

Hans Christian Andersen, 'The Little Mermaid' in *Fairy Tales and Legends*, (London, 1935)
Tony Wilkinson PT8116.E6
barcode 1007693096

This edition was illustrated by the notable British artist Rex Whistler. Hans Christian Andersen tales were first published in the 1830s in his native Denmark, and were a mixture of his own original works and traditional Danish tales he recorded.

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time, fairy tales were not for children. No tales were, because the concept of children's literature and even childhood did not fully emerge until the eighteenth century. Much like the tasks set for the hero or heroine, finding the 'original' tales is impossible. By the time they were written down, most were already very old, and recent analysis suggests the possibility that one tale, *The Blacksmith and the Devil* dates as far back as the Bronze Age.

The phrase "fairy tale" was coined by Countess d'Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville (1650/1651-1705). She published two fairy tale collections in the 1690s, *Les Contes des Fées* (Tales of Fairies) and *Contes Nouveaux, ou Les Fées à la Mode* (New Tales, or the Fancy of the Fairies). Her stories were written in a more conversational style than her contemporary Charles Perrault, and love and happiness triumph after much adversity. They were not written for children and her stories included in, amongst other anthologies, Andrew Lang's *Fairy Books of Many Colours* two hundred years later had to be extensively edited.

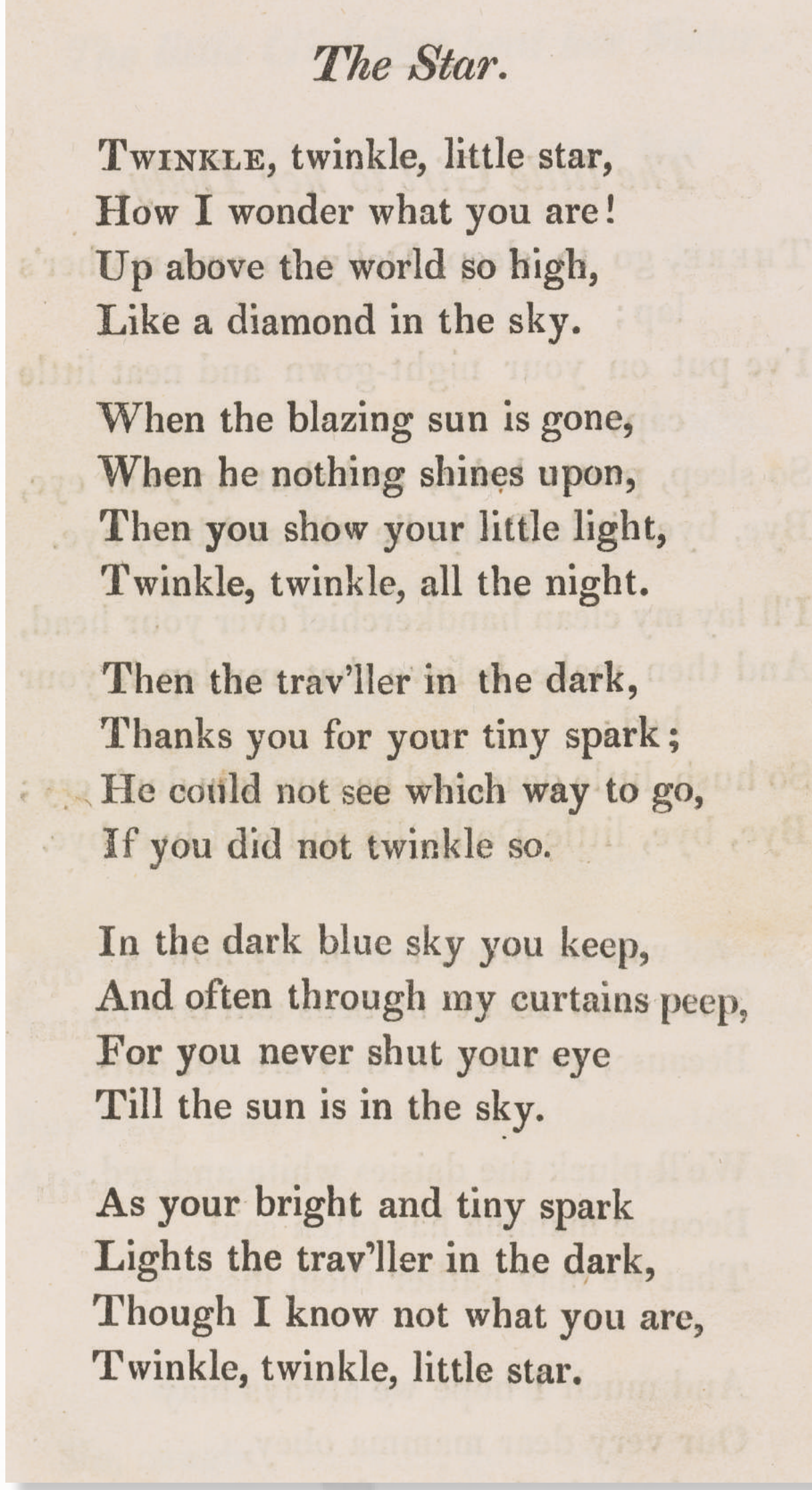
Fairy tales fell out of favour in some circles in Britain. Educational theories promoted reason and rationality above fantasy and excessive emotion. Academic interest in fairy stories began in earnest in the nineteenth century with Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who compiled perhaps the most famous fairy tale collection, colloquially known as Grimms' Fairy Tales. They were spurred on in part by the rapid economic and social changes taking place and a desire to find an authentic unifying culture. The brothers became pioneers in the scientific study of folklore and contributed to standards for fieldwork research.



Using animal noises was a novel way to teach children the letter sounds of the alphabet.
Johann Amos Comenius, *Orbis sensualium pictus* [Visible world] (London, 1689)
Briggs Collection LT109.A/C6 barcode 6001909633



Charles Perrault, 'Puss in Boots' in *Tales of passed times by Mother Goose* (London, 1796)
Briggs Collection PZ6.1.P4 barcode 6001920272



Jane Taylor, 'The Star' in *Rhymes for the nursery* (London, 1827)
Briggs Collection PZ6.7.T2 barcode 6001921483

William Blake, *Songs of innocence and of experience: shewing the two contrary states of the human soul* (London, 1855)
Special Collection PR4144.S6 barcode SC159791



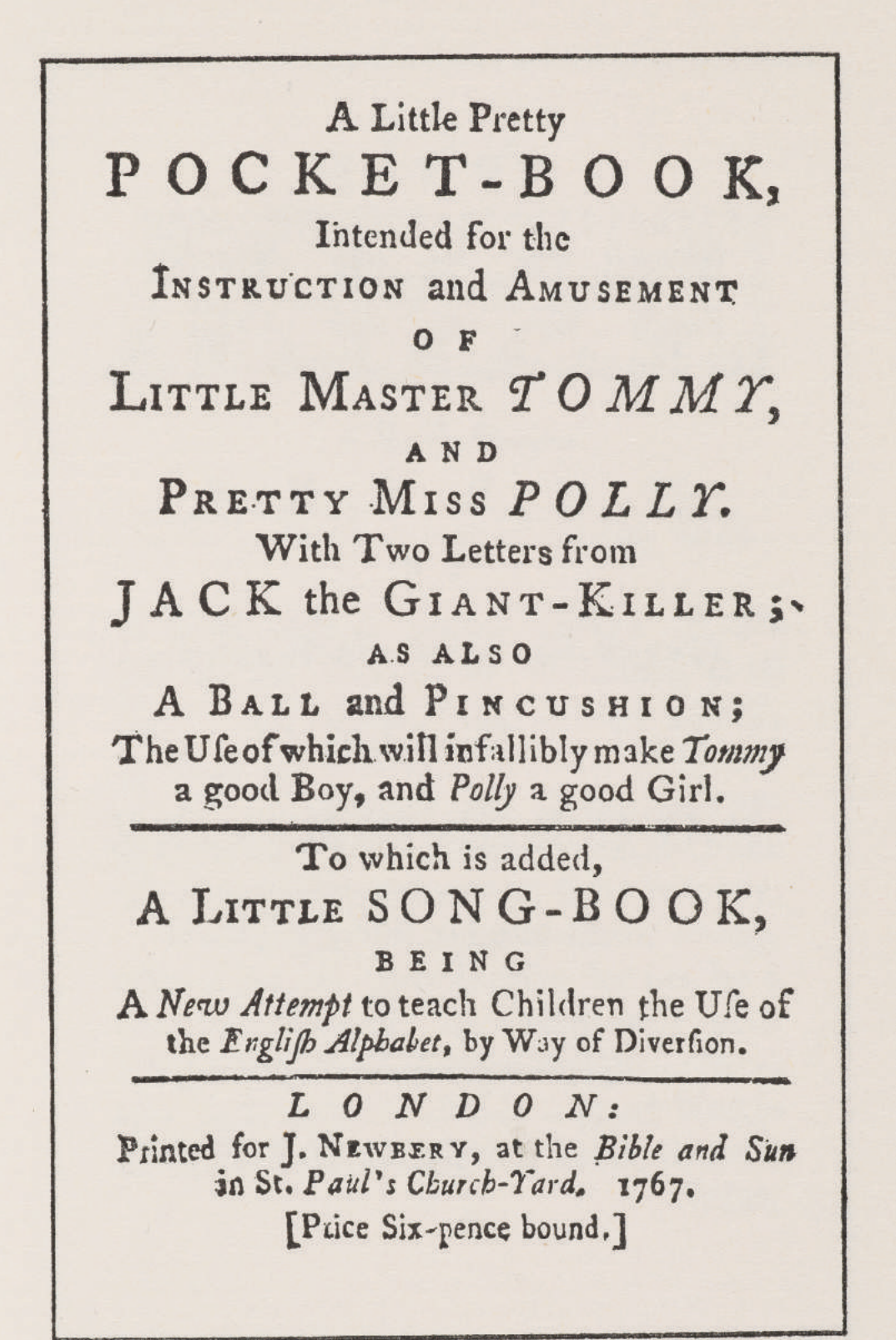
Children's Literature in its Infancy

Widely regarded as the first book intended for children to read for pleasure *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book, Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy, and Pretty Miss Polly*, was published by John Newbery in 1744. As if it wasn't ground-breaking enough, it is also the earliest printed use of the word 'baseball'. Unfortunately, these achievements were not appreciated at the time, and no copies printed before 1766 survive.

Prior to this, books for children were relentlessly edifying: primers, school books, and conduct books. Fables, religious stories, traditional tales and adventure stories like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* were told to or read by children but they were not the intended audience.

Newbery was a shrewd businessman who saw an opportunity to make money from the emerging concept of childhood, coupled with improved printing techniques and the rise of a middle class with disposable income. By the end of the eighteenth century, publishing children's literature was an established and profitable business with up to 50 children's books being printed per year. Much of the early work was still intended to be improving, but attempts were made to make the size, layout and illustrations, as well as the content, appealing to children.

Initially children's books were marketed at middle and upper-class homes. A common image depicted in the frontispieces was of a well-dressed woman reading from a book in her lap, her clean and quiet children around her, ready to receive the pearls of wisdom.



John Newbery, *A little pretty pocket-book: a facsimile* (Oxford, 1966)
Briggs Collection PZ6.7.N4 barcode 6001921581

Jack the Giant Killer would have been a familiar character to children and wrote (identical) letters to 'Master Tommy' and 'Miss Polly' about their behaviour. Gifts were sold accompanying the book, a ball for a boy and a pincushion for a girl. Each had one black side and one red. Pins were stuck into the black side to record bad behaviour, and into the red for good behaviour.

