**Cinderella, Rapunzel, and the Brothers Grimm**



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* There were two Grimm brothers: Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859). They were born in Hanau, Germany, just east of Frankfort.
* They went to law school, but were more interested in studying the German language and folklore.
* They began collecting versions of fairy tales when they were in their twenties. They wanted to preserve German and other European tales in a collection that both scholars and families could read.
* The first volume of their collection of *Children’s and Household Tales* came out in 1812. A second volume was published in 1815, and the brothers continued putting out revised editions until 1857.
* They were raised in the Reform Calvinist Church and remained devout Christians throughout their lives. Wilhelm read daily from a copy of the Greek New Testament, and Jacob drew a copy of Grimm family tree inside the front cover of his personal Bible.
* Their collection of fairy tales includes versions of many famous tales: Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, Puss in Boots, Hansel and Gretel, and Rapunzel.
* They didn’t invent these tales. They wrote down versions of existing traditional tales. Their version of “Cinderella”, for instance, doesn’t include a pumpkin coach, a fairy godmother, or a glass slipper. That famous version of the story is by the French writer Charles Perrault. The Grimms’ version has a golden slipper and a rural setting – Cinderella gets her ball gown from a magic hazel tree that grows on her mother’s grave.
* The brothers – especially Wilhelm – continued revising the tales for new editions, making them more appropriate for families. They took out references to unwed pregnancies, changed evil mothers to evil stepmothers, and ensured evildoers would be punished. Unlike many modern editors, though, they often kept violent scenes.
* Their collection of tales got mixed reviews when it was first published, but it quickly became popular. For much of the nineteenth century, it was the second-most-read book in Germany after the Bible. It was first translated into English in 1823 by the British author Edgar Taylor and has remained in print ever since.
* The Grimms’ fairy tales are short, straightforward, and dramatic. They’re easy to read, and fun to read aloud in a group. It’s little wonder that they are still popular!