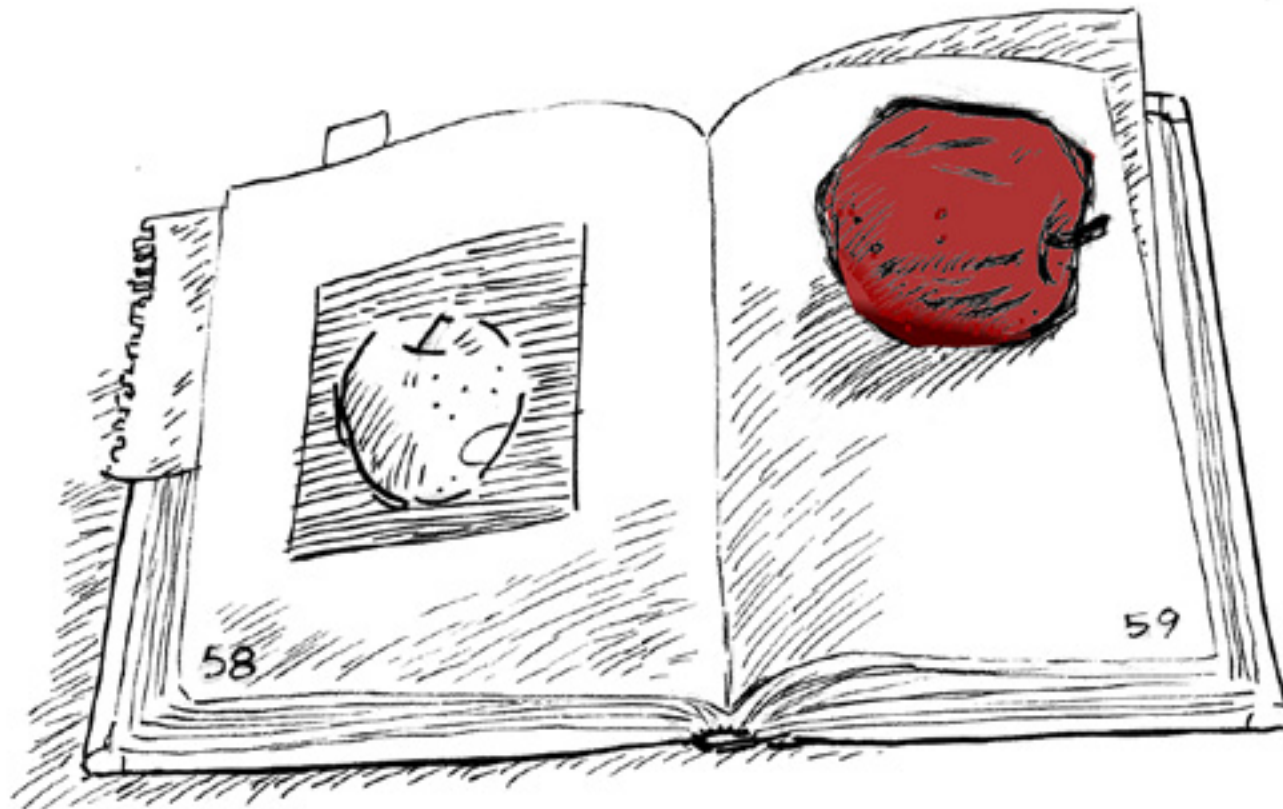


Definitions of Early Genres



A Matter of Historical Perspective

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

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 gods and goddesses interact with humans
- how some heroes 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

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
 - > To determine the protagonist, seek the character who is shown in a full circle of experience. Notice the character introduced in the opening and who develops through the full story.

Definition of Parable

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

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.