



Fables and Fairytales

Leo Tolstoy

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Renowned Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) had an abiding interest in children and children's literature. He started a school for peasant children on his family's estate, and later founded another, experimental school with the motto, "Come when you like, leave when you like."

Fascinated by the simple charm and fresh innocence with which the children of his schools told stories, Tolstoy began writing about his own childhood, emulating the uncomplicated narrative style and disarming directness of the tales told by the children of his acquaintance. After completing WAR AND PEACE, he incorporated these stories in a series of easy readers. Known as THE ABC BOOK (Azbuka) and THE NEW ABC BOOK (Novaia Azbuka), these marvelous readers were widely adopted in Russia and were still in use in the Soviet era.

The tales and fables in this charmingly illustrated volume come mainly from these two well-loved primers. Part 1 consists of stories about Tolstoy's own childhood, all told with beautiful simplicity. Part 2 contains Tolstoy's free adaptations of fables from Aesop and from Hindu tradition. Part 3 is devoted solely to his longest and most famous children's work, the fairy tale "Ivan the Fool and His Two Brothers."

Never patronizing and often humorous, these small gems reveal Tolstoy's deep appreciation for and understanding of children's artistic and moral sensibilities.

Fables and Fairytales Details

Date : Published September 1st 1972 by Plume (first published 1886)

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Author : Leo Tolstoy

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From Reader Review *Fables and Fairytales* for online ebook

Cleo says

So sharp and biting and good.

tortoise dreams says

A selection of fanciful but instructional short works collected or written by the famous Russian author.

Book Review: *Fables and Fairy Tales* by Leo Tolstoy is a bit of an oddity, but a good oddity, a fun oddity. These are indeed fables and fairy tales, mostly aimed at children, all embodying a moral lesson. Unlike Aesop, Tolstoy doesn't include an actual moral at the end, leaving that for the reader to decipher. Since many of these pieces were included in primers to help students learn to read, the moral should be relatively simple, but a good number of these contain ideas worth pondering. A piece of advice in the middle of one tale is: "tell your sons that the elder will receive the entire inheritance, and the younger will receive nothing; then they will be equal." Of course, the younger son ends up better off than the older. But "The Snake" has a disturbingly nihilist and violent conclusion, surely baffling or upsetting to children. In another, a hungry peasant eats roll after roll, and after finally eating a single pretzel is no longer hungry -- he realizes he should've eaten the pretzel first! Who says Tolstoy has no sense of humor? While all these stories were new to me, most seemed familiar. For example, Tolstoy uses the metaphor of many birds caught in a net for the adage, "if we do not hang together we will surely hang separately." In another, two hedgehogs find a way to duplicate the success of the tortoise with the hare. All in all, these *Fables and Fairy Tales* express Tolstoy's philosophy of doing good no matter the cost, which can be difficult for those who concern themselves with superficial notions of fairness or what seems right and wrong. In a longer piece we learn: "For life there is neither time nor space. The life of a moment and the life of thousands of years, your life and the lives of all creatures, seen and unseen, is one." This is for children? Finally, in "The Three Questions," the answers are: the most important time is now, the most important person is the one you're with, and the most important act is to do good to that person. This is a sweet book, but also a deeply human one, and the translation is excellent. *Fables and Fairy Tales* may be the shortest of Tolstoy's works, and at 130 some pages will be certainly the easiest way to honestly claim that you've read Tolstoy. [4★]

Connie says

I am listing each of the stories for future reference. Each one was fascinating, inspiring, and challenging. What Men Live By; How Much Land Does a Man Need?; The Three Hermits; Where Love Is, God is; Two Old Men; God Sees the Truth, But Waits; The Godson; Master and Men.

Mónica says

Pequeñas historias en un pequeño libro.

Es la primera... o primeras obras de Leon Tolstoi que leo. De hecho elegí este libro porque quería conocer al autor, su estilo.

Quisiera más adelante leer Ana Karenina y también guerra y paz.

Iris says

great lil book. one big Q: "two merchants" appears here as well as in aesop's fables... who should be credited as original teller?

Maren says

My all-time favorite fable of his is "Three Questions." I love it's message.

Carolyn Page says

A great introduction to Russian literature for the school child. Hopefully reading this will make the novice less scared to read his more "classic" works.

Martin says

My wife has tasked me with writing a children's book. I'm seeking inspiration wherever I think I might find it. This was an interesting choice, as the stories seem to have been conjured from whole cloth. Unique ideas abound, with nevertheless familiar trappings. There was much leaning on the subject of social justice and comeuppance, something probably very personal to the author. Enjoyed.

Birdiexx says

I found this book in my grandfather's library. The first story I read made no sense, the second didn't either but there was something compelling me to keep at it. These are stories hidden with lessons you learn as a child. Still, there is something about the simplicity and whimsy of his writing that I can't explain. So for a while, I was transported back to a child-like state laughing at stories that suddenly started to make sense.

Antonia says

Vilken underbar bok! Gillar fabler i allmänhet och dessa är lite galna på ett bra sätt. Jag tycker även att Jockum Nordströms kaotiska konst passar helt perfekt till dessa fabler. Skrattar glatt och hummar för mig själv när jag läser.

Chris says

These aren't really "Russian Legends," but Christian stories that happen to be written by a Russian (the majority of which take place in Russian. I give it a high rating because these are really good Christian stories, and carry within them lessons that even Christians today can learn.

And even if you yourself are not Christian, you can still enjoy them just fine.

Aras says

<http://electric-pages.livejournal.com...>

Daniel Callister says

War and Peace, these stories are not.

Rob says

I found an old copy of this book in my parents' library and started reading it out of curiosity; apparently it belonged to my grandmother. I haven't read Tolstoy before and thought it might be a nice introduction to his work. I gather that some of these are original stories that he conceived, and others are imbued folk-legends told in his own style. All of them are in some way literal interpretations of New Testament philosophies, often told through the lives of peasants and their relation to humanity. Love seems to be the most common thread that runs throughout all the stories, but themes of selflessness, poverty, and forgiveness are also recurring, as is the exploration of imperfect man's developing relationship to a perfect God. While these parables teach simple and uplifting principles, they do not elude the intricacy and complexity that I have no doubt Tolstoy employs in his longer works for which he is more notorious. I appreciate this, because it adds an element of depth that I think will allow the influence of these stories to grow on me upon further repeated readings. I enjoyed the following thought-provoking proverb taken from the end of the story 'What Men Live By': "I understood that God does not wish men to live apart, and therefore he does not reveal to them what each one needs for himself; but he wishes them to live united, and therefore reveals to each of them what is necessary for all."

Corinna says

questa raccolta di racconti era nella mia libreria dai tempi del liceo e non ci avevo ancora dato un'occhiata (forse il mio istinto aveva già capito che non era pane per i miei denti XD).

I racconti sono un po' vari: ci sono alcune storie popolari russe, alcuni racconti originali di Tolstoy e altri ancora che sono "riadattamenti" di altri autori stranieri..

In comune hanno il fatto di essere un mezzo di propaganda per la riscoperta fede cristiana dell'autore (l'introduzione spiega benissimo tutte le premesse a questa raccolta e mi ha fatto avere un quadro chiaro e preciso del contesto in cui questa si colloca).
