

The Brothers Grimm:

How Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm Led the Movement to
Preserve Culture Through Stories and Created a Legacy
of Literature

Junior group performance presented by:

Samantha Penny

Clancy Penny

Grace Bowen

Lillian Ward

McCollough Perry

Word Count: 500

“The stories are like a few stalks of a crop that managed to survive and devout hands come to seek them out, ear upon ear, and they provide nourishment, perhaps the only seed for the future.”
-Wilhelm Grimm, Foreword in ***Kinderund Hausmarchen***

The Brothers Grimm were leaders; they dedicated their lives to collecting and editing stories, ensuring their accuracy. The formal study of linguistics dates back to 1786, the year Wilhelm Grimm was born. War in Europe was changing Germany and the brothers wanted to preserve their nationality and capture stories before the storytellers were gone. Jacob developed a system, Grimm’s Law, for combining sounds and unifying language which changed linguistics. The legacy of the Grimms is a body of classic stories, seven editions, translated in 160 languages, which have become common in modern culture. Walt Disney, Broadway, motion picture companies, publishing companies and educational sources use the stories and their characters, such as Cinderella and Snow White to entertain the public.

Our team went to the library and browsed biographies looking for one that was suited to become a performance and that met the 2015 theme. We knew about Snow White and Cinderella, but not their origins. We chose the Grimm Brothers because they exhibited strong leadership in the field of linguistics and inspired others to collect and preserve stories. This included James Child, an American whom the Grimms encouraged to collect English ballads, the Finnish writer, Elias Loonrot, who collected stories and compiled *The Kalavala*, which is celebrated annually in Finland and J.R.R. Tolkien, author, who used their law to research older stories.

To research, each of us read Grimm’s Fairy Tales. Surprisingly, some of us have never read the originals. Reading them helped us understand how tales change over a period of time. We read biographies about the brothers from our local library and a college library, and viewed internet sites that addressed the history of stories, linguistics, and Germany during the 18th and 19th

century. An email to the American Library Association produced statistics regarding the number of Grimm's Fairy Tales in circulation. Stephen Sondheim, Broadway composer of the popular Grimm inspired *Into the Woods*, wrote us a personal letter confirming that he believes the fairy tales are still relevant and he researched them when writing his musical production. Renowned Grimm authority, Jack Zipes, told us via email that the brothers were "pioneers of folklore" and their legacy is the tales which have become classics and led to numerous theatrical plays, ballets, operas and films. The Library of Congress suggested links to primary sources, some in German and we researched our characters and their origins.

Since we are telling the story of the Grimm Brothers from the perspective of fairy tale characters, we designed our set to look like a fairytale scene and designed our costumes to reflect our characters. All of us took turns painting the backdrop to look like a German forest, and making props such as toadstools. The leaves on the trees are photocopies of Grimm's Fairy Tales.

Works Cited

Primary

Arnim, Achim and Brentano, Clemento. *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: The Boy's Magic Horn*. 1805. Print.

The Grimms were inspired by Brentano and Achim who collected songs of love and war and compiled them in a book. However, these two authors were motivated more by their own writing than by the preservation of stories.

Douse, T. Le Marchant. *Grimm's Law: A Study*. Trubner and Company. London. 1876. Library of Congress. P607. D7. Print.

The dominant language of Europe and East Asia was Indo-European. Jacob Grimm studied this language and compared it to the sounds that changed over time. This helped him develop Grimm's Law which helped define Germanic language.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Circular Wegen der Aufsammlung der Volkspoesie-Circular Letter Concerned with Collecting of Folk Poetry*. January 1815.

Jacob, in an effort to collect stories from the original sources whenever possible, wrote and distributed a letter asking for people to come forward. It was sent to scholars and friends. We read an excerpt from this letter in our performance.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Forward in the German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*. Kassel. 24 February 1818.

An introduction to their German legends collection, the brothers write in detail of the discernment they used when collecting these stories. For example, even though they are primarily German, a couple stories of Charlemagne are included due to their relation to their tales. They also discuss their plans to publish a third volume which will focus on local tales.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper*. Eurasia. 1812.

Cinderella is a story that has been passed on for many centuries. We use this example to help support the idea that the brothers captured these oral tales and wrote them down so they would last.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Kinder-und Hausmarchen*. 1812.

The first set of fairy tales were released in two volumes in 1812 and 1815. They would publish 7 more editions by 1857, editing and revising many times. These changes occurred because the brothers were extremely diligent in gathering multiple versions of the stories and then looking for common characters and events to create an accurate final account of the story. Their friend Achim von Arnim helped them to publish.

Grimm, Jacob. *Deutsche Rechts Alterthumer*. Gottingen. 1828. Print.

The brothers spent a great deal of their later lives writing a German dictionary. They were not able to finish this reference before their death. This relates to our project because Jacob realized a common set of word definitions was needed to preserve the German language.

Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. "Grimm 053: Little Snow-White." Trans. D.L. Ashliman. *The Grimm Brothers' Children's and Household Tales (Grimms' Fairy Tales)*. University of Pittsburgh. Web.

This is the original story of Snow White from *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. The Grimms got this story from Marie Hassenpflug among others. The story has changed over the years especially in the Disney movie. This version of the story is a lot more gruesome. For instance, Snow White is only seven years old; her stepmother plans to eat her lungs and liver with salt; and her stepmother is forced to dance in burning iron shoes until she dies. Other differences are that the queen has to try three times to kill Snow White and the prince doesn't kiss her to wake her up.

Grimm, Wilhelm. *Forward in Kinder-und Hausmarchen*. 1815. Berlin: In Der Nicolaischen Buchhandlung. Print.

Wilhelm wrote an introduction to their 1815 2nd volume of the story tales. The introduction compares fairy tales to a crop that a farmer has carefully sowed and then someone has carefully harvested the yield. The brothers were the reapers of the stories and they took it very seriously to collect and distribute them. This was due to their commitment to preserve German culture and their love of linguistics.

Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. *Deutsche Sagen*. Children's and Household Tales. Berlin: In Der Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1816. Print.

One of the characters we portray is Rapunzel. Her story was first told in 1790 by Friedrich Schultz and then preserved by the Grimm Brothers in the next century. Reading her original story helped us research how the brothers located and then preserved her story.

Lunnrod, Elias. *The Kalavala*. 1835. Print.

Lunnrod was Finish and he was inspired by the Grimms to collect folk tales in his country. He traveled the country collecting stories and then put them together in an epic called *The Kalavala*. Today, a celebration of Kalavala is more important to Finnish culture than their Independence Day.

Straparola, Giovanni. *The Facetious Nights of Straparaola*. Translated by W.G. Waters. 1555. Print.

This book contained stories from an Italian writer. He wrote a story of people meeting to dance and tell stories for thirteen nights in a row. Many of the stories he mentions are included in the Grimm's Fairy Tales over 200 hundred years later.

Taylor, Edward. *German Popular Stories*. London: C. Baldwyn, 1823. Print.

This book is a translation of several stories that were collected by the Grimms and translated into English by this author. Within ten years of the publication of *Kinderund Hausmarchen*, translations were being created so more people could read the fairy tales.

Secondary

Aocella, Joan. *The Lure of the Fairy Tale*. The New Yorker. 23 July 2012. Web.

This article, written for a magazine, describes the bond between the brothers and their process for finding the stories. In our performance, we refer to the fact that industrialization replaced the need for domestic chores, such as spinning, and this affected the telling of stories.

"Atlas of Germany." Wikimedia Commons, 8 Jan. 2015. Web. 8 Jan. 2015.

In our performance, we use a map of Germany to show how the country was split into kingdoms due to the invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte. This is relevant because the brothers were partly motivated to collect the stories as a way to preserve national identity for Germany.

Antonsen, Elmer H., ed. *The Grimm Brothers and the Germanic Past*. Philadelphia : J. Benjamins Pub. Co. 1990. Print.

This is a collection of lectures and papers about linguistics which was compiled by a graduate student. It includes Dr. Antonsen's article on the Brothers Grimm and their contribution to the preservation of stories. Many linguistic experts concur that the official study of linguistics began in the mid 17th century-at the time the Grimm brothers were born. They would play a major role in the progress of linguistics.

Ask the Agent. Word Press-First Book Ever Written? Web. 2 Feb. 2015.

From this website we learned more about the first book ever written, The Epic of Gilgamesh. We learned when it was written, 2600 BC, and we refer to this fact in our performance. It helps establish historical context of stories.

Brackert, Helmut. *German Fairy Tales*. Continuum Publishing. New York, NY. 1985. Print.

This is a book about German fairy tales specifically. People have always enjoyed sharing tales but the success of the Grimm brothers, practically overnight, impacted and changed the collection of traditional stories forever. This author confirmed that the brothers were successful in part due to their scholarship and classic style.

Dundes, Alan. *International Folkloric: Classic Contribution by the Founders of Folklore*. Rowman & Littlefield. Lanham, MD. 1999. Library of Congress Online.

This included a copy of the circular that Jacob wrote and distributed.

Gove, Ph.D., P. (Ed.). (1986). *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (3rd ed., Vol. 3, p. 2662). Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster.

The dictionary includes a chart of the Proto Indo-European languages. It refers to Grimm's law and how it helped unify the sounds between German and classical languages. I

Flood, Allison. *Grimm Brother's Fairytales Have Blood and Horror in New Translation*. 12 November 2014. Web.

A review of the new book by Jack Zipes which is a collection of many of the original fairy tales collected by the Grimms. Zipes left the stories in their original form including all the violence. He believes they have been changed too many times by the Grimm Borthers.

Grimm's Law. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnjfHu9eJLM> Xidnaf. Video.

Haase, Donald. *Grimm Criticism*. Wonders and Marvels. <http://www.wondersandmarvels.com/2010/03/grimm-criticism.html>

The article discusses criticism of the Grimms. People criticized their work because of the violence in the stories, and the idea that the brother's construed the stories to fit their life styles. The article proves that fairy tales are in continuous change. As with all writers, they were reflecting the mores of their time.

Haase, Donald. *The Reception of Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Wayne State University Press. Detroit, MI. 1993. Print.

The Brothers Grimm were not the first to work toward capturing Germanic poetry and stories. Johann Gottfried Herder began in the late 1700s to collect stories and Clemens Brentano in 1806. However, Brentano recognized the immense detail the brothers were giving to the project, "their work a diligent and rigorous study". We used this information to help us with establishing the historical context of our topic.

History Of Storytelling – How Did Storytelling Begin? Web. 2 Feb. 2015.

This website helped us learn about the origin of storytelling and what the first fictional book was called. We talked about this in our script. It also provided us with facts about story telling in other parts of the world such as the griots in Africa.

Luthi, Max. *Once Upon A Time On the Nature of Fairy Tales*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington, IN. 1985. Print.

This author is a Swiss scholar and using one fairytale at a time, he studies the traditional value of tales and their symbolism. This was an important source as the author was critical of the work of the Grimm brothers. He believed they “touched up” the stories too much.

Muller, Karen. MLS. American Library Association. 30 March 2015. Interview.

We contacted the ALA to ask about the methods of the Grimm brothers in collecting stories and the circulation of their books in libraries. She told us that it is difficult to count their fairy tale books as the brothers wrote other books and those show up in a search. She also told us that there are 1,236 editions of *Kinderund Hausmarchen*-third edition.

Newfairytale.co.uk - the Online Magazine of New Fairy Tales. Ed. Claire Massey. 1 Aug. 2008. Web. 2 Feb. 2015

This website told us how stories were first orally passed down because the methods of writing were ineffective and many people were illiterate. The Brothers Grimm helped to preserve them by writing them down, otherwise they may have been lost forever as the storytellers died.

Once Upon A Time! Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985. Print.

This biographical book helped us to learn more about the Grimm brothers lives. The brothers were always very close, born just a few years apart. The Brothers Grimm grew up in the kingdom of Hesse and their father was a magistrate. The boys were taught to love literature and learning at a young age. This would affect their path to collecting stories.

Paradiz, Valerie. *Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.

For many years, Jacob worked in the palace of the King of Westphalia, the domain established by Napoleon when he invaded. Jacob saw first-hand how the original works of the German people were being discarded and replaced by French literature. This was a major motivation to save the stories.

Peppard, Murray B. *Paths Through the Forest: A Biography of the Brothers Grimm*. New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

The brothers were very close, both in age and affection. This impacts their work as one of them was more diligent in collecting and recording, Jacob, and the other, Wilhelm, in revising and editing. Both sets of skills were needed and contribute to the enduring nature of the stories and the legacy.

Shippey, Tom. *J.R.R. Tolkien and Philology*.

<http://www.tolkienestate.com/en/learning/thoughts-and-studies/tolkien-and-philology.html>. Web.

"Snow-White." Ed. D.L. Ashliman. 1 Jan. 1998. Web.

<<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0709.html>>.

In the version first published by the Grimm Brothers in 1812, the queen was Snow White's mother and not her stepmother. The 1819 version changed the mother to a stepmother to make the story more suitable for children.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Walt Disney Home Video, 1937. Film.

This movie, produced by Walt Disney, was the first animated movie to retell the story of Snow White. It popularized the story in America in the 20th century. Before the movie people didn't have an idea about what Snow White's dress should look like but after the film Snow White was recognizable. We got the idea for the Snow White costume from the movie.

Sondheim, Stephen. *Interview*.

Sound Changes Which Distinguish Germanic from Indo-European. California State University North Ridge. www.csun.edu. Web.

This is an academic study of linguistics and includes details on how Germanic Language changed from the previous Indo-European language. This unification of sounds assisted the brothers with gathering and editing fairy tales.

Taylor, Edward. *German Popular Stories*. 1823. Print.

Taylor published the fairy tales in English. This shows the beginning of their popularity in other languages and countries.

The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales. New York: Gramercy, 1981. Print.

Our team read several of the original fairy tales together and then we each specifically read the character we were to portray in our performance. The original stories are quite different from the modern day Disney versions but the basic story line prevails.

Ward, Donald. *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*. Vol. II. Institute for the Study of Human Issues. United States. 1981. Print

A collection by the Grimm Brothers which focuses on the German legends. It features a forward written by Wilhelm which we quote in our performance. Wilhelm compares collecting stories to farming; dedicated people plant stories and then others carefully harvest them.

Zipes, Jack. Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota. 29 March 2015. Interview.

Professor Zipes is an authority on Germanic folktales and the Grimm brothers. He has written several books on the topic. We asked him if the Grimm brothers were unique in their approach to collecting fairy tales? In which facets of society has their impact reached? He told us the Grimms were unique because they were one of the first to collect stories and they were first to meticulously record them. As for their legacy, it reaches into literature, theatre, film, opera and ballet.

Zipes, Jack. *The Forgotten Tales of the Brothers Grimm*. The Public Domain Review. Web.

This article is where we first learned of the circular that Jacob Grimm sent out requesting people to bring him stories, poems, songs, prayers. He also writes about how the brothers gathered stories from many parts of Europe and this required looking for common terms to preserve the intent of the stories.