea Princesses, her grandchildren. They were six pretty children, but the youngest was the loveliest of them all. Her skin was as clear and delicate as a rose-leaf, her eyes were as blue as the deepest lake, but like the others she had no feet; her body ended in a fish's tail.

All the long day they could play down there in the palace, in the great halls where living flowers grew out of the walls. The fishes would swim in to them, just as with us the swallows fly in

when we open the windows; but the fishes swam right up to the little Princesses, fed out of their hands, and let themselves be patted.

Outside the palace was a large garden with trees of deep blue and fiery red; the fruit all shone like gold, and the flowers like a blazing fire with stalks and leaves that were never still. The soil itself was the finest sand, but blue like a sulphur flame. Over everything down there lay a strange blue gleam; you really might have thought you were standing high up in the air with nothing to see but sky above and below you, rather than that you were at the bottom of the sea. When there was a dead calm you caught a glimpse of the sun, which looked like a purple flower pouring out all light from its cup.

Each of the small Princesses had her own little plot in the garden, where she could dig and plant at will. One of them gave her flowerbed the shape of a whale, another thought it nicer for hers to look like a little mermaid; but the youngest made hers quite round like the sun, and would only have flowers that shone red like it. She was a curious child, silent and thoughtful; and when the other sisters decorated their gardens with the most wonderful things they had got from sunken ships, she would have nothing but the rose-red flowers that were like the sun high above, and a beautiful marble statue. It was the statue of a handsome boy, hewn from the clear white stone and come down to the bottom of the sea from a wreck. Beside the statue she planted a rose- red weeping willow, which grew splendidly and let its fresh foliage droop over the statue right down to the blue sandy bottom. Here the shadow took on a violet tinge and, like the branches, was never still; roots and treetop looked as though they were playing at kissing each other.

Nothing pleased her more than to hear about the world of humans up above the sea. The old grandmother had to tell her all she knew about ships and towns, people and animals. One thing especially surprised her with its beauty, and this was that the flowers had a smell—at the bottom of the sea they hadn't any—and also that the woods were green and the fishes you saw in among the branches could sing as clearly and prettily as possible. It was the little birds that the grandmother called fishes; otherwise, never having seen a bird, the small sea Princesses

would never have understood her.

"As soon as you are fifteen," the grandmother told them, "you shall be allowed to rise to the surface, and to sit in the moonlight on the rocks and watch the great ships sailing past; you shall see woods and towns." That coming year one of the sisters was to have her fifteenth birthday, but the rest of them—well, they were each one year younger than the other; so the youngest of them had a whole five years to wait before she could rise up from the bottom and see how things are with us. But each promised to tell the others what she had seen and found most interesting on the first day; for their grandmother didn't really tell them enough—there were so many things they were longing to hear about.

None of them was so full of longing as the youngest: the very one who had most time to wait and was so silent and thoughtful. Many a night she stood at the open window and gazed up through the dark blue water, where the fishes frisked their tails and fins. She could see the moon and the stars, though it's true their light was rather pale; and yet through the water they looked much larger than they do to us, and if ever a kind of black cloud went gliding along below them, she knew it was either a whale swimming above her or else a vessel with many passengers; these certainly never imagined that a lovely little mermaid was standing beneath and stretching up her white hands towards the keel of their ship.

By now the eldest Princess was fifteen and allowed to go up to the surface.

When she came back, she had a hundred things to tell; but the loveliest, she said, was to lie in the moonlight on a sandbank in a calm sea and there, close in to the shore, to look at the big town where the lights were twinkling like a hundred stars; to listen to the sound of music and the noise and clatter of carts and people; to see all the towers and spires on the churches and hear the bells ringing. And just because she couldn't get there, it was this above everything that she longed for.

Oh, how the youngest sister drank it all in! And, when later in the evening she stood at the open window and gazed up through the dark blue water, she thought of the big town with all its noise and clatter, and then she seemed to catch the sound of the church bells ringing down to her.

The following year, the second sister was allowed to go up through the water and swim wherever she liked. She came to the surface just as the sun was setting, and that was the sight she found most beautiful. The whole sky had looked like gold, she said, and the clouds—well, she just couldn't describe how beautiful they were as they sailed, all crimson and violet, over her head. And yet, much faster than they, a flock of wild swans flew like a long white veil across the water where the sun was setting. She swam off in that direction, but the sun sank, and its rosy light was swallowed up by sea and cloud.

The year after that, the third sister went up. She was the boldest of them all, and she swam up a wide river that flowed into the sea. She saw delightful green slopes with grape-vines; manors and farms peeped out among magnificent woods; she heard all the birds singing; and the sun was so hot that she often had to dive under the water to cool her burning face. In a small cove she came upon a swarm of little human children splashing about quite naked in the water. She wanted to play with them, but they ran away terrified, and a little black animal came up; it was a dog. She had never seen a dog before. It barked at her so dreadfully that she got frightened and made for the open sea. But never could she forget the magnificent woods, the green slopes and the darling children, who could swim on the water although they had no fishes' tails.

The fourth sister was not so bold. She kept far out in the wild waste of ocean, and told them that was just what was so wonderful: you could see for miles and miles around you, and the sky hung above like a big glass bell. She had seen ships, but a long way off, looking like sea-gulls. The jolly dolphins had been turning somersaults, and enormous whales had spurted up water from their nostrils, so that they seemed to be surrounded by a hundred fountains.

And now it was the turn of the fifth sister. Her birthday happened to come in winter, and so she saw things that the others hadn't seen the first time. The sea appeared quite green, and great icebergs were floating about; they looked like pearls, she said, and yet were much larger than the church-towers put up by human beings. They were to be seen in the most fantastic shapes, and they glittered like diamonds. She had sat down on

one of the biggest, and all the ships gave it a wide berth as they sailed in terror past where she sat with her long hair streaming in the wind. But late in the evening the sky became overcast with clouds; it lightened and thundered, as the dark waves lifted the great blocks of ice right up, so that they flashed in the fierce red lightning. All the ships took in sail, and amidst the general horror and alarm, she sat calmly on her floating iceberg and watched the blue lightning zigzag into the glittering sea.

The first time one of the sisters went up to the surface, she would always be delighted to see so much that was new and beautiful; but afterwards, when they were older and could go up as often as they liked, it no longer interested them; they longed to be back again, and when a month had passed they said that, after all, it was nicest down below—it was such a comfort to be home.

Often of an evening the five sisters used to link arms and float up together out of the water. They had lovely voices, more beautiful than any human voice; and when a gale sprang up threatening shipwreck, they would swim in front of the ships and sing tempting songs of how delightful it was at the bottom of the sea. And they told the sailors not to be afraid of coming down there, but the sailors couldn't make out the words of their song; they thought it was the noise of the gale, nor did they ever see any of the delights the mermaids promised, because when the ship sank the crew were drowned, and only as dead men did they come to the palace of the sea King.

When of an evening the sisters floated up through the sea like this, arm in arm, their little sister stayed back all alone gazing after them. She would have cried, only a mermaid hasn't any tears, and so she suffers all the more.

"Oh, if only I were fifteen!" she said. "I'm sure I shall love that world up there and the people who live in it." And then at last she was fifteen.

"There, now you'll soon be off our hands," said her grandmother, the old Dowager Queen. "Come now, let me dress you up like your sisters;" and she put a wreath of white lilies on her hair, but every petal of the flowers was half a pearl. And the old lady made eight big oysters nip tight on to the Princess's tail to show her high rank.

"Oo! that hurts," said the little mermaid.

"Yes," said the grandmother, "one can't have beauty for nothing."

How she would have liked to shake off all this finery and put away the heavy wreath! The red flowers in her garden suited her much better, but she didn't dare make any change. "Goodbye," she said, and went up through the water as light and clear as a bubble.

The sun had just set, as she put her head up out of the sea, but the clouds had still a gleam of rose and gold; and up in the pale pink sky the evening star shone clear and beautiful. The air was soft and fresh, and the sea dead calm. A large three-masted ship was lying there, with only one sail hoisted because not a breath of wind was stirring, and sailors were lolling about in the rigging and on the yards. There was music and singing, and as it grew dark hundreds of lanterns were lit that, with their many different colours, looked as if the flags of all nations were flying in the breeze.

The little mermaid swam right up to the porthole of the cabin and, every time she rose with the swell of the wave, she could see through the clear glass a crowd of splendidly dressed people; but the handsomest of them all was a young Prince with large dark eyes. He couldn't have been much more than sixteen; it was his birthday, and that's why there was all this set-out. As the young Prince came out on to the deck where sailors were dancing, over a hundred rockets swished up into the sky—and broke into a glitter like broad daylight. That frightened the little mermaid, and she dived down under the water; but she quickly popped up her head again, and look! it was just as if all the stars in heaven were falling down on her. Never had she seen such fireworks. Great suns went spinning around, gorgeous firefishes swerving into the blue air, and all this glitter was mirrored in the clear still water. On board the ship herself it was so light that you could make out every little rope, let alone the passengers. Oh, how handsome the young Prince was; he shook hands with the sailors, he laughed and smiled, while the music went floating out into the loveliness of the night.

It grew late, but the little mermaid couldn't take her eyes off the ship and the beautiful Prince. The coloured lanterns were put

out, the rockets no longer climbed into the sky, and the cannon were heard no more; but deep down in the sea there was a mumbling and a rumbling. Meanwhile the mermaid stayed on the water, rocking up and down so that she could look into the cabin. But the ship now gathered speed; one after another her sails were spread. The waves increased, heavy clouds blew up; and lightning flashed in the distance. Yes, they were in for a terrible storm; so the sailors took in their sails, as the great ship rocked and scudded through the raging sea. The waves rose higher and higher like huge black mountains, threatening to bring down the mast, but the ship dived like a swan into the trough of the waves and then rode up again on their towering crests. The little mermaid thought, why, it must be fun for a ship to sail like that—but the crew didn't. The vessel creaked and cracked, the stout planks crumpled up under the heavy pounding of the sea against the ship, the mast snapped in the middle like a stick, and then the ship gave a lurch to one side as the water came rushing into the hold. At last the little mermaid realized that they were in danger; she herself had to look out for the beams and bits of wreckage that were drifting on the water. One moment it was so pitch dark that she couldn't see a thing, but then when the lightning came it was so bright that she could make out everyone on board. It was now a case of each man for himself. The young Prince was the one she was looking for and, as the ship broke up, she saw him disappear into the depths of the sea. Just for one moment she felt quite pleased, for now he would come down to her; but then she remembered that humans can't live under the water and that only as a dead man could he come down to her father's palace. No, no, he mustn't die. So she swam in among the drifting beams and planks, with no thought for the danger of being crushed by them; she dived deep down and came right up again among the waves, and at last she found the young Prince. He could hardly swim any longer in the heavy sea; his arms and legs were beginning to tire, the fine eyes were closed, he would certainly have drowned if the little mermaid had not come. She held his head above water and then let the waves carry her along with him.

By morning the gale had quite gone; not the smallest trace of the ship was to be seen. The sun rose red and glowing out of the

water and seemed to bring life to the Prince's cheeks, but his eyes were still shut. The mermaid kissed his fine high forehead and smoothed back his dripping hair. He was like the marble statue down in her little garden; she kissed him again and wished that he might live.

Presently she saw the mainland in front of her, high blue mountains with the white snow glittering on their peaks like nestling swans. Down by the shore were lovely green woods and, in front of them, a church or a convent—she wasn't sure which, but anyhow a building. Lemon and orange trees were growing in the garden, and tall palm trees in front of the gate. At this point the sea formed a little inlet, where the water was quite smooth but very deep close in to the rock where the fine white sand had silted up. She swam here with the handsome Prince and laid him on the sand with his head carefully pillowed in the warm sunshine.

Now there was a sound of bells from the large white building, and a number of young girls came through the garden. So the little mermaid swam farther out behind some large boulders that were sticking out of the water and covered her hair and breast with sea foam, so that her face wouldn't show; and then she watched to see who would come to the help of the unfortunate Prince.

It wasn't long before a young girl came along. She seemed quite frightened, but only for a moment; then she fetched several others, and the mermaid saw the Prince come round and smile at those about him; but no smile came out to her, for of course he didn't know she had rescued him. She felt so sad that, when he was taken away into the large building, she dived down sorrowfully into the sea and went back to her father's palace.

Silent and thoughtful as she had always been, she now became much more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen on her first visit to the surface, but she wouldn't say.

Many a morning and many an evening she rose up to where she had left the Prince. She saw the fruit in the garden ripen and be gathered, she saw the snow melt on the peaks, but she never saw the Prince, and so she always turned back more despondent than ever. Her one comfort was to sit in the little garden with her arms round the beautiful marble statue which was so like the

Prince. She never looked after her flowers, and they grew into a sort of wilderness, out over the paths, and braided their long stalks and leaves on to the branches of the trees, until the light was quite shut out.

At last she could keep it to herself no longer, but told one of her sisters; and immediately all the rest got to know, but nobody else—except a few other mermaids who didn't breathe a word to any but their nearest friends. One of these was able to say who the Prince was; she, too, had seen the party that was held on board the ship, and knew where he came from and whereabouts his kingdom was.

"Come on, little sister!" said the other Princesses. And with arms round each other's shoulders they rose in one line out of the sea, just in front of where the Prince's castle stood. It was built in a glistening stone of pale yellow with great flights of marble steps; one of these led straight into the sea. Splendid gilt domes curved above the roof, and between the pillars that went right round the building were lifelike sculptures in marble. Through the clear glass in the tall windows you could see into the most magnificent rooms; these were hung with sumptuous silk curtains and tapestries and their walls were covered with large paintings that were a delight to the eye. In the middle of the biggest room was a huge splashing fountain; its spray was flung high up to the glass dome in the ceiling, through which the sun shone down on to the water and the beautiful plants growing in the great pool.

Now she knew where he lived, and many an evening and many a night she would come to the surface at that spot. She swam much closer to the shore than any of the others had ever dared. She even went up the narrow creek under the fine marble balcony that threw its long shadow across the water. Here she would sit and gaze at the young Prince, who imagined he was quite alone in the clear moonlight.

Often in the evening she saw him go out to the strains of music in his splendid vessel that was dressed with flags. She peeped out from among the green rushes and, when the wind caught her long silvery veil and someone saw it, they fancied it was a swan spreading its wings.

On many nights, when the fishermen were at sea with their

torches, she heard them speaking so well of the young Prince, and that made her glad she had saved his life when he drifted about half-dead on the waves; and she thought of how closely his head had rested on her bosom and how lovingly she had kissed him. But he knew nothing whatsoever about that, never even dreamed she existed.

Fonder and fonder she became of human beings, more and more she longed for their company. Their world seemed to her to be so much larger than her own. You see, they could fly across the ocean in ships, climb the tall mountains high above the clouds; and the lands they owned stretched with woods and meadows further than her eyes could see. There was so much she would have liked to know, but her sisters couldn't answer all her questions, and so she asked the old grandmother, for she knew all about the upper world—as she so aptly called the countries above the sea.

"If people don't drown," asked the little mermaid, "can they go on living for ever? Don't they die, as we do down here in the sea?"

"Yes, yes," said the old lady, "They, too, have to die; their lifetime is even shorter than ours. We can live for three hundred years, but when our life here comes to an end we merely tum into foam on the water; we haven't even a grave down here among those we love. We've no immortal soul; we shall never have another life. We're like the green rush—once it's been cut it can't grow green again. But human beings have a soul which lives for ever; still lives after the body is turned to dust. The soul goes climbing up through the clear air, up till it reaches the shining stars. Just as we rise up out of the sea and look at the countries of human beings, so they rise up to beautiful unknown regions—ones we shall never see."

"Why haven't we got an immortal soul?" the little mermaid asked sadly. "I would give the whole three hundred years I have to live, to become for one day a human being and then share in that heavenly world."

"You mustn't go worrying about that," said the grandmother. "We're much happier and better off here than the people who live up there."

"So then I'm doomed to die and float like foam on the sea,

never to hear the music of the waves or see the lovely flowers and the red sun. Isn't there anything at all I can do to win an immortal soul?"

"No," said the old lady. "Only if a human being loved you so much that you were more to him than father and mother—if he clung to you with all his heart and soul, and let the priest put his right hand in yours as a promise to be faithful and true here and in all eternity—then his soul would flow over into your body and you, too, would get a share in human happiness. He would give you a soul and yet keep his own. But that can never happen. The very thing that's so beautiful here in the sea, your fish's tail, seems ugly to people on the earth; they know so little about it that they have to have two clumsy supports called legs, in order to look nice."

That made the little mermaid sigh and look sadly at her fish's tail.

"We must be content," said the old lady. "Let's dance and be gay for the three hundred years we have to live—that's a good time, isn't it?—then one can have one's fill of sleep in the grave all the more pleasantly afterwards. Tonight we're having a Court ball."

That was something more magnificent than we ever see on the earth. In the great ballroom, walls and ceiling were made of thick but quite clear glass. Several hundred enormous shells, rose-red and grass-green, were ranged on either side, each with a blue-burning flame which lit up the whole room and, shining out through the walls, lit up the sea outside as well. Countless fishes, big and small, could be seen swimming towards the glass walls; the scales on some of them shone purple-red, and on others like silver and gold ... Through the middle of the ballroom flowed a wide running stream, on which mermen and mermaids danced to their own beautiful singing. No human beings have voices so lovely. The little mermaid sang the most sweetly of them all, and they clapped their hands for her, and for a moment there was joy in her heart, for she knew that she had the most beautiful voice on earth or sea. But then her thoughts soon returned to the world above her; she couldn't forget the handsome Prince and her sorrow at not possessing, like him, an immortal soul. So she crept out of her father's palace and, while

all in there was song and merriment, she sat grieving in her little garden. Suddenly she caught the sound of a horn echoing down through the water, and she thought, "Ah, there he is, sailing up above—he whom I love more than father or mother, he who is always in my thoughts and in whose hands I would gladly place the happiness of my life. I will dare anything to win him and an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing there in my father's palace, I will go to the sea witch; I've always been dreadfully afraid of her, but perhaps she can help me and tell me what to do."

So the little mermaid left her garden and set off for the place where the witch lived, on the far side of the roaring whirlpools. She had never been that way before. There were no flowers growing, no sea grass, nothing but the bare grey sandy bottom stretching right up to the whirlpools, where the water went swirling round like roaring mill-wheels and pulled everything it could clutch down with it to the depths. She had to pass through the middle of these battering eddies in order to get to the sea witch's domain; and here for a long stretch there was no other way than over hot bubbling mud—the witch called it her swamp. Her house lay behind it in the middle of an extraordinary wood. All the trees and bushes were polyps, half animals and half plants. They looked like hundred-headed snakes growing out of the earth; all the branches were long slimy arms with supple worm-like fingers, and joint by joint from the root up to the very tip they were continuously on the move. They wound themselves "tight round everything they could clutch hold of in the sea, and they never let go. The little mermaid was terribly scared as she paused at the edge of the wood. Her heart was throbbing with fear; she nearly turned back. But then she remembered the Prince and the human soul, and that gave her courage. She wound her long flowing hair tightly round her head, so that the polyps shouldn't have that to clutch her by, she folded both her hands across her breast and darted off just as a fish darts through the water, in among the hideous polyps which reached out for her with their supple arms and fingers. She noticed how each of them had something they had caught, held fast by a hundred little arms like hoops of iron. White skeletons of folk who had been lost at sea and had sunk to the bottom looked out

from the arms of the polyps. Ship's rudders and chests were gripped tight, skeletons of land animals, and—most horrible of all—a small mermaid whom they had caught and throttled.

Now she came to a large slimy open space in the wood where big fat water-snakes were frisking about and showing their hideous whitish yellow bellies. In the middle was a house built of the bones of human folk who had been wrecked. There sat the sea witch letting a toad feed out of her mouth, just as we might let a little canary come and peck sugar. She called the horrible fat wafer-snakes her little chicks and allowed them to sprawl about her great spongy bosom.

"I know well enough what you're after," said the sea witch. "How stupid of you! Still, you shall have your way, and it'll bring you into misfortune; my lovely Princess. You want to get rid of your fish's tail and in its place have a couple of stumps to walk on like a human being, so that the young Prince can fall in love with you and you can win him and an immortal soul"—and with that the witch gave such a loud repulsive laugh that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground and remained sprawling there. "You've just come at the right time," said the witch. "Tomorrow, once the sun's up, I couldn't help you for another year. I shall make you a drink, and before sunrise you must swim to land, sit down on the shore and drink it up. Then your tail will divide in two and shrink into what humans call 'pretty legs'. But it'll hurt; it'll be like a sharp sword going through you. Everyone who sees you will say you are the loveliest human child they have ever seen. You will keep your graceful movements—no dancer can glide so lightly—but every step you take will feel as if you were treading on a sharp knife, enough to make your feet bleed. Are you ready to bear all that? If you are, I'll help you."

"Yes," said the little mermaid, and her voice trembled; but she thought of her Prince and the prize of an immortal soul.

"Still, don't forget this," said the witch: "once you've got human shape, you can never become a mermaid again. You can never go down through the water to your sisters and to your father's palace; and if you don't win the Prince's love, so that he forgets his father and mother for you and always has you in his thoughts and lets the priest join your hands together to be man and wife, then you won't get an immortal soul. The first morning

after the Prince marries someone else, your heart must break and you become foam on the water."

"I'm ready," said the little mermaid, pale as death.

"Then there's me to be paid," said the witch, "and you're not getting my help for nothing. You have the loveliest voice of all down here at the bottom of the sea. With that voice, no doubt, you think to enchant him; but that voice you shall hand over to me. I demand the best that you have for me to make a rich drink. You see, I have to give you my own blood, in order that the drink may be as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what shall I have left?"

"Your lovely form," said the witch, "your graceful movements, and your speaking eyes. With those you can so easily enchant a human heart . . . Well, where's your spunk? Put out your little tongue and let me cut it off in payment; then you shall be given the potent mixture."

"Go on, then," said the little mermaid, and the witch put the kettle on for brewing the magic drink. "Cleanliness before everything," she said as she scoured out the kettle with a bundle of snakes she had knotted together. Next, she scratched her breast and let her black blood drip down into the kettle; the steam took on the weirdest shapes, terrifying to look at. The witch kept popping fresh things into the kettle, and when it boiled up properly it sounded like a crocodile in tears. At last the brew was ready; it looked like the clearest water.

"There you are!" said the witch and cut off the little mermaid's tongue; she was now dumb and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polyps should catch hold of you, as you go back through the wood," said the witch, "throw but a single drop of this drink on them, and their arms and fingers will burst into a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need to do that. The polyps shrank from her in terror when they saw the dazzling drink that shone in her hand like a glittering star. So she quickly came through the wood, the swamp and the roaring whirlpools.

She could see her father's palace; the lights were out in the great ballroom. They were all certain to be asleep in there by this time; but she didn't anyhow dare to look for them, now that she

was dumb and was going to leave them for ever. She felt as if her heart must break for grief. She stole into the garden, picked one flower from each of her sisters' flower-beds, blew a thousand finger kisses towards the palace, and rose then through the dark-blue sea.

The sun was not yet up, as she sighted the Prince's castle and climbed the magnificent marble steps. The moon was shining wonderfully clear. The little mermaid drank the sharp burning potion, and it was as if a two-edged sword pierced through her delicate body—she fainted and lay as though dead. Then the sun, streaming over the sea, woke her up, and she felt a sharp pain. But there in front of her stood the handsome young Prince. He stared at her with his coal-black eyes, so that she cast down her own—and saw that her fish's tail had gone and she had the sweetest little white legs that any young girl could wish for; but she was quite naked and so she wrapped herself in her long flowing hair. The Prince asked who she was and how she had come there, and she could only look back at him so gently and yet so sadly out of her deep-blue eyes; for of course she couldn't speak. Then he took her by the hand and led her into the castle. Every step she took, as the witch had foretold, was as though she were treading on sharp knives and pricking gimlets; but she gladly put up with that. By the side of the Prince she went along as lightly as a bubble; and he and all of them marvelled at the charm of her graceful movements.

Costly dresses were given her of silk and muslin; she was the most beautiful in all the castle. But she was dumb; she could neither sing nor speak. Lovely slave-girls in gold and silk came out and danced before the Prince and his royal parents; one of them sang more beautifully than all the rest, and the Prince clapped his hands and smiled at her. This saddened the little mermaid, for she knew that she herself had sung far more beautifully. And she thought, "Oh, if only he knew that I gave my voice away for ever, in order to be with him!"

Next, the slave-girls danced a graceful gliding dance to the most delightful music; and then the little mermaid raised her pretty white arms, lingered on the tips of her toes and then glided across the floor, dancing as no one had danced before. She looked more and more lovely with every movement; and her

eyes spoke more deeply to the heart than the slave-girls' singing.

Everyone was enchanted, and especially the Prince, who called her his little foundling. Still she went on dancing, although every time her foot touched the ground it felt as though she was treading on sharp knives. The Prince said that she must never leave him, and she was allowed to sleep on a velvet cushion outside his door.

He had boys' clothes made for her, so that she could go riding with him on horseback. They rode through the sweet-smelling woods, where the green boughs grazed her shoulders and the little birds sang among the cool foliage. She went climbing with the Prince up high mountains and, although her delicate feet bled so that others could see it, she only laughed and went on and on with him, until they could see the clouds sailing below them like a flock of birds migrating to other lands.

Back at the Prince's castle, when at night the others were asleep, she would go out on to the broad marble steps and cool her tingling feet in the cold sea-water; and then she would think of those down there in the depths of the sea.

One night her sisters rose up arm in arm singing so mournfully as they swam on the water. She made signs to them, and they recognized her and told her how unhappy she had made them all. After that, they used to visit her every night; and once, in the far distance, she saw her old grandmother who hadn't been above the water for many years, and also the sea King wearing his crown. They both stretched out their hands towards her, but they didn't venture in so near to the shore as the five sisters.

Day by day she became dearer to the Prince. He loved her as one loves a dear good child, but he didn't dream of making her his Queen; and yet she had to become his wife, or else she would never win an immortal soul, but on his wedding morning would be turned to foam on the sea.

"Do you like me best of all?" the little mermaid's eyes seemed to say, when he took her in his arms and kissed her lovely brow.

"Yes," said the prince, "You're the dearest of all, because you have the kindest heart. You are the most devoted to me, and you remind me of a young girl I once saw but shall probably never see again. I was sailing in a ship that was wrecked; the waves

drove me ashore near a sacred temple where a number of young girls were serving. The youngest, who found me on the beach and saved my life—I only saw her twice. She was the only one I could ever love in this world, but you are so like her that you almost take the place of her image in my heart. She belongs to the holy temple, so that fortune has been kind in sending you to me. We will never part.”

“Ah, little does he know that it was I who saved his life,” thought the mermaid; “that I carried him across the sea to the temple in the wood; that I waited in the foam and watched if anyone would come. I saw the pretty girl he loves better than me”—and the mermaid sighed deeply, for she didn’t know how to cry. “The girl belongs to the sacred temple, he says; she’ll never come out into the world; and they’ll never meet again. I am with him. I see him every day. I will take care of him, love him, give up my life to him.”

But now the Prince was getting married they said—married to the pretty daughter of the neighbouring King, and that was why he was fitting out such a splendid ship. The Prince was going off to take a look at his neighbour’s kingdom—that was how they put it, meaning that it was really to take a look at his neighbour’s daughter. A large suite was to go with him, but the little mermaid shook her head and laughed. She knew the Prince’s thoughts far better than all the others. “I shall have to go,” he said to her. “I shall have to visit the pretty Princess, as my parents are so insistent. But force me to bring her back here as my wife, that they will never do. I can’t love her. She’s not like the beautiful girl in the temple, as you are. If I ever had to find a bride, I would rather have you, my dear mute foundling with the speaking eyes,” and he kissed her red mouth, played with her long hair and laid his head against her heart, so that it dreamed of human happiness and an immortal soul.

“You’ve no fear of the sea, have you, my dumb child?” he asked, as they stood on board the splendid ship that was to take him to the neighbouring kingdom. And he told her of stormy gales and dead calms, of strange fishes at the bottom of the ocean, and all that the diver had seen there; and she smiled at his tales, for she knew better than anyone else about the bottom of the sea.

At night, when there was an unclouded moon and all were asleep but the helmsman at his wheel, she sat by the ship’s rail and stared down through the clear water; and she seemed to see her father’s palace, with her old grandmother standing on the top of it in her silver crown and gazing up through the swift current at the keel of the vessel. Then her sisters came up on to the water and looked at her with eyes full of sorrow, wringing their white hands. She beckoned to them and smiled and would have liked to tell them that all was going well and happily with her; but the cabin-boy came up at that moment, and the sisters dived down, so that the boy felt satisfied that the white something he had seen was foam on the water.

Next morning the ship sailed into the harbour of the neighbouring King’s magnificent capital. The church-bells all rang out; and trumpets were blown from the tall battlements, while the soldiers saluted with gleaming bayonets and flying colours. Every day there was a fête. Balls and parties were given one after another, but nothing had yet been seen of the Princess; it was said that she was being educated abroad in a sacred temple, where she had lessons in all the royal virtues. At last she arrived.

The little mermaid was eager for a glimpse of her beauty, and she had to admit that she had never seen anyone more charming to look at. Her complexion was so clear and delicate, and behind the long dark lashes smiled a pair of trusting deep-blue eyes.

“It’s you!” cried the Prince. “You who rescued me, when I was lying half-dead on the shore.” And he clasped his blushing bride in his arms. “Oh, I’m too, too happy,” he said to the little mermaid. “My dearest wish—more than I ever dared to hope for—has been granted me. My happiness will give you pleasure, because you’re fonder of me than any of the others.” Then the little mermaid kissed his hand, and already she felt as if her heart was breaking. The morrow of his wedding would mean death to her and change her to foam on the sea.

All the church-bells were ringing, as the heralds rode round the streets to proclaim the betrothal. On every altar sweet oil was burning in rich lamps of silver. The priests swung their censers, and bride and bridegroom joined hands and received the blessing of the bishop. Dressed in silk and gold, the little

mermaid stood holding the bride's train; but her ears never heard the festive music, her eyes never saw the holy rites; she was thinking of her last night on earth, of all she had lost in this world.

That same evening, bride and bridegroom went on board the ship; the cannon thundered, the flags were all flying, and amidships they had put up a royal tent of gold and purple, strewn with luxurious cushions; here the wedded couple were to sleep that calm cool night.

The sails filled with the breeze and the ship glided lightly and smoothly over the clear water.

As darkness fell, coloured lanterns were lit, and the crew danced merrily on the deck. The little mermaid could not help thinking of the first time she came up out of the sea and gazed on just such a scene of joy and splendour. And now she joined in the dance, swerving and swooping as lightly as a swallow that avoids pursuit; and shouts of admiration greeted her on every side. Never had she danced so brilliantly. It was as if sharp knives were wounding her delicate feet, but she never felt it; more painful was the wound in her heart. She knew that this was the last evening she would see the Prince for whom she had turned her back on kindred and home, given up her beautiful voice, and every day suffered hours of agony without his suspecting a thing. This was the last night she would breathe the same air as he, gaze on the deep sea and the star-blue sky. An endless night, without thoughts, without dreams, awaited her who had no soul and could never win one . . . All was joy and merriment on board until long past midnight. She laughed and danced with the thought of death in her heart. The Prince kissed his lovely bride, and she toyed with his dark hair, and arm in arm they went to rest in the magnificent tent.

The ship was now hushed and still; only the helmsman was there at his wheel. And the little mermaid leaned with her white arms on the rail and looked eastward for a sign of the pink dawn. The first ray of sun, she knew, would kill her. Suddenly she saw her sisters rising out of the sea. They were pale, like her; no more was their beautiful long hair fluttering in the wind—it had been cut off.

“We have given it to the witch, so that she might help us to

save you from dying when tonight is over. She has given us a knife—look, here it is—do you see how sharp it is? Before sunrise you must stab it into the Prince's heart. Then, when his warm blood splashes over your feet, they will grow together into a fish's tail, and you will become a mermaid once more; you will be able to come down to us in the water and live out your three hundred years before being changed into the dead salt foam of the sea. Make haste! Either he or you must die before the sun rises. Our old grandmother has been sorrowing till her white hair has fallen away, as ours fell before the witch's scissors. Kill the Prince and come back to us! But make haste—look at that red gleam in the sky. In a few minutes the sun will rise, and then you must die.” And with a strange deep sigh they sank beneath the waves.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtain of the tent, and she saw the lovely bride sleeping with her head on the Prince's breast. She stopped and kissed his handsome brow, looked at the sky where the pink dawn glowed brighter and brighter, looked at the sharp knife in her hand, and again fixed her eyes on the Prince, who murmured in his dreams the name of his bride—she alone was in his thoughts. The knife quivered in the mermaid's hand—but then she flung it far out into the waves; they glimmered red where it fell, and what looked like drops of blood came oozing out of the water. With a last glance at the Prince from eyes half-dimmed in death she hurled herself from the ship into the sea and felt her body dissolving into foam.

And now the sun came rising from the sea. Its rays fell gentle and warm on the death chilled foam, and the little mermaid had no feeling of death. She saw the bright sun and, hovering above her, hundreds of lovely creatures—she could see right through them, see the white sails of the ship and the pink clouds in the sky. And their voice was the voice of melody, yet so spiritual that no human ear could hear it, just as no earthly eye could see them. They had no wings, but their own lightness bore them up as they floated through the air. The little mermaid saw that she had a body like theirs, raising itself freer and freer from the foam.

“To whom am I coming?” she asked, and her voice sounded like that of the other beings, more spiritual than any earthly music can record.

“Persinette” Study Questions

“To the daughters of the air,” answered the others. “A mermaid has no immortal soul and can never have one unless she wins the love of a mortal. Eternity, for her, depends on a power outside her. Neither have the daughters of the air an everlasting soul, but by good deeds they can shape one for themselves. We shall fly to the hot countries, where the stifling air of pestilence means death to mankind; we shall bring them cool breezes. We shall scatter the fragrance of flowers through the air and send them comfort and healing. When for three hundred years we have striven to do the good we can, then we shall win an immortal soul and have a share in mankind’s eternal happiness. You, poor little mermaid, have striven for that with all your heart; you have suffered and endured, and have raised yourself into the world of the spirits of the air. Now, by three hundred years of good deeds, you too can shape for yourself an immortal soul.”

And the little mermaid raised her crystal arms toward God’s sun, and for the first time she knew the feeling of tears.

On board the ship there was bustle and life once more. She saw the Prince with his pretty bride looking about for her; sorrowfully they stared at the heaving foam, as if they knew she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen, she kissed the forehead of the bride, gave a smile to the Prince, and then with the other children of the air she climbed to a rose-red cloud that was sailing to the sky.

“So we shall float for three hundred years, till at last we come into the heavenly kingdom.”

“And we may reach it even sooner,” whispered one. “Unseen we float into human homes where there are children and, for every day we find a good child who makes father and mother happy and earns their love, God shortens our time of trial. The child never knows when we fly through the room and, if that makes us smile with joy, then a year is taken away from the three hundred. But if we see a child who is naughty or spiteful, then we have to weep tears of sorrow, and every tear adds one more day to our time of trial.”

1. What does the woman in this story desire in the beginning, and why do you think she desires it so much?
2. What happens to this woman because she believes she will never get this thing she so greatly desires?
3. Identify some of the reasons why it is difficult for the husband to fulfill her desire (find at least 3).
4. What arrangement does the man make with the fairy? Do you think this is wise? Why or why not?
5. How does Persinette feel about living in the fairy’s tower and why does she feel that way?
6. Explain what draws the prince to Persinette’s tower and why he so persistently tries to get inside it.
7. What great mistake does Persinette make with the prince for which the fairy punishes her, and what is the punishment (there are multiple parts to the punishment)?
8. How does the fairy punish the prince?
9. How does the prince find Persinette again?
10. Why does the fairy finally put an end to all of the young family’s suffering (in other words, what is the lesson of the tale)?

Charlotte-Rose de la Force, "Persinette" (1698), in *Les contes des contes* (Paris: S. Bernard, 1698).

Persinette

After a long period of courtship, two young lovers were married, and nothing could equal their ardor. They lived content and happy, and to complete their felicity, the young wife became pregnant, and this brought great joy to their little household. They had strongly desired to have a child, and their wish was now fulfilled.

Within the vicinity of their house there lived a fairy who was fond of cultivating beautiful garden filled with different kinds of fruits, plants, and flowers. At the time of this story, parsley was very rare in this country, and the fairy had it brought from the Indies. Indeed, one could not find any parsley in that country except in her garden.

Now the expectant wife had a great desire to eat some parsley, and since she knew that it would be difficult to satisfy her wants because nobody was allowed in the fairy's garden, she became so sad and wretched that her husband could barely recognize her with his own eyes. He kept insisting and urging her to tell him what had brought about such a huge change not only in her spirits but in her body, and after resisting for some time, his wife finally confessed that she had a great desire to eat some parsley. Her husband sighed and was troubled by this desire, which would indeed be difficult to satisfy. Nevertheless, since nothing appears difficult if one is in love, he walked along the walls of the garden day and night to try to find a way to climb over. But it was impossible because they were so high.

Finally, one evening, he saw that one of the doors to the garden was open. He crept through quietly, and he was so happy that he grabbed a fistful of parsley as fast as he could. Then he left as he had entered and carried the loot to his wife, who ate the parsley with avidity. Two days later she felt an even greater desire to eat some more.

To be sure, the parsley must have been extremely delicious at that time.

The poor husband returned to the garden many times afterward but in vain. Eventually, however, his perseverance was rewarded, for he found the door to the garden open again. He entered and was extremely surprised to find the fairy herself, who snarled at him because he had been so audacious as to set foot in a place where admission was not simply granted to anyone who thought he could enter. The bewildered young man fell to his knees, begged her pardon, and told her that his wife would die if she could not eat a little parsley, for she was pregnant, and her desire was thus understandable and indeed forgivable.

"Well, then," said the fairy, "I'll give you as much parsley as you like if you will give me your child when your wife gives birth."

After a short deliberation, the husband gave his promise, and he took as much parsley as he liked.

When the time of the birth arrived, the fairy went to be near the mother, who gave birth to a daughter, whom the fairy called Persinette. She wrapped her in sheets of gold and sprinkled her face with some precious water which she had in a crystal vase that immediately made her the most beautiful creature in the world. After performing these ceremonies to make the child beautiful, the fairy took little Persinette to her home and raised her with the utmost care imaginable. Before Persinette reached the age of twelve, she was a marvel to behold, and since the fairy was fully aware of what fate had in store for her, she decided to shield her from her destiny.

In order to accomplish her goal, she used her magic to build a silver tower in the middle of a forest. This mysterious tower did not have a door by which one could enter it. There were large and beautiful apartments that were so bright it seemed as if the sunlight penetrated them, but they actually received the day through the fire of the carbuncles that glistened in all the chambers. The fairy had splendidly provided everything necessary for life, and all the rarest things were gathered together in this place. Persinette had only to open the drawers of her dressers, and she would find the most beautiful jewels. Her wardrobe was just as magnificent as that of the queens of Asia, and she was always the first to start the most recent fashion.

Alone in this beautiful residence, she had nothing to desire other than some company. Except for that, all her desires were anticipated and fulfilled.

Needless to say, the food at all the meals was the most delicious one could imagine, and I assure you that, even though she did not know anyone except the fairy, she was not bored in her solitude. She read, painted; played musical instruments, and entertained herself with all the things that a girl knows how to do when she has been perfectly educated.

The fairy ordered her to sleep at the top of the tower, where there was one single window, and after helping Persinette get settled in this charming solitude, she descended via this window and returned to her own borne. Meanwhile, Persinette amused herself with a hundred different things, and even when she was merely searching around in her caskets, she felt fully occupied. Indeed, how many people would like to feel as contented as she was!

The view from the window of the tower was the most beautiful in the world because one could see the sea from one side, and from the other, the vast forest, two sights that were unusual and charming. Since Persinette had a divine voice, she liked to sing aloud. This was one of the ways she entertained herself, especially during the hours she awaited the arrival of the fairy, who came to see her very often, and when the fairy was at the bottom of the tower, she used to say, "Persinette, let your hair down so can climb up."

One of the great beauties of Persinette was her hair, which was thirty yards long and did not cause her any discomfort. It was as blond as gold and braided with ribbons of all colors. And when she heard the fairy's voice, she would undo her hair and let it fall down, and the fairy would climb up.

One day, Persinette was alone at her window, and she began to sing in the most extraordinary way. Just at this very moment, a young prince happened to be hunting in the forest. He had lost the rest of his company in pursuit of a stag. Upon hearing such a pleasant voice in this wilderness, he approached the tower and saw the young Persinette. Her beauty moved him. Her voice captivated him. He went around that fatal tower twenty times, and when he could not find an entrance, he thought he would die

of agony, for he had fallen in love. But since he was daring, he kept looking for a way to scale the tower.

As far as Persinette was concerned, she became speechless upon gazing at such a charming man. She looked at him a long time, but all at once she withdrew from the window, believing that he was a kind of a monster, for she remembered that she had heard of some men who could kill with their eyes, and she had found his looks to be very dangerous.

When the prince saw that she had disappeared, he became despondent and began making inquiries in the nearby village, where he was told that a fairy had built that tower and had locked up a young girl in it. So he prowled around it every day, until he finally saw the fairy arrive and say: "Persinette, let your hair down so I can climb up." At that very instant, he watched the beautiful girl undo her long plaits of hair, and soon after he saw how the fairy mounted by taking hold of the hair. To be sure, he was very surprised by this unusual manner of making a visit.

The next day, when he knew that the usual hour for the fairy to enter the tower had passed, he waited impatiently until nightfall. Then he went under Persinette's window and disguised his voice admirably to make it sound like the fairy's, and he said, "Persinette, let your hair down so I can climb up."

Poor Persinette, deceived by the sound of this voice, ran to the window and undid her beautiful hair. The prince climbed up, and when he was at the top and looked at her through the window and saw how marvelously beautiful she was up close, he thought he would fall back down to the bottom. Nevertheless, he recovered his natural boldness and jumped into the chamber. Then he bowed down before Persinette and embraced her knees with an ardor that was to persuade her of his love. But she was frightened. She cried, and the next moment she trembled, and there was nothing that could calm her, for her heart was full of all the love she could possibly feel for this prince. Meanwhile, he was saying all the most beautiful things in the world to her, and she responded by showing her confusion, which in turn gave hope to the prince. Finally, he became bolder and proposed to marry her right then and there, and she consented without hardly knowing what she was doing. Even so, she was able to complete the ceremony.

Now the prince was happy, and Persinette grew accustomed to loving him. They saw each other every day, and in a short time she became pregnant. Since she had no idea what this condition meant, she was upset. Although the prince knew, he did not want to explain it to her for fear of tormenting her. But the fairy had come to see her, and no sooner did she look at her than she recognized the malady.

"Ah, how unfortunate for you!" she said. "You've made a great mistake, and you're going to be punished for it. Fate has had its way, and all the precautions I took were in vain."

After saying all this she asked Persinette in an imperious tone to confess all that had happened. And Persinette complied with her eyes filled with tears. Upon hearing her story, the fairy did not appear to be moved by Persinette's touching story about how she fell in love, and taking her by her hair, she cut off the precious braids. After doing this, she made Persinette climb down the tower by using her braids, and she followed her through the window. When they were at the bottom, she covered Persinette in a cloud that carried both of them to the seaside and deposited them at a spot that was very isolated but pleasant enough. There were meadows, woods, a brook with fresh water, and a small bit made of foliage that always remained green. Inside there was a bed made of shrubs, and on the side was a basket filled with unusual biscuits that were continually replenished. Such was the place to which the fairy had conducted Persinette, and she left her there after severely reproaching her. These reproaches seemed to Persinette a hundred times more cruel than her own woes.

It was in this place that she gave birth to a little prince and a little princess, and it was in this place that she nursed them and had all the time in the world to cry about her misfortune.

But the fairy did not find this vengeance sufficient enough. She also wanted to punish the prince as well. As soon as she left the wretched Persinette, she returned to the top of the tower and began singing the way Persinette usually did. The prince was fooled by this voice, and when he returned to see Persinette, he asked her to lower her hair so that he could climb up the way he was accustomed to doing. The perfidious fairy had expressly cut Persinette's hair for this purpose and let it down for him. When

the poor prince appeared at the window, he was more distressed than surprised by not finding his mistress, and he searched for her eyes.

"You reckless fool!" the fairy said to him. "Your crime is immense. Your punishment will be terrible!"

But the prince shrugged off these menacing threats and responded, "Where is Persinette?"

"She's no longer here for you!" the fairy replied.

And invoking her power, she caused the prince to throw himself from the top of the tower. Although his body should have broken into a thousand pieces when it reached the ground, the only agony he suffered was the loss of his sight.

The prince was horrified when he realized that he could no longer see. He remained for a time at the foot of the tower, groaning and repeating Persinette's name a hundred times. Then he began groping about tried to proceed as best lie could. Slowly he gained confidence and could make his way in the dark world he now inhabited. For a long time he did not encounter anyone who could help and guide him. He nourished himself by eating herbs and roots that he found when he became hungry.

At the end of some years, he was walking about one day, when he found himself more troubled by his love and suffering than usual. He went to sleep under a tree and was consumed by sad reflection, a cruel preoccupation for someone who deserved a better fate. But suddenly he was wakened from his reverie by a charming voice. The first sounds pierced his heart, producing sweet feelings that he had not experienced for a long time.

"Oh gods!" he cried out. "It's Persinette's voice!"

He was not mistaken. Without realizing it, he had reached her solitary spot. She was seated at the door of her cabin and was singing a song about her unfortunate love. Her two children, more beautiful than the day was bright, were playing a little distance from her. They moved about until they came upon the tree under which the prince had been sleeping. No sooner did they see him than one and then the other ran and hugged him a thousand times.

"It's my father!" they said at one and the same time and called their mother. In fact, they made such a cry that she came running, for she could not imagine what the matter could be.

Until that very moment nothing had ever happened in that solitary place.

Imagine her surprise and joy when she recognized her dear husband! It is impossible to describe it. She uttered a piercing cry above him and quite naturally burst forth into tears. But what a miracle! No sooner had her precious tears fallen on the prince's eyes than he regained his full vision. Now he could see just as clearly as he had seen before, and all this was due to the tenderness of the impassioned Persinette, who took him into her arms. He responded with endless hugs, more than he had ever given her before.

It was touching indeed to see the handsome prince, the charming princess, and the lovely children express such ecstatic joy and tenderness. The rest of the day continued just as pleasant, and when night came, this little family finally realized it was time to eat. However, when the prince took a biscuit, it turned into stone. He was terror-stricken by this miracle and sighed with pain. The poor children cried, and the distraught mother wanted at least to give them some water, but it changed into crystals. What a night! They believed this terrible time would last forever.

When the sun appeared, they got up and decided to gather herbs. But their astonishment, the herbs turned to toads and venomous snakes. The most innocent birds became dragons, and vixens flew around them, glaring at them in a terrifying way.

'I can't go on like this!' the prince cried. "My dear Persinette, I did not want to find you only to lose you in such a terrible way."

"Let us die together, my dear prince," she responded, embracing him "and let us make our enemies envious by the sweetness of our death."

The poor little children were in their arms, all of them so faint that they on the brink of death. Who would not have been touched by the of this dying poor family? They needed a miracle.

Fortunately, the fairy was finally moved, and recalling at this moment all the tenderness that she had once felt for the amiable Persinette, she flew to the spot where they were and appeared in a glittering golden chariot covered with gems. She summoned the now fortunate lovers, each of them at one side of her, and after placing their charming children on magnificent pillows at

their feet, she transported them to the palace of the prince's father, the king. There was no end of rejoicing. The handsome prince, whom his parents had long believed lost, was received like a god, and he found himself quite content to be settled after the torments of his stormy life. Nothing in the world could be compared to the happiness in which he lived with his perfect wife.

*Oh, tender couples learn to view
How advantageous it is always to be true.
The pains, the work, the most burdensome worry,
All this will eventually turn out quite sweet,
When the ardor is shared in a love complete.
Together there's nothing a couple can't do,
And fortune and fate will be overcome too.*

“Brier Rose” Study Questions

1. Why does one of the kingdom's thirteen wise women curse the king's daughter? What is the curse?
2. What is the spindle of a spinning wheel? Draw a picture or describe it in detail, (you might have to look it up)
3. How does the twelfth wise woman attempt to protect the princess from this curse?
4. Who do you think the granny in the tower might be? Why?
5. Why is the princess known as Brier Rose?
6. Why is it so easy for this prince to enter the palace in which Brier Rose sleeps, when dozens of other princes had died trying to do so?

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, “Brier Rose” – “Domröschen” (1857), No. 50 in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen. Gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1857).

Brier Rose

In times of old there lived a king and queen, and every day they said, “Oh, if only we had a child!” Yet, they never had one.

Then one day, as the queen went out bathing, a frog happened to crawl ashore and say to her, “Your wish will be fulfilled. Before the year is out, you will give birth to a daughter.”

The frog's prediction came true, and the queen gave birth to a girl who was so beautiful that the king was overjoyed and decided to hold a great feast. Not only did he invite his relatives, friends, and acquaintances, but also the wise women in the hope that they would be generous and kind to his daughter. There were thirteen wise women in his kingdom, but he had only twelve golden plates from which they could eat. Therefore, one of them had to remain home.

The feast was celebrated with tremendous splendor, and when it drew to a close, the wise women bestowed their miraculous gifts upon the child. One gave her virtue, another beauty, the third wealth, and so on, until they had given her nearly everything one could possibly wish for in the world. When eleven of them had offered their gifts, the thirteenth suddenly entered the hall. She wanted to get revenge for not having been invited, and without greeting anyone or looking around, she cried out with a loud voice, “In her fifteenth year the princess will prick herself with a spindle and fall down dead!”

That was all she said. Then she turned around and left the hall. Everyone was horrified, but the twelfth wise woman stepped forward. She still had her wish to make, and although she could not undo the evil spell, she could nevertheless soften it.

“The princess will not die,” she said. “Instead, she shall fall into a deep sleep for one hundred years.”

Since the king wanted to guard his dear child against such a catastrophe, he issued an order that all spindles in his kingdom were to be burned. Meanwhile, the gifts of the wise women

fulfilled their promise in every way: the girl was so beautiful, polite, kind, and sensible that whoever encountered her could not help but adore her.

Now, on the day she turned fifteen, it happened that the king and queen were not at home, and she was left completely alone in the palace. So she wandered all over the place and explored as many rooms and chambers as she pleased. She eventually came to an old tower, climbed its narrow winding staircase, and came to a small door. A rusty key was stuck in the lock, and when she turned it, the door sprang open, and she saw an old woman in a little room sitting with a spindle and busily spinning flax.

"Good day, old granny," said the princess. "What are you doing there?"

"I'm spinning," said the old woman, and she nodded her head. "What's the thing that's bobbing about in such a funny way?" asked the maiden, who took the spindle and wanted to spin too, but just as she touched the spindle, the magic spell began working, and she pricked her finger with it.

The very moment she felt the prick, she fell down on the bed that was standing there, and she was overcome by a deep sleep. This sleep soon spread throughout the entire palace. The king and queen had just returned home, and when they entered the hall, they fell asleep, as did all the people of their court. They were followed by the horses in the stable, the dogs in the courtyard, the pigeons on the roof, and the flies on the wall. Even the fire flickering in the hearth became quiet and fell asleep. The roast stopped sizzling, and the cook, who was just about to pull the kitchen boy's hair because he had done something wrong, let him go and fell asleep. Finally, the wind died down so that not a single leaf stirred on the trees outside the castle.

Soon a brier hedge began to grow all around the castle, and it grew higher each year. Eventually, it surrounded and covered the entire castle, causing it to become invisible. Not even the flag on the roof could be seen. The princess became known by the name Beautiful Sleeping Brier Rose, and a tale about her began circulating throughout the country. From time to time princes came and tried to break through the hedge and get back to the castle. However, this was impossible because the thorns clung together tightly as though they had hands, and the young men

got stuck there. Indeed, they could not pry themselves loose and died miserable deaths.

After many, many years had gone by, a prince came to this country once more and heard an old man talking about the brier hedge. Supposedly, there was a castle standing behind the hedge, and in the castle was a remarkably beautiful princess named Brier Rose, who had been sleeping for a hundred years, along with the king and queen and their entire court. The old man also knew from his grandfather that many princes had come and had tried to break through the brier hedge, but they had got stuck and had died wretched deaths.

"I'm not afraid," said the young prince. "I intend to go and see the beautiful Brier Rose."

The good old man tried as best he could to dissuade him, but the prince would not heed his words.

Now the hundred years had just ended, and the day on which Brier Rose was to wake up again had arrived. When the prince approached the brier hedge, he found nothing but beautiful flowers that opened of their own accord, let him through, and then closed again like a hedge. In the castle courtyard he saw the horses and the spotted hunting dogs lying asleep. The pigeons were perched on the roof and had tucked their heads beneath their wings. When he entered the palace, the flies were sleeping on the wall, the cook in the kitchen was still holding his hand as if he wanted to grab the kitchen boy, and the maid was sitting in front of the black chicken that she was about to pluck. As the prince continued walking, he saw the entire country lying asleep in the hall with the king and queen by the throne. Then he moved on, and everything was so quiet that he could hear himself breathe.

Finally, he came to the tower and opened the door to the small room in which Brier Rose was asleep. There she lay, and her beauty was so marvelous that he could not take his eyes off her. Then he leaned over and gave her a kiss, and when his lips touched hers, Brier Rose opened her eyes, woke up, and looked at him fondly. After that they went downstairs together, and the king and queen woke up along with the entire court, and they all looked at each other in amazement. Soon the horses in the courtyard stood up and shook themselves. The hunting dogs

jumped around and wagged their tails. The pigeons on the roof lifted their heads from under their wings, looked around, and flew off into the fields. The flies on the wall continued crawling. The fire in the kitchen flared up, flickered, and cooked the meat. The roast began to sizzle again, and the cook gave the kitchen boy such a box on the ear that he let out a cry, while the maid finished plucking the chicken.

The wedding of the prince with Brier Rose was celebrated in great splendor, and they lived happily to the end of their days.

“Little Thumbling” Study Questions

1. What are the problems (identify at least 3) that the family is facing at the beginning of this tale?
2. What is life like for Little Thumbling in this family?
3. Explain why the woodcutter wants to abandon his children, why his wife ultimately agrees with him, and why this might be better for the children than staying with their parents (even though we would never dream of doing such things to our own children).
4. How does Little Thumbling save his brothers and sisters from their abandonment?
5. Why do the parents once again abandon their children in the forest?
6. How does the Ogre's wife treat the woodcutter's children? Why do you think she does so?
7. Why does the Ogre murder his own children?
8. How does Little Thumbling ensure his family will never be poor again?

Charles Perrault, "Little Thumbling" — "Le petit poucet" (1697), in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1697).

Little Thumbling

Once upon a time there was a woodcutter and his wife who had seven children, all boys. The eldest was but ten years old, and the youngest only seven. People were astonished that the woodcutter had had so many children in such a short time, but the fact is that his wife did not mince matters and seldom gave birth to less than two at a time. They were very poor, and their seven children were a great burden to them since not one was able to earn his own living.

What distressed them even more was that the youngest son was very delicate and rarely spoke, which they considered a mark of stupidity instead of good sense. Moreover, he was very little. Indeed, at birth he was scarcely bigger than one's thumb, and this led everyone to call him Little Thumbling. This poor child was the scapegoat of the family and was blamed for everything that happened. Nevertheless, he was the shrewdest and most sensible of all the brothers, and if he spoke but little, he listened a great deal.

One year there was a very bad harvest, and the famine¹ was so severe that these poor people decided to get rid of their children. So one evening, when they were all in bed and the woodcutter was sitting by the fire with his wife, he said to her with a heavy heart "It's plain to see that we can no longer feed our children. I can't let them die of hunger before my eyes, and I've made up my mind to lose them tomorrow in the forest. We can do this without any trouble when they are amusing themselves by making bundles of sticks. We only have to disappear without their seeing us."

"Ah!" the woodcutter's wife exclaimed. "Do you really have the heart to abandon your own children?"

Her husband tried in vain to convince her how their terrible poverty necessitated such action, but she would not consent to

the deed. She was poor, but she was their mother. However, after reflecting on how miserable she would be to see them die of hunger, she finally agreed and went to bed weeping.

Little Thumbling had heard everything they said, for he had been lying in his bed and had realized that they were discussing their affairs. So he had gotten up quietly, slipped under his father's stool, and listened without being seen. He went back to bed and did not sleep a wink the rest of the night because he was thinking over what he should do. He rose early the next morning and went to the banks of a brook, where he filled his pockets with small white pebbles, and then returned home.

Later they set out all together, and Little Thumbling revealed nothing of what he had heard to his brothers. They entered a very dense forest, where they were unable to see each other once they were ten paces apart. The woodcutter began to chop wood, and his children picked up sticks and made bundles. Seeing them occupied with their work, the father and mother gradually stole away and then fled all at once by a small winding path. When the children found themselves all alone, they began to scream and cry with all their might. Little Thumbling let them scream since he was fully confident that he could get home again after having dropped the little white pebbles he had in his pockets all along the path.

"Don't be afraid, brothers," he said. "Our father and mother have left us here, but I'll lead you safely home. Just follow me."

They followed him, and he led them back to the house by the same road that they had taken into the forest. At first they were afraid to enter the house. Instead, they placed themselves next to the door to listen to the conversation of their parents.

Now, after the woodcutter and his wife had arrived home, they had found ten crowns that the lord of the manor had sent them. He had owed them this money for a long time, and they had given up all hope of ever receiving it. This money had put new life into them because these poor people had actually been starving. So the woodcutter had sent his wife to the butcher's² right away, for it had been many a day since they had eaten anything. She had bought three times as much as was necessary for the supper of two persons, and when they had sat down at the table again, the woodcutter's wife had said, "Alas! Where are

our poor children now? They would make a good meal out of our leftovers. But it was you, Guillaume, who wanted to lose them. I told you we'd repent it. What are they doing now in the forest! Alas! Heaven help me! The wolves have probably eaten them already! What a monster you must be to get rid of your children this way!"

The woodcutter lost his temper, for she repeated more than forty times that they would repent it and that she had told him so. He threatened to beat her if she did not hold her tongue. It was not that the woodcutter was not perhaps even more sorry than his wife, but that she browbeat him. He was like many other people who are disposed to women who can talk well but become very irritated by those women who are always right.

"Alas!" His wife was all in tears. "Where are my children now, my poor children!"

She uttered these words so loudly that the children, who were at the door, heard her and began to cry, "Here we are! Here we are!"

She rushed to open the door for them, and embracing them, she exclaimed, "How happy I am to see you again, my dear children! You're very tired and hungry. And how dirty you are Pierrot! Come here and let me wash you."

Pierrot was her eldest son, and she loved him most of all because he was somewhat red-headed, and that was the color of her hair too. They sat down to supper and ate with an appetite that pleased their father and mother. They all talked at once and related how frightened they had been in the forest. The good souls were delighted to see their children around them once more, and their joy lasted just as long as the ten crowns. But when the money was spent, they relapsed into their former misery and decided to lose the children again. And to do so effectually they were determined to lead them much further from home than they had done the first time.

They tried to discuss this in secret, but they were overheard by Little Thumbling, who counted on getting out of the predicament the way he had done before. Yet, when he got up very early to collect the little pebbles, he found the house door double locked. He could not think of a thing to do until the woodcutter's wife gave them each a piece of bread for their

breakfast. Then it occurred to him that he might use the bread in place of the pebbles by throwing crumbs along the path as they went. So he stuck his piece in his pocket. The father and mother led them into the thickest and darkest part of the forest, and as soon as they had done so, they took a side path and left them there. Little Thumbling was not at all worried, for he thought he would easily find his way back by means of the bread which he had scattered along the path. But he was greatly surprised when he could not find a single crumb, for the birds had eaten them all up. Now the poor children were in great trouble. The further they wandered, the deeper they plunged into the forest. Night arrived, and a great wind arose which filled them with fear. They imagined that they heard wolves howling on every side of them, and that they were coming to devour them. They scarcely dared to turn their heads. Then it began raining so heavily that they were soon drenched to the skin. With each step they took, they slipped and tumbled into the mud. They got up all covered with mud and did not know what to do with their hands. Little Thumbling climbed up a tree to try and see something from the top of it. After looking all around him, he saw a little light like that of a candle, but it was on the other side of the forest. He got down from the tree, and when he had reached the ground, he could no longer see the light. This was a great disappointment to him, but after having walked on with his brothers for some time in the direction of the light, he saw it again as they emerged from the forest. At last they reached the house where the light was burning but not without having been frightened, for they had often lost sight of it, especially when they had descended into some valleys. They knocked at the door, and a good woman came to open it and asked them what they wanted. Little Thumbling told her that they were poor children who had lost their way in the forest and begged her for a night's lodging out of charity. Seeing how lovely the children were, she began to weep and said, "Alas! My poor children, don't you know where you've landed? This is the dwelling of an ogre who eats little children!"

"Alas, madam!" replied Little Thumbling, who trembled from head to toe just as all his brothers did. "What shall we do? It's for sure that the wolves of the forest will devour us tonight if you refuse to take us under your roof. That being the case, we'd

rather be eaten by your husband. Perhaps he'll take pity on us if you're kind enough to plead for us."

The ogre's wife, who believed she could manage to hide them from her husband till the next morning, allowed them to come in and led them to a spot where they could warm themselves by a good fire, for there was a whole sheep on the spit roasting for the ogre's supper. Just as they were beginning to get warm, they heard two or three loud knocks at the door. It was the ogre, who had come home. His wife immediately made the children hide under the bed and went to open the door. The ogre first asked if his supper were ready and if she had drawn the wine. With that he sat down to his meal. The mutton was all but raw, but he liked it all the better for that. He sniffed right and left saying that he smelt fresh meat.

"It must be the calf that you smell. I've just skinned it," said his wife.

"I smell fresh meat, I tell you," replied the ogre, looking suspiciously at his wife. "There's something here I don't understand." Upon saying these words, he rose from the table and went straight to the bed. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "This is the way you deceive me, cursed woman! I don't know what's holding me back from eating you also! It's a lucky thing that you're an old beast! Here's some game that comes just in time for me to entertain three ogre friends of mine who are coming to see me in a day or two."

He dragged the boys from under the bed one after the other. The poor children fell on their knees, begging for mercy, but they had to deal with the most cruel of all the ogres. Far from feeling pity for them, he was already devouring them with his eyes and said to his wife that they would be perfect as dainty bits once she had made a good sauce for them. He went to fetch a large knife, and as he approached the poor children, he whetted it on a long stone that he held in his left hand. He had already grabbed one of the boys when his wife said to him, "Why do you want to do it at this hour of the night? Won't you have time enough tomorrow?"

"Hold your tongue," the ogre replied. "They'll be all the more tender."

"But you already have so much meat," his wife responded. "Here's a calf, two sheep, and half a pig."

"You're right," the ogre said. "Give them a good supper to fatten them up, and then put them to bed."

The good woman was overjoyed and brought them plenty for supper but they could not eat because they were so paralyzed with fright. As for the ogre, he seated himself to drink again, delighted to think he had such a treat in store for his friends. So he emptied a dozen goblets, more than usual, which affected his head somewhat, and he was obliged to go to bed.

The ogre had seven daughters who were still quite young. These little ogresses had the most beautiful complexions due to eating raw flesh like their father. But they had very small, round gray eyes, hooked noses, and large mouths with long teeth, extremely sharp and wide apart. They were not very vicious as yet, but they showed great promise, for they had already begun to bite little children to suck their blood. They had been sent to bed early, and all seven were in a large bed, each having a golden crown on her head. In the same room, there was another bed of the same size. It was in this bed that the ogre's wife had put the seven little boys to sleep after which she went to sleep with her husband.

Little Thumbling, who had noticed that the ogre's daughters had golden crowns on their heads, and who feared that the ogre might regret not having killed him and his brothers that evening, got up in the middle of the night. He took off his nightcap and those of his brothers, went very softly, and placed them on the heads of the ogre's seven daughters, after having taken off their golden crowns, which he put on his brothers and himself so that the ogre might mistake them for his daughters, and his daughters for the boys whose throats he longed to cut.

Everything turned out exactly as he had anticipated, for the ogre awoke at midnight and regretted that he had postponed until the next morning what he might have done that evening. Therefore, he jumped right out of bed and seized his large knife. "Now let's go," he said, "and see how our little rascals are doing. We won't make the same mistake twice." So he stole up to his daughters' bedroom on tiptoe and approached the bed in which the little boys were lying. They were all asleep except Thumbling, who was dreadfully frightened when the ogre placed his hand on his head to feel it as he had in turn felt those of his brothers.

After feeling the golden crowns, the ogre said, "Upon my word, I almost made a mess of a job! It's clear I must have drunk too much last night." He then went to the bed where his daughters slept, and after feeling the little nightcaps that belonged to the boys, he cried, "Aha! Here are our sly little dogs. Let's get to work!" With these words he cut the throats of his seven daughters without hesitating. Well satisfied with his work, he returned and stretched himself out in bed beside his wife. As soon as Little Thumbling heard the ogre snoring, he woke his brothers and told them to dress themselves quickly and follow him. They went down quietly into the garden and jumped over the wall. As they ran throughout the night, they could not stop trembling and did not know where they were going.

When the ogre awoke the next morning, he said to his wife, "Go upstairs and dress the little rascals you took in last night."

The ogress was astonished by her husband's kindness, never suspecting the sort of dressing he meant her to give them. Thus she merely imagined he was ordering her to go and put on their clothes. When she went upstairs, she was greatly surprised to find her daughters murdered and swimming in their blood. All at once she fainted (for this is the first thing most women do in similar circumstances). Fearing that his wife was taking too long in carrying out the task he had given her to do, the ogre went upstairs to help her. He was no less surprised than his wife when he came upon the frightful spectacle.

"Ah! What have I done?" he exclaimed. "The wretches shall pay for it, right now!" He then threw a jugful of water in his wife's face, and reviving her, he said, "Quick! Fetch me my seven-league boots³ so I can go and catch them."

After setting out, he ran far and wide and at last came upon the tracks of the poor children, who were not more than a hundred yards from their father's house. They saw the ogre striding from hill to hill and stepping over rivers as easily as if they were the smallest brooks. Little Thumbling noticed a hollow cave nearby and hid his brothers in it, and while watching the movements of the ogre, he crept in after them. Now the ogre, feeling very tired because his long journey had been to no avail, needed to rest, especially since seven-league boots make the wearer very exhausted. By chance he sat down on the very rock

in which the little boys had concealed themselves. Since the ogre was quite worn out, he soon fell asleep and began to snore so terribly that the poor children were just as frightened as they had been when he had grabbed the large knife to cut their throats.

Little Thumbling was not as much alarmed and told his brothers to run straight into the house while the ogre was sound asleep and not to worry about him. They took his advice and quickly ran home. Little Thumbling now approached the ogre and carefully pulled off his boots, which he immediately put on himself. The boots were very large and very long, but since they were fairy boots, they possessed the quality of increasing or diminishing in size according to the leg of the person who wore them. Thus they fit him just as if they had been made for him. He went straight to the ogre's house, where he found the wife weeping over her murdered daughters.

"Your husband is in great danger," Thumbling said to her. "He's been captured by a band of robbers who have sworn to kill him if he doesn't give them all his gold and silver. He saw me just at the moment they had their daggers at his throat, and he begged me to come and tell you about his predicament and to ask you to give me all his ready cash without holding anything back. Otherwise, they'll kill him without mercy. Since time was of the essence, he insisted I take his seven-league boots, which you see me wearing, so that I might go faster and also so that you'd be sure I wasn't an imposter."

The good woman was very much alarmed by this news and immediately gave Thumbling all the money she could find, for the ogre was not a bad husband to her, even though he ate little children. So, loaded down with: the ogre's entire wealth, Little Thumbling rushed back to his father's house, where he was received with great joy.

There are many people who differ in their account of this part of the story, and who assert that Little Thumbling never committed the theft, and that he only considered himself justified in taking the ogre's seven league boots because the ogre had used them expressly to run after little children. These people argue that they got their story from good authority and had even eaten and drunk in the woodcutter's house. They maintain that,

after Little Thumbling had put on the ogre's boots, he went to the, court, where he knew they were anxious to learn about the army and the outcome of a battle that was being fought within two hundred miles of them. They say he went to the king and told him that if he, the king, so desired, he would bring back news of the army before dusk. The king promised him a large sum of money if he did so. Little Thumbling brought news that very evening, and since this first journey gave him a certain reputation, he earned whatever he chose to ask. Not only did the king pay most liberally for taking his orders to the army, but numerous ladies gave him anything he wanted for news of their lovers, and this was the best source of his income. Occasionally he met some wives who entrusted him with letters for their husbands, but they paid him so poorly and this amounted to such a trifling that he did not even bother to put down what he got for that service among his receipts.

After he had been a courier for some time and saved a great deal of money, he returned to his father, and you cannot imagine how joyful his family was at seeing him again. He made them all comfortable by buying newly created positions⁴ for his father and brothers. In this way, he made sure they were all established, and at the same time, he made certain that he did perfectly well at the court himself.

Moral

*No longer are children said to be a hardship,
If they possess great charm, good looks, and wit.
If one is weak, however, and knows not what to say,
Mocked he'll be and chased until he runs far away.
Yet, sometimes it's this child, very least expected,
Who makes his fortune and has his honor resurrected.*

²The eating of meat was considered a luxury for peasants, and going to the butcher's was a sign of celebration. The normal diet of poor woodcutters and peasants consisted of bread, soup, vegetables, pork, and sometimes poultry, if times were good.

³Magic boots are common in European folklore. The boots adjust to the size of the wearer and allow the wearer to cover seven leagues, or twenty-one miles, in one step. The boots are mainly worn by giants and are often stolen by small and cunning heroes.

⁴During Louis XIV's reign, his director of finances, Louis Phélypeaux, set up a system in which titles and official positions could be bought by the bourgeoisie. In this way, the royal treasury could benefit. Here Little Thumbling buys positions to secure the future of his family.

¹There was a series of major famines during the seventeenth century in France: 1660, 1661, 1662 and 1675. In the years 1693-94, when Perrault wrote his first fairy tale, there were famines that were accompanied by epidemics.