

Cinderella

Orphaned and forced to work as a servant for her stepmother, Cinderella is transformed by her fairy godmother to allow her to go to a ball where a Prince falls in love with her. Cinderella loses a shoe in her rush to leave before the magic wears off at midnight. The Prince orders every woman to try on the shoe until he finds her.

Some 700 versions of Cinderella have been found across the world, but the earliest written tale to resemble the story, *Yeh-hsien* or *Ye Xian*, comes from China and is dated to c.850 AD. Though it may pre-date the practice of footbinding, it demonstrates the widespread admiration in China for small feet.

Cinderella is not always as good as she is beautiful. Some Middle-Eastern and early European versions, like Basile's

Zeuzippe, include the heroine plotting her stepmother's murder. Other versions restrict any violence to the stepfamily, who suffer gruesome fates ranging from death by flying stones or boiling alive, which makes the Brothers Grimm's punishment of having their eyes pecked out comparatively merciful.

Perrault's version was the first to introduce a glass slipper. The clear, unmalleable material allowed the Prince to see if the shoe fitted. This is significant because previous versions had Cinderella's stepsisters cut off their toes to make the shoe fit. The fairy godmother is also a later addition. Originally Cinderella was granted her wish to go to the ball by the spirit of her dead mother, in the form of a magical fish, cow, animal bones or a tree.



Frontispiece to *Farthing Cinderella*.

Frontispiece to *Farthing Cinderella*, from *Banbury chap-books and nursery toy book literature*, E. Pearson (1890). Briggs Collection Z1037.67.P4 barcode 6001932940.



Ludwig Pietsch's Cinderella from 1858, *Mein Vöglein mit dem Ringlein rot: hundert Illustrationen aus zwei Jahrhunderten zu Märchen der Brüder Grimm*, compiled by Heinz Wegehaupt (1985). Magdeburg Collection PT921.G7.Z barcode 1001635380.



From Rags to Witches

The grim tale of children's stories



Tales of passed times by Mother Goose, written in French by M. Perrault and englished by R.S. Gent (1796). Ref: Briggs Collection PZ6.1.P4 barcode 6001920272.

In seventeenth-century France, the time Perrault wrote his *Cendrillon*, 80% of widowers remarried within a year, making stepfamilies very common. As the wicked stepmother came to the fore, Cinderella's father, who allows the abuse, receded until he virtually disappears from the story and rarely receives any punishment for his actions or inactions.

Cinderella, from *Favourite fairy-tales*, edited by W.T. Stead (1896?). Briggs Collection Pamphlet PZ6.1.F2 barcode 1005848128.

The original rags-to-riches story (technically, riches-to-rags-to-greater riches), at no stage does Cinderella confess her identity. There is the unstated implication that the Prince must fall in love with her in her degraded state. This does not mean she passively accepts her life of drudgery, although how resourceful she is varies in each retelling.