

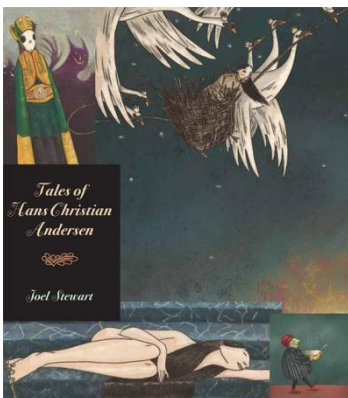
# Author Focus

## Hans Christian Andersen

International Children's Book Day is celebrated on April 2<sup>nd</sup> the birthday of the internationally renowned Danish storyteller Hans Christian Andersen <http://ibby.org/awards-activities/activities/international-childrens-book-day/?L=0>

Some of the stories he wrote, such as *The Wild Swans*, are based on traditional fairy tales but most came from his own imagination. Among the most famous are *The Little Mermaid*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Snow Queen*.

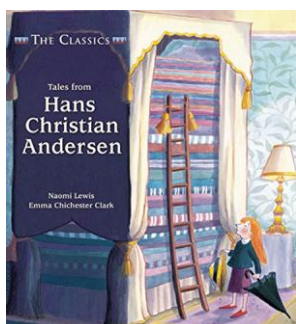
### Collections



***Tales of Hans Christian Andersen***, translated and introduced by Naomi Lewis, illustrated by Joel Stewart

Walker 9781406317466

A delightful compendium of thirteen of Andersen's fairy tales, including most of the best known, such as Gerda's search for her lost playmate in *The Snow Queen* and the circular journey of *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*. There is a brief introduction to Andersen's life and each story is prefaced by fascinating information about its origin and place within his work. The overall production of the book makes it very inviting. The stories are allocated their own postage stamp sized icons which are repeated at the top of each page, and each story is printed on a different coloured paper. The subtle illustrations are a mix of muted colours and small sepia vignettes and are well suited to the light and dark of the tales.

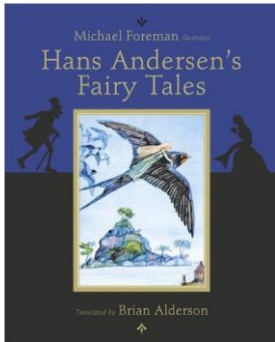


***Tales from Hans Christian Andersen (The Classics)***, retold by Naomi Lewis, illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark

Frances Lincoln 9781847805102

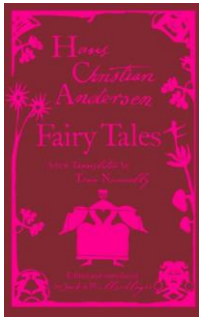
Nine of Hans Andersen's stories are retold here. Some are well known, such as *The Little Match Girl* and *The Princess and the Pea*. Others are less familiar, including *Elf Hill* (under which title this collection was previously published) and *Little Ida's Flowers* in which a little girl learns that flowers wilt because they dance all night. This scene is amusingly portrayed in the enchanting illustrations.





***Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales***, translated by Brian Alderson, illustrated by Michael Foreman. Templar 9781848772984

In this collection of eighteen of Andersen's tales, Brian Alderson has placed them in order of their original Danish publication to demonstrate his development as a writer. Michael Foreman's framed watercolour pictures illustrate key moments, his distinctive blue palette being particularly appropriate for *The Little Mermaid* but also working magic for many other stories.



***Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales***, translated by Tiina Nunnally  
Penguin Classics 9780713996418

This translation was produced in celebration of the bicentenary of Hans Christian Andersen's birth. It's not an edition aimed at children, but for English speaking readers it provides a way of getting close to the original stories as told in Danish. Andersen's own paper cutouts are used to illustrate the volume.

## Individual Stories

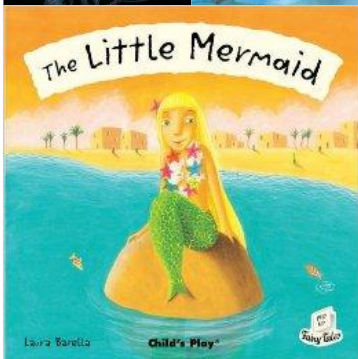
### The Little Mermaid

Retellers of the tragic story of the little mermaid, who painfully exchanged her fish tail for legs and sacrificed her beautiful voice to the Sea Witch as recompense for this in an attempt to win the love of a human prince she rescued from drowning, have often been tempted to substitute a happy ending, not least in the Disney film.



Jane Ray in ***The Little Mermaid and Other Fishy Tales*** (Boxer Books 9781907152740) has altered the ending so that it has an ambivalence that is left open to interpretation as to whether spiritual union might have been achieved. The pictures illustrating the story are etched and cross-hatched using various subtle shades of blue for the watery environment and colours of earth and fire for the world above.

In Alan Marks' delicate illustrations for a version retold by Katie Daynes (Usborne 9780746067765) waves and seaweed fronds weave around a text which doesn't shy away from sadness.



The version illustrated by Laura Barella (Child's Play 9781846433252/with CD 9781846433313) is aimed at younger children. The mermaid and the prince become playmates rather than potential partners and the Sea Witch appears almost as a kindly soul who does not exact the cruel price of removing the mermaid's voice. The mermaid returns to the ocean in less unhappy circumstances than in the original tale but the idea that she and the prince must remain apart is preserved.



## The Princess and the Pea

Andersen's story of the prince who would only marry a real princess and identified her because with her sensitive skin she could feel a pea through a whole pile of mattresses is very short in the original. It's a story that has inspired embellishment and adaptation in a variety of ways, some of which lead to questioning of the concept of being a 'real princess'.

Lauren Child created a 3D version of the story (Puffin 9780141500140) with her distinctively drawn characters set amongst dolls' house furniture in rooms made with boxes and board and then photographed by Polly Borland. Here the prince is more concerned with true romance than royal blood but 'did the traditional fairy-tale find-yourself-a-bride thing of riding far and wide looking throughout the kingdom for a real princess.'

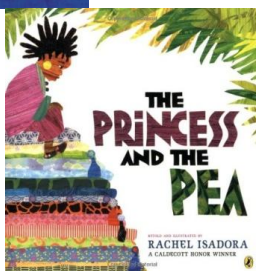
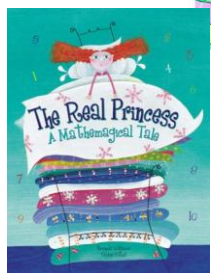
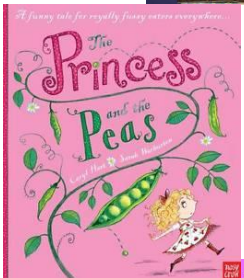
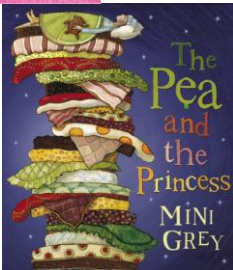
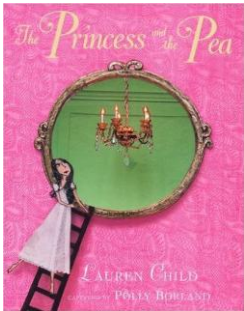
Mini Grey in *The Pea and the Princess* (Red Fox 9780099432333) gives the tale given new twist, telling it from the viewpoint of the pea who gives the chosen 'princess' a helping hand in getting selected. The pictures reveal her true identity, making a sly dig at the idea of being a 'true princess'. The vegetable theme is a constant throughout the witty illustrations, from the globular green pea eyes of all the characters to the wallpaper festooned with carrots, peas and potatoes.

In *The Princess and the Peas* by Caryl Hart and Sarah Warburton (Nosy Crow 9780857631084) a rhyming text tells the story of Lily-Rose May who absolutely refuses to eat the peas her dad serves up. A doctor recalls the well-known story and concludes that the little girl's apparent allergy to peas means she must be a princess with initially life-changing consequences!

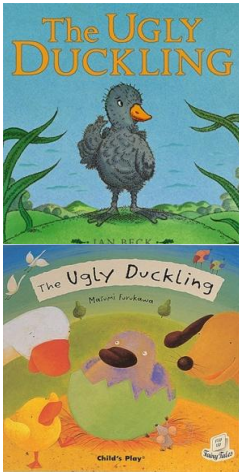
In the humorous retelling by Susanna Davidson, illustrated in cartoon style by Mike Gordon (Usborne 9780746063248), Prince Patrick meets princesses Prunella, Pavlova and Primrose but finally discovers that his travelling companion, Peg the palace maid, is more of a 'true' princess than any of them.

In *The Real Princess. A Mathemagical Tale* by Brenda Williams and Sophie Fatus (Barefoot 9781846863929) three princes - Primo, Secundo and Terzo – are all in search of a princess bride. Their parents each have a counting house – the king's contains bags of gold, the queen's 9 golden peas – and much enumerating later, a happy ending is achieved for all.

Rachel Isadora transposes the tale to Africa (Puffin USA 9780142413937), using collage illustrations in which princesses greet the prince in Amharic, Somali and Swahili. The simply told text stays closer to Andersen than many others, including the ending where the pea is placed in a museum.







### The Ugly Duckling

This story about rejection and acceptance and finding your true identity which also raises questions about prejudice based on appearance and being different has often been retold in picture books for young children. In Ian Beck's version (Orchard 9781846165801) the framed pictures depict the passing seasons – the autumnal woods and the winter snow - as the 'ugly' duckling gradually changes and emerges as a swan in the spring sunshine.

Masumi Furukawa's life-the-flap edition (Child's Play 9781846430220/with CD 9781846430954) allows the simulation of the duckling hatching from the egg, soaring into flight and peering at his reflection in the pond.

### The Snow Queen

Andersen's story of the Gerda's quest to rescue her friend Kay who has been stolen away by the Snow Queen has been revisited many times by a variety of illustrators. In the version retold by Sarah Lowes (Barefoot 9781846866616) Miss Clara entwines delicate doll-like models in collage creations composed of flowers and leaves.

P J Lynch's illustrations for a version by Caroline Peachey (Andersen Press 9781842709016) reflect moods of light and dark – the brightness of the beautiful enchanted garden where Gerda lingers and the sunlit street when she and Kay finally return home contrast with the dark forest where she encounters the robber-maiden.

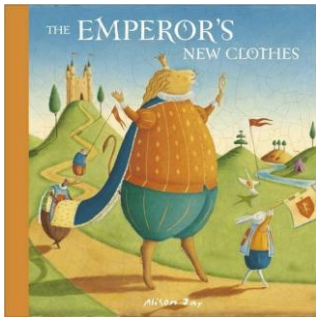
In a new translation by Misha Hoekstra (Pushkin Press 9781782691037), who uses modern terminology by referring to the Lapp woman as the Sami woman, Lucie Arnoux's pictures are in black and white, appearing at the beginning of each chapter, allowing for the illustration of what she feels are representative moments.

Sanna Annukka's illustrations for the translation by Jean Hersholt (Hutchinson 9780091959005) are bold and striking, using strong shapes and colours. The book's shape is slender, rendering it a pleasure to hold, and the use of a limited range of colours for each abstract picture is highly effective.

**The Fir Tree** translated by Tiina Nunnally, illustrated by Sanna Annukka Hutchinson 9780091944339

A story told from the viewpoint of a fir tree growing in the forest who yearns to take his exalted place in a family home at Christmas and about the fate that befalls him. In this companion volume to the illustrator's *The Snow Queen* she makes use of the repeated pattern of the triangular shape of the fir tree, for example on the children's clothes at the Christmas party where the fir tree stands resplendent.

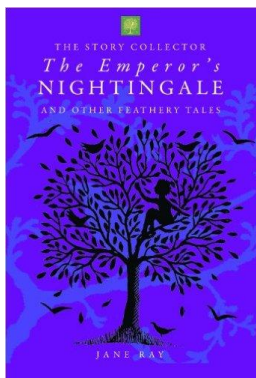




***The Emperor's New Clothes*** retold by Marcus Sedgwick, illustrated by Alison Jay

Templar 9781783701469

Fear of being found foolish leads to public embarrassment for a proud king who refuses to admit that he cannot see the clothes two tricky tailors have made for him. The innocence and honesty of a child unmasks him. Marcus Sedgwick retells the story in rhyming verse which Alison Jay illustrates using her signature crackled glazed technique, portraying the protagonists as animals – the king is a lion while the tailors are wily weasels.

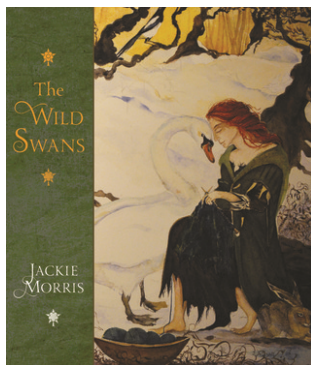


***The Emperor's Nightingale and Other Feathery Tales*** by Jane Ray

Boxer Books 9781907152597

Jane Ray has retold an Andersen tale as the title story for another of her Story Collector books, a companion volume to *The Little Mermaid and Other Fishy Tales* (see above). The Emperor of China develops a preference for a jewel encrusted mechanical songbird instead of the sweet singing nightingale who had previously delighted his heart and mind. When death knocks at the Emperor's door, the nightingale sings all night to fend him off, before declaring her own independence and need for freedom.

## Novels for older readers

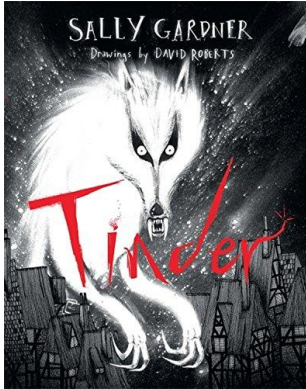


***The Wild Swans*** by Jackie Morris

Frances Lincoln 9781847805362

Jackie Morris has enriched this story of the sister who must remain silent and sew shirts spun from nettles to save her swan brothers. Known as an illustrator with a distinctive way of portraying the natural world, she reveals the significance of feathers, flora and fauna as integral in both the words and the pictures which sometimes span a double page, at other times appear in exquisite miniature. The extended text allows for character development and examination of motive and behaviour.





***Tinder*** by Sally Gardner and David Roberts

Orion 9781780621487

It's as if the ghosts of Angela Carter and Charles Keeping have met in this haunting expansion of Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Tinderbox*. The combined talents of Sally Gardner and David Roberts have resulted in a reworking which reflects the cruelty and violence as well as the sensual undercurrents present in the original tale. The stunning overall design makes this volume an object of beauty. Gothic elements abound, from creepy castles to images that mirror and echo one another. A book that adults will covet for themselves and want to share with older children and teenagers.

To find out more about Hans Christian Andersen and his stories, you could explore the following:

***Hans Christian Andersen: The Life of a Storyteller*** by Jackie Wullschlager

Penguin 9780140283204

***The Annotated Hans Christian Andersen*** edited by Maria Tatar

W W Norton 9780393060812

