

Stories in the Enki Approach

"Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."

- Traditional proverb

Why has storytelling withstood the test of time? Why do so many of the oldest tales still speak to us in a way no concept can? We believe that this is because the timeless stories invoke a universal human experience. It is not that they tell us about people, places, and events; rather, they bring those other worlds to life, right here and now in our imaginations. We all enter experience far more deeply when it comes to us in its whole and living form, as it does in story. We all remember and apply that which we have "lived" far more fully than that which we are "told" about. And finally, for the child there is one more reason stories have such an impact: she is seated primarily in her body and her heart, i.e. movement and imagination. These are her primary tools for taking in new experiences and information and digesting them. Story gives her both a doorway in and the materials to use in digesting it.

Understanding the deep impact that stories have, people often seek the most authentic or true stories. They look to the traditional tales for a guarantee, believing them to hold some objective truth. But what exactly is a true tale? Traditional stories and the traditional wisdom they carry, by definition, go through many hands, many understandings, and many interpretations. And they do this over a period of many, many years.

Even if a tale is told precisely the same way as it has been in another time or place, the way you hear it today cannot possibly be the same. The Grimm Brothers, often credited with collecting the "true" Fairy and Folk Tales of Europe, left behind many versions of the stories tucked away in their attic; the stories that made it into their collections are those that bring out what the Grimm brothers believed to be "truth."

Each person who hears a tale, or a song, or a poem, can only experience and understand it from his or her own perspective. So, inevitably, in the telling as well as the hearing, all stories and songs change. This is the Folk Process.

Like the Grimm Brothers, anyone presenting stories is bringing forth the truth as they understand it - their belief system. In Enki, the truth we see is that wisdom and vitality are the human birthright - found in all people of all times and all places - unconditional and a part of us all. Virtually all the stories in our collections have been selected, edited, and adapted to bring this perspective to life. This is the central reason that our stories come from all over the world - these qualities belong to all.

Why Fairy Tales?

In the modern world, Fairy Tales are a controversial topic. Some see them as violent; others, sexist; others, power-frenzied; and some, all of the above. Yet these are the core stories told in the first grade in the Enki Approach, as is also true in Waldorf education. Why? Certainly none of the traits listed above are goals of our education! Although Fairy Tales are controversial for some today, around the world they have withstood the test of time - there must be another way to hear and understand them.

We see Fairy Tales as a description of the journey of innate human wisdom and vitality as it passes through a NO-FAULT process of growth. As human beings we all have a fundamental innocence or openness, and it is here that we find the potential for a complete and vital life. When we see an infant, what is it that touches us? The delight in her eye, the ripple of her laugh, the power of her cry. Whether she is saying yes or no, it is all worthy of her full attention; she is enraptured. The innocence that lies at the heart of the human being can be described as the simple, innate human ability to appreciate, to stand in rapture, to be interested. This, we believe, is the truth of the human gift for everyone, everywhere - it is the ability to enter all experience completely and directly - to be present in the now.

In each Fairy Tale this inherent vitality, or fundamental innocence, passes through a no-fault process of growth. The journey is much like that of gold ore - it, too, has done nothing bad or good, and yet is pounded mercilessly to release its potential. So, too, all the challenges of our lives are also opportunities to realize our unique path and potential. The children will face challenge and struggle and sorrow and grief. They will face success and delight and connection and love. What more lasting and healing gift could we offer than the experiential understanding that all of it, every last bit, is their very human opportunity to realize their own potential? This is the message of the Fairy Tale. Because this is an innate potential, not earned and not owned, it is **critical that children hear Fairy Tales from all over the world** and have the chance to experience the story of the human birthright in many different costumes. Only in this way can it be a birthright - innate, belonging to all, and not something conditional that some have and others don't.

Fairy Tales speak in symbols of a world of underlying and unchangeable laws. Just as water is wet and the sun is hot, the laws of this world are fundamental - archetypal. The primary law that Fairy Tales embody is this: *human beings have an indestructible vitality, openness, or innocence. This will go through many unavoidable passages and processes and the endpoint of a full human life is for this to reemerge in a matured manner.* All people will meet many things on their very human journey from childhood to old age; they will grow and change; the world around them will change. But deep within, their essential human essence will remain - if they are open to it, it will guide them to fulfill their potential.