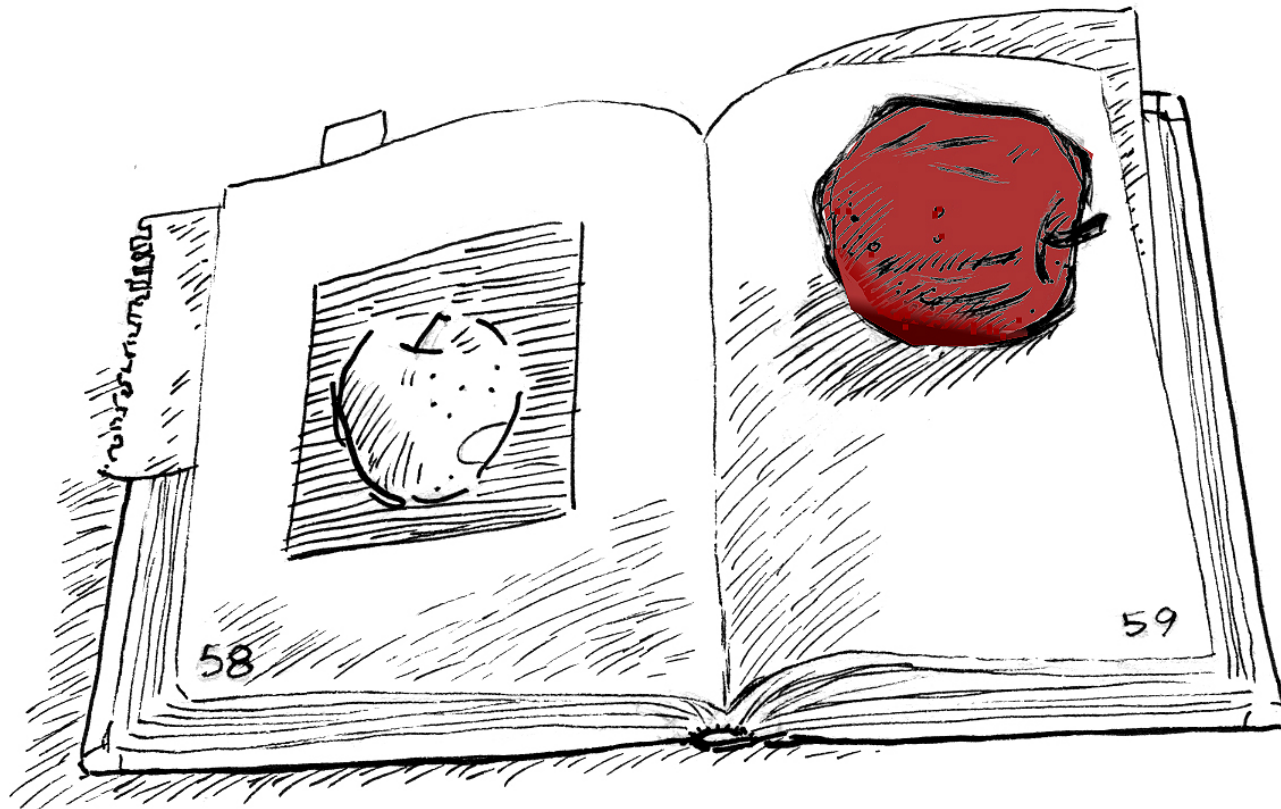


# Definitions of Early Genres

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# *A Matter of Historical Perspective*

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## **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 show universal themes, *however* they each serve different functions.

# *Definition of Myth*

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## **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

*Overall these stories show the manner how a culture tries to explain the Divine aspects of the Universe. To explain the unexplainable.*

# *Definition of Fable*

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## **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 and natural elements represent human characteristics or personality-types
- some do use human-centered actors.
- can be perceived as early jokes, anecdotes

# *Definition of Parable*

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## **Parable:**

a brief story, based in realistic terms, contains explicit teachings of religion or philosophy; they explain the notions of a Spiritual World and apply them to the Natural World.

- these stories are intensified in the areas of
  - > morality
  - > spirituality
  - > cultural
- deal with human characters (*not* talking animals)
- do *not* contain magic nor fantasy aspects
- strictly contain teachings of:
  - > social
  - > political
  - > religious
  - > moral behavior

# *Definition of Folk-Tale / Fairy Tale*

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## **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.

# *Example of Gruesome Situation*

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Below is a typical gruesome situation from the Grimm brothers' version of "Little Snow-White" where the story closes with the death of the evil step-mother.

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse, and was so wretched, so utterly wretched, that she knew not what to do. At first she would not go to the wedding at all, but she had no peace, and must go to see the young Queen. And when she went in she knew Snow-white; and she stood still with rage and fear, and could not stir. But iron slippers had already been put upon the fire, and they were brought in with tongs, and set before her. Then she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes, and dance until she dropped down dead.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "Little Snow-White." *Household Tales*. Margaret Hunt, trans. *Surlalunefairytales.com*. Sur La Lune Fairy Tales, October 11, 2007. Web. 01/26/11.