

# ANIMATED TALES — OF THE — WORLD™

## Germany: Frau Holle



### Background

*Germany: Frau Holle* is a classic retelling of a tale published in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm of Germany. While the Grimm brothers were noted for their work in linguistics, they will always be remembered around the world for their collections of folk and fairy tales. In fact, they are credited with recording oft-told tales, such as "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "Hansel and Gretel." Folk literature terms relevant to this tale are provided below:

**folk literature/folklore** — Traditional tales, knowledge and beliefs handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

**folktale** — A type of folk literature that has grown from the lives and imaginations of people. Folktales often tell of the adventures of human or animal characters and sometimes attempt to explain the physical or spiritual world. Folktales can be organized into several different categories.

**fairy tale** — Tales that contain mystical and magical characters, such as fairies, trolls, elves and dragons. Enchantment and magic helps to advance the plot. The endings are happy in that good characters are rewarded and evil characters are punished.

**moral tale** — A story in which a lesson is learned or a message is conveyed. Sometimes, the moral is left for listeners or readers to determine for themselves, while at other times it is explicitly stated.

### Program Summary

Young Marie spends her days toiling in the home of her cruel stepmother while being taunted by her stepsister Trine. A mishap at the well brings Marie to a magical land where apple trees talk and loaves of bread cry out when they are ready to be removed from the oven. There, she meets Frau Holle, a mysterious old woman who invites Marie to help her in return for a reward. Marie lives happily with Frau Holle until she discovers that her stepmother is allowing Marie's friend, the rooster, to starve. Despite the cruelty that she endures from her stepmother, Marie insists on returning home to come to the aid of her friend. Frau Holle allows her to leave. Upon her departure, Marie is rewarded with a dress made from golden thread and a spindle of golden thread for her stepmother. Her stepmother is elated at the gift of golden thread and warmly welcomes Marie back. Trine is now forced to do Marie's chores and is ordered to visit Frau Holle for the same reward. However, Trine does not show Frau Holle the kindness and willingness to help that Marie demonstrated. When it is time for Trine to return home, she is rewarded. However, instead of clothing her in gold, Trine is covered with black soot. Humbled, Trine spends her days toiling at home until one day when Marie stands up to her stepmother.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- Share famous fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen and discuss what makes them fairy tales.
- Invite students to write and share their own definitions of fairy tales and then generate a list of characteristics of some of their favorite fairy tales. Students can even submit drawings for a class collage about fairy tales.

### Follow-Up Discussion

- The tale ends as Marie finally stands up to her mean stepmother. What do you think happens as a result of this? Does the stepmother change her demeanor or does she become meaner than ever? Poll students on what they think and use the results of the poll to write an extended ending while modeling writing skills and creative writing techniques.
- When Trine announces that she would like to work for Frau Holle for a reward, Frau Holle replies to her by saying, "You too will get what you deserve." What does Frau Holle mean by this? Do you think that Trine got what she deserved? Explain.
- Oftentimes in folk and fairy tales, there are characters that are one-dimensional and change little over the course of the tale. What characters in this tale fit this description? Did any characters show great change over the course of the tale?
- Motifs are recurring elements found in many folk and fairy tales. They include everything from stock characters, such as tricksters, to magical objects, such as flying carpets. Recall the events, characters and details of this tale. What motifs can be found in this tale?

### Follow-up Activities

- Tales involving siblings are common worldwide. In some instances, such as in Cinderella-type stories, one sibling is mistreated by the others. In other instances, such as in *Norway: The Three Sisters Who Fell Into the Mountain*, one sibling must come to the rescue of the others in need. Have students compare this tale to other sibling tales. Consider watching *Namibia: Omuninyan* or *Russia: The Two Brothers*. Students can come up with their own tales with siblings as the main characters and share them in the form of an illustrated booklet or comic strip. Students with brothers and/or sisters may wish to cast their own family members in their tales.
- The Brothers Grimm collected and recorded this tale as well as many other oft-told tales, such as "Cinderella," "The Bremen Town Musicians," "Tom Thumb," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Little Red Riding Hood." In fact, many of these tales have become of the basis of plays, movies and other productions. Select a tale from the Brothers Grimm and compare their original version to a theatrical version. In what ways did the theatrical version stay true to the original? In what ways were the two different? Students can organize these similarities and differences in a Venn diagram. To access 19<sup>th</sup>-century editions of their writings, visit [www.fln.vcu.edu/grimm/grimm\\_menu.html](http://www.fln.vcu.edu/grimm/grimm_menu.html).
- *Germany: Frau Holle* features many elements of magic and wonder. Here, we see a young girl transported to a magical place when she falls into a well. Young Marie is instructed to shake Frau Holle's pillows out the window, causing snow to fall onto the earth below. In addition, Marie returns home clothed in a dress of gold to help her friend, a talking rooster. Have students compare this tale to other tales with magic and wonder elements. Consider watching *France: Ewenn Congar*, *Scotland: The Green Man of Knowledge* or *Germany: The Enchanted Lion*. Discuss why storytellers might choose to feature magic in their tales. Encourage students to get creative and come up with their own magical tales. Students can write and illustrate their stories or prepare for a dramatic storytelling.

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- Folktales were sometimes told to explain a scientific event or natural phenomenon, such as why tigers have stripes or why we have day and night. We see a small element of this in this tale when Marie shakes Frau Holle's pillows outside the window of her home and causes snow falls on earth. This is an opportunity to make some connections to science and investigate what causes snow to fall as well as monthly snowfall totals in different regions. The National Snow and Ice Data Center is an interesting resource for information about snow (visit [nsidc.org/snow/index.html](http://nsidc.org/snow/index.html)). Students can organize and display findings by making charts and sketching diagrams. As an extension, investigate other tales that attempt to explain weather-related phenomena, such as the origin of thunder and lightning or why we have seasons.
- Act it out! Recreate this tale in your classroom. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. In preparation for the production, examine and critically think about the story's elements of characters, setting and plot. Students can further explore fairy tales by examining some of the Grimm brothers' other classic tales. (Many are available online at [www.grimmstories.com/](http://www.grimmstories.com/).) Students can select a favorite tale to perform live.
- Before folk and fairy tales were written or turned into films, they were passed down orally, from one generation to the next. Introduce students to the art of storytelling. Discuss different ways in which the storyteller can engage listeners (e.g., using sound and gestures, giving vivid sensory details). Practice storytelling techniques by having each student retell a portion of this tale.

## Suggested Internet Resources

- [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3997.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3997.htm)  
This site, assembled by the U.S. Department of State, presents information on the geography, history, people, culture, government and economy of Germany.
- [www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/](http://www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/)  
This archive of folk and fairy tales from around the world presents a sampling of the many stories that make up our world's oral tradition.

## Suggested Print Resources

*To learn more about the land and people of Germany:*

- Ayer, Eleanor H. *Modern Nations of the World: Germany*. Lucent Books, Farmington Hills, MI; 2001.
- Blashfield, Jean F. *Germany*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2003
- Gordon, Sharon. *Germany*. Benchmark Books, New York, NY; 2004.

*If you are interested in tales from Europe, you might also enjoy:*

- MacDonald, Margaret. *Fat Cat: A Danish Folktale*. August House, Atlanta, GA; 2001.
- Milligan, Bryce. *The Prince of Ireland and the Three Magic Stallions*. Holiday, New York, NY; 2003.
- Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rapunzel*. Penguin Group, New York, NY; 2002. A retelling of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century French version of this tale.

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| • Alaska: Raven Steals the Daylight      | • Denmark: The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep | • Ireland: The Boy Who Had No Story                    | • Scotland: The Green Man of Knowledge   |
| • Arabia: The Crown and the Sceptre      | • England: Cap O' Rushes                         | • Israel: King Solomon and the Bee                     | • Scotland: The Loch Ness Kelpie         |
| • Armenia: The Shoemaker's Son           | • Finland: The Raspberry Worm                    | • Japan: Crossing the Snow                             | • Singapore: Redhill                     |
| • Australia: Bad Baby Amy                | • France: Ewenn Congar                           | • Mongolia: Shepherd Boy Tumur                         | • South Africa: How Tortoise Won Respect |
| • Burkina Faso: The Tyrant and the Child | • Germany: Frau Holle                            | • Namibia: Omuninyan                                   | • South Africa: Ummemo                   |
| • Canada: Timoon and the Narwhal         | • Germany: The Enchanted Lion                    | • Norway: The Three Sisters Who Fell Into the Mountain | • Taiwan: Aunt Tiger                     |
| • Caribbean: The Chief and the Carpenter | • Greece: The Myth of Persephone                 | • Pakistan: Podna & Podni                              | • U.S.A.: John Henry: Steel-Driving Man  |
| • Catalonia: The Manairons               | • Holland: The Tree with the Golden Apples       | • Poland: The Flower of Fern                           | • Wales: King March                      |
| • China: The Magic Gourd                 | • India: The Multi-Coloured Jackal               | • Poland: The Story of Flax                            | • Wales: Merlin and the Dragons          |
| • China: The Magic Paintbrush            | • Ireland: Fionn                                 | • Russia: The Two Brothers                             |                                          |



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