

Sleeping Beauty

Popularised by Charles Perrault in 1697, *Sleeping Beauty* existed in other versions before this, most notably as the story of Troylus and Zelandine in the fourteenth-century medieval romance *Perceforest*, and *Sun, Moon, and Talia* by Giambattista Basile.

These stories clearly share the same origin: the hero impregnates the cursed sleeping beauty, who only awakes when the baby hungrily suckles on her finger and draws out the flax splinter keeping her asleep.

Talia, Basile's beauty, awakens to discover everyone she knows has died, she has been assaulted by the King, and his jealous Queen is plotting her murder. Somehow, his moral is that fortunate people are lucky even in their sleep.

Perrault's moral that it is better to wait for love is surprisingly gentle

after the similar torments he inflicts on his beauty. However, even his tamer version is closer to Basile's than popular modern versions. Once awakened, Beauty must compete with the Prince's mother who is intent on cooking her and her children. They are protected by the kind cook long enough for the Prince to save them and kill his mother. This conflict between Beauty and the Queen has sometimes been seen to reflect the transition at the beginning of marriage, when the mother must give up her position and power to her son's new wife. In Basile's tale, the Queen's motive is more straightforward. She is the King's childless wife, not mother, and her cannibalistic plan would both remove the rival illegitimate family and get revenge for his betrayal.

Walter Crane's *Sleeping Beauty* from 1876, *Household stories: from the collection of the Brothers Grimm, translated from the German by Lucy Crane; and done into pictures by Walter Crane* (1963). Magdeburg Collection PT921.G7.Z barcode 1001635380.

Cursed by a witch who was not invited to bless Beauty as a baby, Beauty is forced into a long sleep when she pricks her finger spinning.



Illustrations from 'The Sleeping Beauty', 1920, taken from Derek Hudson, *Arthur Rackham. His Life and Work* (1960). Central Store S/NC242.R3 Oversize barcode 6001396199



**From Rags
to Witches**
The grim tale of children's stories



BRIAR ROSE
From time to time Princes came and tried to force a way through the hedge into the castle.

Illustration of 'Briar Rose', from *BB's Fairy Book* (1948). Tony Wilkinson Collection.

Briar Rose, the oral storytelling version of Perrault's story that was published by the Brothers Grimm in 1812, removed the conflict with the Queen to create a happily ever after ending – except for the numerous princes who died entangled in the magical forest of thorns surrounding the castle.