



Cinderella

Once upon a time...

there was a girl whose mother had died. When her father married again he chose a wife who was silly, vain and spiteful, and she had two daughters who were even worse than she was. The new wife and her daughters were jealous of the girl's sweet nature and pretty face, and made her wash and iron, sweep and scrub and do all the other housework. Her stepsisters had new clothes in the latest fashions, but she had to wear the same old dresses until they turned to rags. Because she sat by the kitchen fire to do her mending her stepmother and sisters called her Cinderella.

One day news came from the palace that the king had decided it was time for his son, Prince Charming, to marry. He sent invitations to all the young ladies in the kingdom to come to a ball so that the prince might choose one to be his bride. Cinderella's stepsisters were thrilled. They could talk of nothing but clothes.

“Of course you can’t go, Cinderella,” they said, “everyone would laugh at you in your rags.”

Cinderella was secretly very sad. She would have loved to go to the ball. But as she was a kind girl she said nothing, and helped her sisters get ready. They put on far too much makeup and laced their frocks so tightly they could hardly breathe.

At last the stepsisters and their mother were ready and drove off in their coach to the ball. Cinderella sat by the kitchen fire and wept.

Suddenly she heard a voice saying: “My dear, why are you crying?” She looked up and there was a kindly fairy smiling at her.

“Who are you?” cried Cinderella.

“I am your fairy godmother,” said the fairy. “What is the matter?”

“My stepmother and sisters have gone to Prince Charming’s ball,” sobbed Cinderella. “But I can’t go because I have nothing to wear and no carriage to ride in.”

“You shall go to the ball,” said the fairy godmother.

“Fetch me a pumpkin from the kitchen garden.”

Cinderella set the pumpkin by the kitchen door and the fairy godmother tapped it with her wand. It turned into a beautiful golden coach. Then the fairy godmother sent Cinderella to look in the mousetrap where there were six white mice. The fairy godmother turned them into six fine white horses.

Finally she tapped Cinderella with her wand and Cinderella’s rags turned into a gorgeous golden dress; on her feet appeared a dainty pair of glass slippers.

“Off you go to the ball,” said the fairy godmother. “But you must be home before midnight, for that is when the magic ends.”

Cinderella rode to the palace in her golden coach. Even her stepsisters didn’t recognise her in her new dress. Everyone wondered who this beautiful girl with the sweet smile could be. Prince Charming danced every dance with her. When she heard the palace clock strike quarter to midnight she ran out of the ballroom and down the palace steps, jumped into

her coach and arrived home just as her lovely dress turned back into rags and her horses turned back into mice.

The next day her stepsisters could talk of nothing but the ball, Prince Charming and the beautiful girl who had danced with him all evening.

“You don’t know what you missed, Cinderella,” they said. Cinderella smiled to herself and said nothing.

That evening everything happened as before. As soon as her stepmother and sisters set off for the ball Cinderella found her coach and horses waiting for her and her rags changed into a dress even more beautiful than last night’s. Prince Charming was very pleased to see her and danced with her all evening. Time flew by, and she was horrified when she heard the palace clock strike midnight. As she ran out of the palace one of her slippers fell off, and by the time she reached the bottom of the palace steps her beautiful dress had turned back into rags and her coach and horses had vanished. She had to walk all the way home.

The prince was desperate to find her again. He announced

that he would try the slipper on the foot of every girl in the kingdom until he found his beautiful dancing partner. When he and his servants arrived at Cinderella's house her stepsisters were very excited. They tried to squeeze their great ugly feet into the tiny little slipper. Then Cinderella said, "Let me try."

"You?" scoffed the sisters. But as Cinderella's little foot slid into the slipper everyone, even the sisters, could see it was a perfect fit. Then Cinderella took the other slipper out of her apron pocket and it was a perfect match.

"At last I've found you," said Prince Charming. "Will you be my bride?"

Of course Cinderella said yes. So they were married the next day. Cinderella bore her stepsisters no ill-will, despite their treatment of her, and persuaded Prince Charming to find a couple of lords who would marry them. So they all lived happily ever after.



Cinderella - Notes for grown-ups

This story is told all over the world. It was first recorded by the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, who called the heroine Rhodopis (“rosy cheeks”). In France her name is Cendrillon, in Russia Zolushka, in China Yeh-Xien (whose slippers are golden) and in Germany Aschenputtel.

Cinderella is the classic story that leaps to mind when we hear the term “fairy tale”. It has inspired pantomimes, films, ballets, operas and psychological disorders. Charles Perrault’s account contains all the elements that we associate with the traditional Cinderella story: the fairy godmother, the pumpkin and the glass slippers. It was long supposed that “glass” slippers were a mistranslation as the French words for glass and squirrel fur sound very similar but this is no longer thought to be true. Probably Perrault chose glass to emphasise how delicate and dainty Cinderella was. In most other versions the slippers are of gold.

According to the Grimm brothers there is no fairy godmother. Aschenputtel (*Cinderella*) plants a magic tree on her mother’s grave which grants her wishes. When the stepsisters try on the slipper they cut off their toes and heels to get a better fit. The prince is fooled until he notices blood pouring out of their stockings. In the end the sisters have their eyes pecked out by birds.

Before he appears in the Disney cartoon film *Cinderella*, Prince Charming has no regular name. He is usually just “the prince”.