

## Turkey embarks on cultural mission to preserve its fairy tales

**Level:** Intermediate

### 1 Warmer

Write the titles of as many fairy tales as you can. Look up the titles in English if you don't know them.

English title	Title in my language

### 2 Key words

a. Match the words in the box to the definitions below. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

approved
curse
deceit
enchanted
index
intimidated

motif
preserve
reason
resist
submit

sultan
villain
wonder

1. use magic powers to make bad things happen to someone \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
2. a leader, similar to a king, in some Muslim countries \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. an idea, subject or story pattern that is often repeated in stories \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
4. arrange information in a certain order in a list \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
5. keep something from being lost \_\_\_\_\_ (para 4)
6. give something to someone so that they can make a decision about it \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
7. accepted as being suitable \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
8. affected by special magic powers \_\_\_\_\_ (para 9)
9. the main bad character in a story, play, film, etc. \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
10. admire something and feel surprised by how beautiful or unusual it is \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
11. the human ability to think in an intelligent way and make sensible decisions \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
12. be made to feel nervous or frightened of someone or something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
13. dishonest behaviour that is intended to trick someone \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)
14. oppose or fight against someone or something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 12)

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b. Use some of the key words from 2a to complete these sentences.

1. I always \_\_\_\_\_ at the first spring flowers growing through the snow.
2. Their relationship was based on lies and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. He's just like the \_\_\_\_\_ from a James Bond film.
4. The good witch lived in a small house in the middle of a/an \_\_\_\_\_ forest.
5. The attraction of the city was hard to \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Please \_\_\_\_\_ your report to the committee before Friday.
7. We need to \_\_\_\_\_ the rainforests in South America.

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### 'Teaching us wonder': Turkey embarks on cultural mission to preserve its fairy tales

**Bethan McKernan**

**8 January, 2021**

- 1 Once upon a time, in the old, old days, when the mouse was a hairdresser and the donkey ran errands and the tortoise baked bread, there was a great mountain called Kaf Dağı. Many of the fairy tales and myths of the Middle East came from there.
- 2 Today, Kaf Dağı is thought to be somewhere in the Caucasus mountain range that separates the Black Sea from the Caspian. In this magical place, princes are cursed by witches, who turn them into stags; beautiful girls are born from oranges; and sultans, courtiers, slaves and farmers are at the mercy of the *peri* (fairies) and *ifrit* (demons) that live in the Turkish fairyland.
- 3 The oral folktales of the Anatolian plateau mix storytelling motifs and traditions. They draw on the *Arabian Nights* and Brothers Grimm, as well as Kurdish, Persian, Slavonic, Jewish and Romanian influences. Dr Ignác Kúnos was a Hungarian Turkologist who was one of the first academics to collect and write some of them down in the 1880s. He compared the treasures of Turkish folklore to "precious stones waiting for someone to collect them."
- 4 More than a century later, the oral storytelling tradition has survived, and a mammoth academic project called Masal is collecting and indexing around 10,000 stories to preserve for future generations.
- 5 Members of the public and academics from university literature departments around the country can submit a fairy tale Masal online, and it is then checked by researchers and language editors. The project is funded by the Atatürk Cultural Centre.
- 6 The stories are indexed according to the regions they are from and the type of stories: animal tales, magical or extraordinary tales, realistic tales and funny tales.
- 7 There are often several different versions of one story, so they are all cross-referenced to see out how a tale can change over time and from one region to another: there are 20 different versions of *Tin Tin Kabacık* in the province of Muğla alone. Many stories and poems over the years have changed into Turkish from original Kurdish, Laz, Armenian and Circassian versions.
- 8 If a submitted tale is approved, it becomes part of Masal's online database, which will be made available to the public. More than 3,300 tales have been collected from 77 different areas so far, and the project's directors hope the project will be completed by February, 2022.
- 9 Motifs such as magic carpets, animals and birds that can talk and enchanted mirrors, apples and pomegranates repeat throughout the tales. Characters who fight the dragons and giants of Kaf Dağı or survive a trek across the desert are rewarded with marriage proposals in beautiful gardens, and the Simurgh bird is always nearby to help the hero.
- 10 The tales can be ugly, too. Black or Moorish servants, Jews and elderly witches almost always take the part of the villain; innocent wives are stoned to death and enemies ripped apart by wild horses; a small bird comes to tell a young woman about her death.
- 11 Dr Mehmet Naci Önal, a lecturer at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University's department of Turkish language and literature, is one of Masal's researchers. He hopes that academics, writers and artists will be able to draw on the project's database of stories for generations to come.
- 12 "Fairy tales teach us to wonder, to use reason, to be patient, to dream, to overcome obstacles, not to be intimidated, to struggle, to be good people, to fight against evil, to tell the truth, to detect lies and deceit, to resist, and to listen. These values are universal human values: times change, people don't."

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First published in *The Guardian*, 08/01/2021

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### 3 Comprehension check

Find the information in the text.

1. Which part of the world do Turkish fairy tales generally come from?
2. Where are the fairy tales being collected, how and by whom?
3. How are the tales indexed?
4. Who will be able to use this database when it is completed?
5. What motifs are often repeated in Turkish fairy tales?

### 4 Using key language

a. Match the beginnings and endings of these phrases. Then find and underline them in the article.

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. run             | a. obstacles   |
| 2. at the          | b. proposals   |
| 3. draw            | c. generations |
| 4. future          | d. errands     |
| 5. members of      | e. mercy of    |
| 6. marriage        | f. values      |
| 7. overcome        | g. the public  |
| 8. universal human | h. on          |

b. Match the phrases from 4a with their meanings.

- a. use something that you have gradually gained or saved
- b. succeed in getting past problems that are put in your way
- c. people in general
- d. do tasks for others that often involve going to collect or deliver something
- e. the acts of asking someone to marry you
- f. the beliefs that influence and control how everyone acts and behaves
- g. the people who are born after us
- h. in a situation that is controlled by someone or something with the power to harm you

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c. Use the phrases from 4a to complete the sentences about the article.

1. In most fairy tales, the hero usually has to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Sometimes, small animals \_\_\_\_\_ to help other characters.
3. People in fairy tales often find themselves \_\_\_\_\_ of witches and demons.
4. In Turkish fairy tales, \_\_\_\_\_ often take place in a beautiful garden.
5. Turkish fairy tales often \_\_\_\_\_ other fairy tales from other areas.
6. Most fairy tales include elements of \_\_\_\_\_.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ can send a fairy tale to the database.
8. The project plans to collect fairy tales that will one day be read by \_\_\_\_\_.

### 5 Discussion

- Look back at your answers to task 1 and talk about where you first heard or read those fairy tales. Did you read them yourself, were they read to you, did you see them at the theatre or on television, etc?
- Do you have any favourite characters from fairy tales? If so, talk about who these are.

### 6 In your own words

Most fairy tales in English start with the words *Once upon a time*. If the story has a happy ending, it often ends with the words *and they all lived happily ever after*.

Think of a fairy tale from your culture or country, or one you remember from your childhood, or one that you remember for another reason.

a. Make notes in the box to summarize the fairy tale.

Where, and when, the story takes place:

Who the main characters are:

What obstacles the hero has to overcome:

Who helps him/her:

What happens in the end:

b. Use your notes to retell your fairy tale. Begin with the words *Once upon a time*.