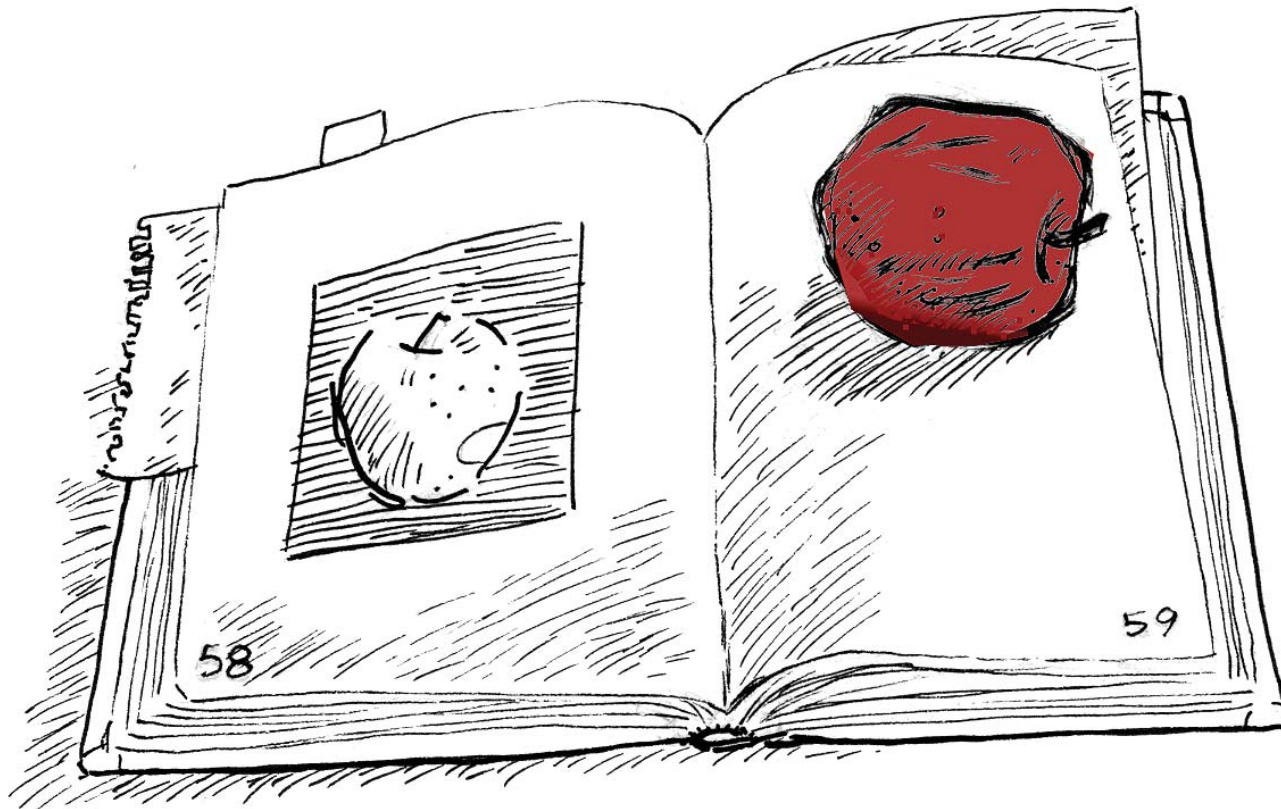


Definitions of Early Genres



A Matter of Historical Perspective

The forerunners of modern literature include:

fable

myth

parable

folk-tales

- Although rather diverse in appearance and format, all of these forms have a common origin: all four are based on an oral tradition of story telling.
- Of course, lumped into this historical time you also have other genres: legends, epics, jokes, riddles, tall-tales.
- Overall, these collected stories define a people's culture—and usually these stories relate a system of morality or ethics.
- By definition, the four sub-genres above are rather similar and they do teach universal themes, *however* they each serve different functions in society.

Definition of Myth

Myth:

a religious teaching—developed by a culture which views them as a truth, as a religious mystery; these stories try to explain aspects of the Natural World:

- how the Universe was created
 - how gods or goddesses became chief deities
 - how humans were created
 - how cities, countries, and societies were created
 - how human intellect and art developed
 - how some heros became worshipped as gods
-
- The protagonist is usually easily recognizable, working toward betterment of humankind and the development of the known world.
 - *Overall these stories show the manner how a culture tries to explain the Divine aspects of the Universe. To explain the unexplainable.*

Heracles (Hercules)

An example of an ultimate hero is the Greek Heracles (Roman: Hercules)

- many stories surround his adventures and deeds across all of the city-kingsdoms in Greece
- known mainly for his Twelve Labours which consists of removing monstrous threats to humanity, or capturing various items of interest
- all of his tasks are efforts proving his birth as a son of Zeus, the chief god, and thus proving he is worthy of being worshiped in the full Pantheon of Gods
- one of the first examples of his divine hero-status: still as an infant, two giant snakes crept into the cradle where he and his twin brother slept.

The brother cried out in fear, whereas Heracles strangled the two monsters, one in each fist— immediately the figure, even as a baby, is proving his worth to the Ancient Greek culture

Definition of Fable

Fable:

a short allegorical story— with a moral, an explicit message presented to reader at close of plot-line. Usually these stories simply explain how to behave in a culture, how to get along with fellow humans.

- short fictitious work (some are only three sentences long)
- usually involve animals or inanimate objects as actors within the story
- animals, objects, and natural elements represent human characteristics or personality-types; some stories do use human-centered actors.
- can be perceived as early jokes, anecdotes

- With these stories, the protagonist is not easily identified, at first.
- The protagonist is generally introduced in the first sentence. Can be flawed.
- For the most part, he/she will be shown with spoken dialogue, sometimes providing the lesson to the secondary character.

Definition of Parable

Parable:

a brief story, based on heavy realism, contains explicit teachings of religion or philosophy; they explain the logic of a Spiritual World and apply them to the Natural World.

- strictly contain teachings of:
 - > social
 - > political
 - > religious
 - > moral behavior
- deal with human characters (*no* talking animals)
- do *not* contain magic nor fantasy aspects
- Protagonists in these stories vary from culture to culture. Since the parable is based on a strong realism, these characters must be easily identifiable, believable figures from day-to-day life.

Definition of Folk-Tale / Fairy Tale

Folk-Tale, Fairy Tale:

a story based solely on fantasy; basic premise is to explain how good and bad operate in a fantasy representation of the Natural World.

- shows a magical representation of the world
- however, these in turn *can* teach a moral lesson, yet this is *not* a requirement
- more of an entertainment value rather than religious or moralistic teaching
- based on children's notions of the world as divided into black and white, no gray, in-between areas
- prepares children for the violent world of their times.

Like Myths, protagonists in a folk-tales are easily recognizable:

- shown as pure good, well-meaning, decent, with high-moral standards
- their personality and morality echo their physical appearance; they are oftentimes shown as beautiful creatures, strong features; usually their good qualities are overlooked or suppressed by a domineering antagonist