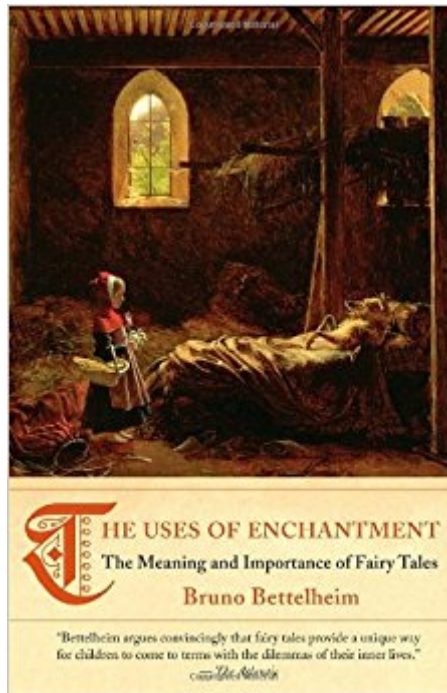


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The Uses Of Enchantment: The Meaning And Importance Of Fairy Tales



Synopsis

Bruno Bettelheim was one of the great child psychologists of the twentieth century and perhaps none of his books has been more influential than this revelatory study of fairy tales and their universal importance in understanding childhood development. Analyzing a wide range of traditional stories, from the tales of Sindbad to "The Three Little Pigs," "Hansel and Gretel," and "The Sleeping Beauty," Bettelheim shows how the fantastical, sometimes cruel, but always deeply significant narrative strands of the classic fairy tales can aid in our greatest human task, that of finding meaning for one's life.

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Customer Reviews

It is well known that storytelling is an innate expression of civilization, in an effort to define who we are and to make sense of the world. The fairy tale is an important part of this tradition that has a long and rich history spanning thousands of years. First published in 1975, Bruno Bettelheim, one of Sigmund Freud's followers and an important contributor to psychoanalysis, has written an incredible book, suggesting that the fairy tale has a pedagogical use, educating the child about the struggles in life, that these struggles are an intrinsic aspect of existence. Following Plato, he believes that the literary education of children should begin with the telling of myths. In other words, the fairy tale can present models for behaviour, providing meaning and value to our lives. This wonderful book expresses this view extremely well and also provides a frame of reference towards the child's overall psychological development. I have read Freud for some years, and nowhere, including Freud

himself, have I read a more succinctly expressed view on the ultimate purpose of psychoanalysis, than in this book by Dr. Bettelheim, he writes, "Psychoanalysis was created to enable man to accept the problematic nature of life without being defeated by it, or giving in to escapism. Freud's prescription is that only by struggling courageously against what seems like unwieldy odds can man succeed in wringing meaning out of existence." (P.8) Fairy tales inform us about life's struggles, hardships and the reality of death. From Bettelheim's point of view, the fairy tale is a "manifold form" that communicates to the child, educates them, against life's vagaries and realities, which are the unavoidable aspects of our existence.

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