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English Fairy Tales

Joseph Jacobs · *1890 · English original*

A representative route follows dangerous bargains, giant encounters, a resourceful pig, and the comedy of private names.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How do small travelers and household figures gain room to act against greater power?

"Well, the woman she was done,"
Tom Tit Tot, the mother's response

Knowledge, careful timing, and verbal ingenuity repeatedly change the odds, though each tale gives those resources a different shape.

KEY CHARACTERS

Tom Tit Tot
Makes a bargain whose danger depends on a hidden name.

Jack
Carries a household bargain into the ogre's country.

The third little pig
Combines a brick house with clever timing and evasions.

Molly Whuppie
Protects her sisters and outwits a giant.

The servant and her master
Turn invented household names into an urgent verbal test.

Grades 3–5
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A name breaks the bargain

TOM TIT TOT, THE MOTHER'S RESPONSE

Tom Tit Tot helps with impossible spinning until the heroine learns the hidden name that defeats his claim.

- Tom Tit Tot (and tales like it) turn on a name that breaks a bargain.
- Jacobs printed the English folk wording, not a later prettified children's revision.
- The hosted book is the 1890 collection, including his notes at the end.

> *"Well, the woman she was done,"*
> Tom Tit Tot, the mother's response

02

Up the beanstalk

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK, OPENING

Jack exchanges the cow for magical beans and follows their growth into repeated encounters with the ogre.

- Jack and the Beanstalk begins with a poor widow, a son named Jack, and the cow Milky-white.
- The climb and the giant's house follow in Jacobs's telling.
- Quote the tale body, not the table of contents.

> *"a cow named Milky-white."*
> Jack and the Beanstalk, opening

03

The third pig's ingenuity

THE STORY OF THE THREE LITTLE PIGS, THIRD HOUSE

After two houses fail, the surviving pig combines a strong shelter with repeated tricks against the wolf.

- The Story of the Three Little Pigs is in this collection.
- The third pig's house and cunning are the turning of the tale.
- This is Jacobs's English version, not a later film or a different nation's wording.

> *"but he could _not_ get the house down."*
> The Story of the Three Little Pigs, third house

04

Molly protects and returns

MOLLY WHUPPIE, FIRST NIGHT IN THE GIANT'S HOUSE

Molly notices the giant's arrangements, saves her sisters, and meets further trials through quick invention.

- Molly Whuppie (and kindred clever girls) protect and return.
- Jacobs keeps a tight, spoken English cadence.
- The notes at the back are part of the book if you are studying how he chose his texts.

> *"she was very clever."*
> Molly Whuppie, first night in the giant's house

05

Private words meet a public emergency

MASTER OF ALL MASTERS, OPENING

A servant must report a fire using the strange vocabulary her master has demanded for household things.

- Master of All Masters is a pile of private names that must be remembered in a hurry.
- The girl is taught the master's words for ordinary things, then must use them all at once.
- The comedy is in the exact names; do not paraphrase the list if you quote it.

> *"he had his own names for things."*
> Master of All Masters, opening

Names and knowledge

Resourceful children

Repetition and reversal

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. Regional speech and contractions give several tales a spoken sound.
2. Some familiar tales end more sharply than later adaptations.
3. The final notes discuss sources and changes rather than continuing the stories.

Quotations are verbatim from the English original, Project Gutenberg #7439: Joseph Jacobs, English Fairy Tales, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/jacobs-english-fairy-tales/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.