The following article provides the history of some traditional fairy tales. Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

Who Wrote “CINDERELLA”?  
by Richard Wolkomir and Joyce Rogers Wolkomir

Once upon a time, in fairy-tale land . . .
Snow White ate a poisoned apple.
Rapunzel, in her tower, lowered her hair to reel up a prince. Meanwhile, a wolf put on Granny’s bonnet to fool Red Riding Hood. And a witch plotted to turn Hansel and Gretel into little-kid sandwiches.

Do you know those old stories? Are you sure? Over the centuries, people have fiddled so much with fairy tales that each story comes in many variations. Take “Cinderella.” Most of us know the Disney movie version, which ends with Cinderella forgiving her nasty stepmother and stepsisters, while sweet-singing doves flutter around. The movie is close to a French version written down in the 1600s by Charles Perrault. But you may also have read the German version, as told by the Grimm brothers. That’s the one where one stepsister squeezes her foot into the tiny glass slipper only by cutting off her own big toe. The Grimms’ version ends with birds, too. But they are not Disney doves: instead they are pigeons that peck out the stepsisters’ eyes.

And that’s just the start of it. One scholar counted 345 versions of “Cinderella.” According to Maria Tatar, a Harvard University fairy-tale scholar, the story’s earliest known version dates to A.D. 850 in China. In that version, the “fairy godmother” is a 10-foot-long fish. And the wicked stepmother and stepsisters are killed in the end by flying stones.

“Cinderella” is the champion, but most fairy tales exist in at least dozens of variations. What is the name of the little man who asks for a child in return for spinning straw into gold? Depending on which version you read, it is Titeliture, Doppeltürk, Purzinigele, Batzibitzili, Panzmanzi, Whuppity Stoorie, Ricdin-Ricdon, Tom Tit Tot, Terry-Top—or Rumpelstiltskin.

Why are there so many versions of fairy tales? Where do the tales come from anyway? Were they originally children’s stories? Why are they so violent? And why do children love them so much?

Have you ever noticed how much spinning goes on in fairy tales? In “Rumpelstiltskin” the miller’s daughter
must spin straw into gold. In “Sleeping Beauty,” the princess falls asleep when she pricks her finger on a spindle. Scholars think that fairy tales were originally told by peasants at the fireside or in spinning circles to keep one another awake and relieve boredom. As the writer John Updike puts it, they were the television of their time. Some of the earliest illustrations for collections of the tales show the storyteller spinning as she talks. Sometimes there are children in the illustrations, but judging by the tales themselves, many of which are very rude, scholars think they were told to amuse adults.

The peasants could neither read nor write and so told stories strictly from memory. Tracing these memorized stories back to their origins is virtually impossible. There never was a sacred original, just endless retellings. Storytellers constantly adjusted their tales to match audiences. And stories changed between countries.

But this oral tradition came to an end when printing presses appeared and scholars began writing down the old stories. Among the earliest of the fairy-tale collectors was a French official, Charles Perrault, born in 1628. He chose the architects for two of the world’s most famous buildings, Versailles and the Louvre. For fun, he met with a group of aristocratic women and their children to swap fairy tales. And in 1697 he published a collection of eight fairy tales called Stories, or Tales from Past Times, with Morals, also known as Tales of Mother Goose.

Perrault’s audience consisted of sophisticated aristocrats, not rude peasants, and he altered the tales to suit them. The old peasant-told tales featured millers and half-starved woodcutters. “Perrault revised them to emphasize beautiful dresses and elegant architecture and ballrooms and servants,” says Alison Lurie, a professor at Cornell University who studies fairy tales. In his stories, characters notice if a dress is out of style or another character behaves impolitely. Not surprisingly, most modern retellings of “Cinderella” are based on Perrault’s version, and the illustrations show characters dressed in the fashions of his time.

Perrault focused on heroines because he was writing mainly for aristocratic women and their daughters. He also ended his stories with rhyming morals, mostly directed at girls. But how seriously should we take these morals? Perrault tells the story of Bluebeard, a maniac who chops up his wives and stores their bloody corpses in a little room. When Bluebeard is called away, he gives his new wife the key to the room and tells her she is not on any account to enter it. Of course she goes into the room, of course he finds
out, and of course he tries to kill her for disobeying him. Perrault says the moral of the story is that curiosity can get women into trouble. But shouldn’t the moral be: Don’t marry a serial killer?

Maybe Perrault’s morals were tongue-in-cheek. After all, he was a sophisticated man. Do you remember the plot of “Puss in Boots”? In an elaborate con, the cat convinces the king that a miller’s son is a wealthy man called the Marquis de Carabas. Perrault says the moral is that hard work will get you farther than an inheritance, but in the story the miller’s son barely lifts a finger. It would be nearer the truth to say that the moral is that you can get what you want if you are a good liar. Perrault’s morals are so ill-suited to the tales that Tatar suggests they might be his way of poking sly fun at the attitudes of his aristocratic friends.

The most famous collections of fairy tales, however, are the ones by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. They began studying fairy tales in Germany in 1806, more than a hundred years after Perrault. By then, the old farmhouse-fireplace tales faced extinction. So the Grimms set out to preserve the ancient stories in print.

The Grimms published their first fairy-tale collection in 1812. They didn’t think they were writing for children, either. They thought they were preserving vanishing German folk culture (even though many of the stories they collected were French or Italian in origin). Their first edition was a scholarly book, with no illustrations and many footnotes, that carefully reproduced the rude language and wandering plots of the oral tales. They were surprised when some of their early readers suggested that the stories might be interesting to children.

But the Grimms needed money. Unworldly and trusting, they had made a bad deal with their publisher and received little payment for their first book. At one point Wilhelm complained there wasn’t a chair in his house you could sit on without worrying it would break. So he took the hint and set to work to make a book that would be suitable for children. He selected a few of the tales, made them much longer, and polished up the prose. He didn’t tack on morals like Perrault, but he did slip in character judgments and moralizing comments wherever he could. He was particularly concerned that the beautiful characters also be hard working, which is why Snow White keeps the dwarfs’ house so tidy.

Despite Wilhelm’s efforts to brush up the tales, it is pretty obvious that good role models and advice have very little to do with their appeal. Compare the fairy tales with Aesop’s fables. The fable “The Hare and the Tortoise” teaches that slow and steady wins the race. What does the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel” teach? Never use bread to mark a trail in the woods?

The Grimms’ fairy tales also have one characteristic that would seem to make them unsuitable for children. Many of them include gruesome or violent incidents. In “Hansel and Gretel” an old woman is burned to death in an oven, and in “Little Red Riding Hood” a child is eaten by a wolf. When he revised the tales for children, Wilhelm Grimm left in the violence. In fact, he sometimes even ramped it up. For example, in the first edition of the tales, Cinderella is reconciled to her stepsisters at the end. It’s only in the second edition, the one intended for children, that her birds peck out their eyes.
So here is a puzzle. The fairy tales Perrault and the Grimms recorded were not intended to be children’s stories. They don’t teach lessons, and they are far more violent than the children’s stories being written today. Why, then, have they become classics of children’s literature, so much so that it is hard to imagine a child who doesn’t know Cinderella’s story or Snow White’s?

One answer is that only a few of the tales made it through the long sifting and winnowing process that started with Perrault and the Grimms. The first edition of Grimms’ fairy tales had 210 tales. By 1825 it was down to 50. And today only a dozen or so of the tales are often reprinted in children’s collections.

But the deeper answer is that the tales that have lasted are magical adventures that help children (and adults) deal with the struggles and fears of their everyday lives. What are the tales about? One answer is they are family dramas that deal with our fear (as Tatar puts it) “that every sibling is a rival and at least one parent is an ogre.” We secretly fear we were adopted, that we will be abandoned by our parents, that our parents will love our siblings more than us, that our siblings will be allowed to mistreat us, or that we will somehow lose our rightful place in the family.

The fairy tale reassures us that, no matter how mistreated we may feel, it will all come right in the end. A tale often begins with a child whose mother has died and who has been cast out by the stepmother. The child goes “into the woods,” a magic realm where she is likely to encounter a witch suspiciously like her stepmother. Once she outwits or kills the witch, she can rejoin her true family (the stepmother having disappeared) or a new, better family (by marrying a prince).

But what about all the violence? Tatar wisely says that Wilhelm Grimm probably made the tales more rather than less attractive to children by leaving in the fright scenes. The tales appeal to children because they show the weak overcoming the strong. The more miserable the story’s main characters, the more children identify with them. The tale then gives shape to disguised dreams of revenge. The villain comes to a bad and bloody end, it is true. But in the realm of the fairy tale, the villain’s suffering (and the victim’s reward) are richly deserved. That’s what we mean when we say “it was like a fairy tale.”
29. Based on paragraph 2, what is the **main** difference between Perrault’s version and the Grimms’ version of “Cinderella”?  
A. The Grimms’ version is more violent.  
B. The Grimms’ version is more realistic.  
C. The Grimms’ version is less authentic.  
D. The Grimms’ version is less entertaining.

30. According to paragraph 6, why do many fairy tales feature spinning wheels in them?  
A. Peasants imagined that everyone used spinning wheels.  
B. Peasants thought fairy tales could teach useful skills.  
C. Peasants told the fairy tales while using spinning wheels.  
D. Peasants believed the circle was a symbol of good fortune.

31. According to paragraph 6, how were fairy tales “the television of their time”?  
A. They kept people amused.  
B. They were sometimes offensive.  
C. They were based on imaginary situations.  
D. They kept people from getting enough sleep.

32. Read the sentence from paragraph 7 in the box below.  
There never was a sacred original . . .  
What does the sentence mean?  
A. The source of the stories is unknown.  
B. The stories have religious beginnings.  
C. The first version of the stories is best.  
D. The stories come from many countries.

33. According to paragraph 9, why did Perrault change the stories he published?  
A. His audience consisted of young children.  
B. His audience consisted of the upper class.  
C. He thought the fairy tales needed less violence.  
D. He thought earlier versions focused too much on heroines.
According to paragraph 15, which feature of Grimms’ fairy tales was least influential in their popularity?
A. the morals of the stories
B. the violence in the stories
C. the creativity of the stories
D. the characters in the stories

What does the phrase “ramped it up” mean as it is used in paragraph 16?
A. started
B. allowed
C. clarified
D. increased

Question 36 is an open-response question.
- Read the question carefully.
- Explain your answer.
- Add supporting details.
- Double-check your work.

Write your answer to question 36 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Based on the article, describe how fairy tales changed over time. Support your answer with relevant and specific information from the article.