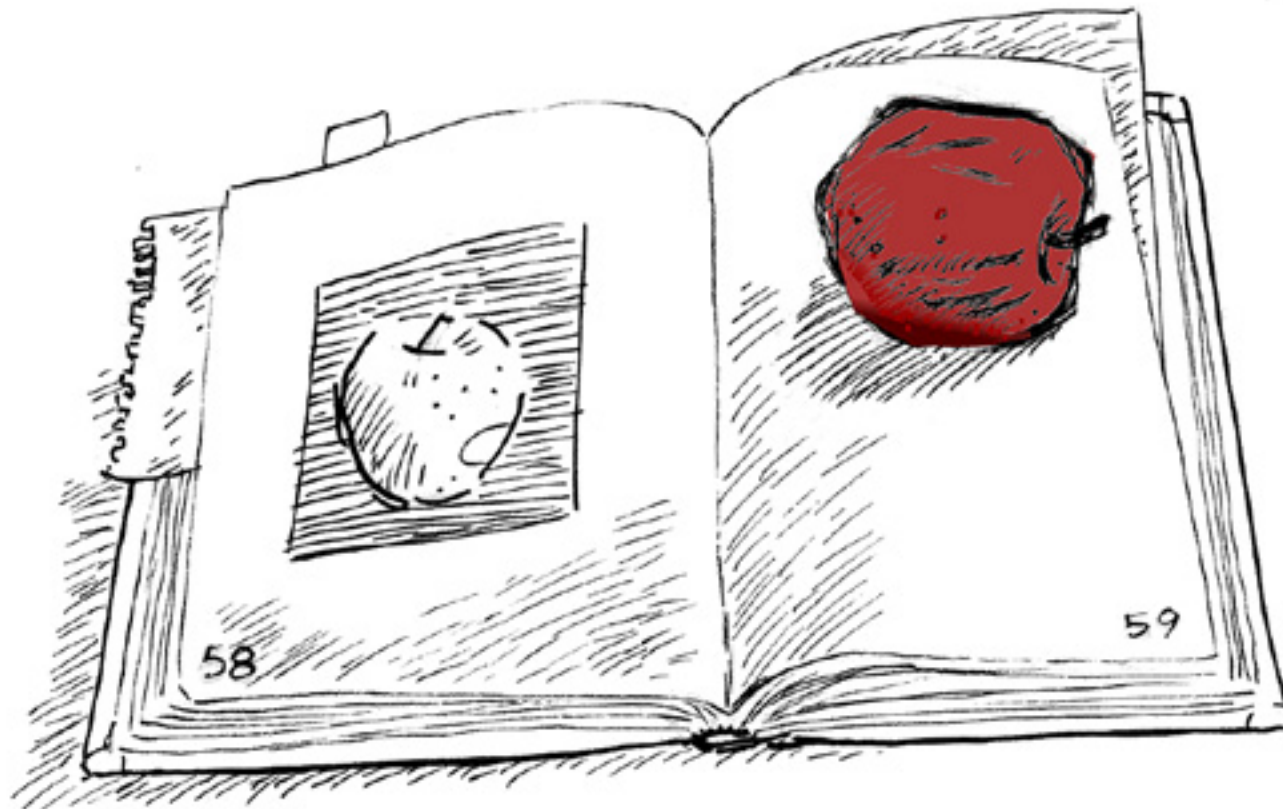


# Definitions of Early Genres

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# *A Matter of Historical Perspective*

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## **The forerunners of modern literature include:**

- myth
- fable
- parable
- folk-tales

- Although rather diverse by 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 such as:
  - 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.  
*In other words, they all teach a lesson in diverse ways.*
- By definition, the four sub-genres are similar and they do use universal themes,  
*however they each have 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 moralistic teaching presented in a short allegorical story and contains a moral statement at the close of plot-line. This is an explicit message presented to reader. 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.