



# Oxford Treasury of Fairy Tales

Books Reviewed:

[Oxford Treasury of Fairy Tales](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Jill Bennett](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

A collection of twenty stories drawn from the European tradition that includes classic favourites such as Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White and Hansel and Gretel, Andersen's The Tinderbox, The Little Mermaid and The Princess and the Pea, and a Baba Yaga tale from Russia. There are also some lesser-known offerings: Cap-of-Rushes (a Cinderella variant), the Scottish Tamlin and a new to me version of the suitor contest tale, The Three Oranges. McCaughrean's lively renditions are a real delight to read aloud. Books of fairy tales have largely replaced the age-old oral tradition though one greatly hopes that the narrative art is still alive and well in twenty-first century Great Britain. Respectful of that oral art, McCaughrean is a true storyteller as well as a highly skilled crafter of the written word moving from such language as '... Quick-Eye saw the princess. "Easy-peasy, master." ... "No prob'," said Long. "I'll just go and fetch her back." And so he did, his long legs covering the ground faster than thought' ('The Four Friends') to 'Down on the sea bed, the bells of drowned ships rang a knell for the wreck of another, and the mermaids were stirred from their sleep by the flicker of lightning on the roof of their ocean world' (The Little Mermaid). Sophy Williams, in the tradition of the medieval illuminator, embellishes each story with misty, magical illustrations, leaving her mark on every page. There is a calligraphic title page for each tale, full and half page illustrations as well as smaller paintings of the characters, objects, animals and plants drawn from the story, punctuating the text or decorating the head, foot or margins of the page. The overall effect is never to distract but to transport the reader or listener into the heart of the story. Altogether a beautiful book for 5-8 year-olds and upwards: a collection one would like to see in every home and school.

Running Order:

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