

## Characteristics of Traditional Children's Literature

Compiled by Marcie Haloin, with input from Gaylynn Jameson, JoAnne Piccolo, and Kari Oosterveen.

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[www.mhaloin.com/genre-characteristics-of-traditional-literature.html](http://www.mhaloin.com/genre-characteristics-of-traditional-literature.html)

| Genre                                       | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                | Frequently Found Elements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Picture Book Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TRADITIONAL LITERATURE AND FOLKTALES</b> | The songs, stories, myths, and proverbs of a people as handed down orally before they were ever written down.                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narrative story handed down within a culture.</li><li>• Stories were created by adults for the entertainment of other adults.</li><li>• Stories frequently involve trickery.</li><li>• "Folktales are a legacy from anonymous artists of the past." (Arbuthnot, 1947)</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <i>The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit</i> as told by Julius Lester, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. New York: Puffin Books, 1999.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>FAIRY TALES</b>                          | Stories with fairies or other magical creatures, usually for children. A modern fairy tale is written in a traditional style with the elements of folklore but with a contemporary twist. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stories include fantasy, make believe, and often magic.</li><li>• Stories often begin "Once upon a time . ." or "Long, long ago . .".</li><li>• Characters include royalty or a kingdom setting.</li><li>• Stories end "...happily ever after."</li><li>• Incidents may come in threes.</li><li>• Characters or events may be found in sevens.</li><li>• Characters are clearly defined as good and evil.</li><li>• Good conquers evil.</li><li>• Magical devices such as wands, swords, or horses assist the resolution of the story.</li><li>• Picture book "fractured" fairy tales are published in abundance.</li></ul> | <i>You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together</i> by Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Michael Emberley. New York: Little Brown, 2004.<br><br><i>Cinderella</i> retold and illustrated by Ruth Sanderson. Boston: Little, Brown, 2002.<br><br><i>Armadilly Chili</i> by Helen Kettelman, illustrated by Will Terry. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman and Co., 2004. |

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| <b>TALL TALES</b> | Stories with a definite setting in fairly modern times that exaggerate or are based on the traits of a person who may have actually existed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories are humorous w/ blatant exaggeration.</li> <li>• Characters are swaggering heroes who do the impossible with nonchalance.</li> <li>• Problems and solutions may involve trickery.</li> </ul>                                                                        | <i>Paul Bunyan</i> retold and illustrated by Steven Kellogg. New York: Morrow, 2005.<br><i>Widdermaker</i> by Pattie Schnetzler, pictures by Rick Sealock. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2002.  |
| <b>LEGENDS</b>    | Stories, sometimes of a national or folk hero, which have a basis in fact but also include imaginative material.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legends often explain the reason for a natural occurrence.</li> <li>• Native American legends are available in picture book format.</li> <li>• <i>Pourquoi</i> stories explain why natural events occur.</li> </ul>                                                         | <i>The Story of Jumping Mouse: A Native American Legend</i> retold and illustrated by John Steptoe. New York: Mulberry Books, 2004.                                                              |
| <b>MYTHS</b>      | Legend or traditional narrative, often based in part on historical events that reveal human behavior and natural phenomena by its symbolism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation myths depict the struggle to form the earth.</li> <li>• Hero myths describe how people who begin life at a low status are elevated to high status through a good deed.</li> <li>• Myths often pertain to the actions of the gods.</li> </ul>                       | <i>There's a Monster in the Alphabet</i> by James Rumford. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.                                                                                                       |
| <b>FABLES</b>     | Narration demonstrating a useful truth, especially in which animals speak as humans.                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fables are legendary.</li> <li>• Fables are supernatural tales.</li> <li>• Morals or lessons are revealed and stated at the end.</li> <li>• Characters often have generic names such as Dog, Rooster, Boy.</li> <li>• Fable adaptations are now being published.</li> </ul> | <i>Aesop's Fables</i> by Jerry Pinkney. New York: Sea Star Books, 2000.<br><i>The Ant or the Grasshopper?</i> by Toni and Slade Morrison, pictures by Pascal Lemaitre. New York: Scribner, 2003. |
| <b>PROVERBS</b>   | A one-sentence utterance that holds the conventional wisdom of the ages.                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>A Word to the Wise and Other Proverbs</i> selected by J. Hurwitz, illustrated by R. Rayevsky. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1994.                                                            |