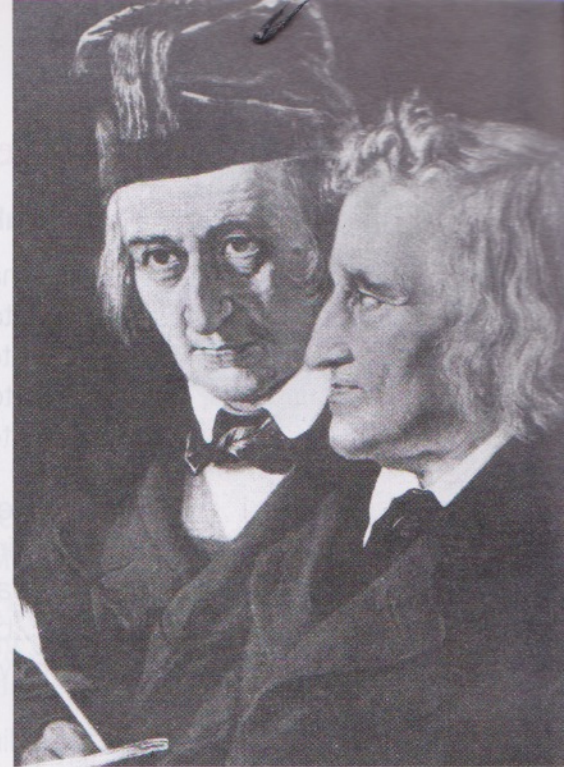


# The Brothers Grimm



▲ The Brothers Grimm:  
Jacob (right) and Wilhelm

1 Long before J.K. Rowling,<sup>1</sup> there were Jacob and  
Wilhelm Grimm—two young men from Germany  
who loved a good story. The Grimm brothers never  
expected to be storytellers for children. But today,  
5 their fairy tales are read and loved in over  
160 languages.

## Once Upon a Time

Jacob and Wilhelm were introduced to folktales—  
traditional stories people **memorized** and told again  
10 and again—as university students. The brothers  
loved these stories of adventure and magic. Soon they  
began to **collect** traditional folktales from storytellers  
in Germany. Many of these tales were similar to stories  
told in France, Italy, Japan, and other countries. Between  
15 1812 and 1814, the Grimm brothers published two books.  
These included stories like *Hansel and Gretel* and *Little  
Red Riding Hood*.



Grimms' tales **reflected** traditional life and beliefs in Germany.  
For example, forests are common in Germany, and this image  
20 appears often in the Grimms' stories. For medieval<sup>2</sup> Germans,  
the forest was a dangerous place. In Grimms' fairy tales,  
witches, talking animals, and other **magical** beings live in the  
forest. People's lives change forever when they visit this place.

## Children's Stories?

25 **Although** Grimms' fairy tales are now considered children's  
stories, the brothers first wrote them **primarily** for adults.  
Many of the early tales were dark and a little **scary**.



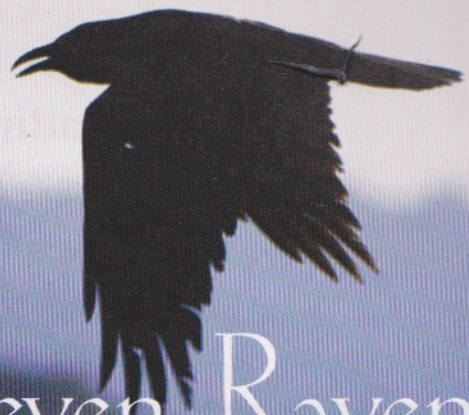
▲ Along Germany's "Fairy  
Tale Road" tourists can  
travel past dark forests  
and old villages. The  
550-km road begins in  
the town of Hanau, the  
Grimm brothers'  
birthplace.

Later, the brothers changed the **text** of some of the  
original stories. They "**softened**" many of the tales and also  
30 added drawings. This made them more **appropriate** for  
children. Like the early tales, though, each of today's  
stories still has a moral: work hard, be good, and listen  
to your parents.

<sup>1</sup> J.K. Rowling wrote the *Harry Potter* books.

<sup>2</sup> The **medieval** period is a time in European history from A.D. 476 to about A.D. 1500.





# The Tale of the Seven Ravens

1 The **youths** looked into the well and thought of their father. They were afraid to go home.

Hours passed. “Where are those boys?” shouted the father angrily. “They are probably playing a game and have  
5 forgotten about the water. I wish they were all turned into ravens!” And when he looked up, he saw seven black birds flying away. The father was **shocked**. “What have I done?” he thought. But it was too late. He could not take back his words.

10 In time, the girl grew up and discovered she had brothers. The story of their misfortune<sup>1</sup> **affected** her **deeply**, and she decided to find them. For years she searched and did not stop. She was **determined** to find her brothers. Finally, she found their home. To enter, she needed a special key made from  
15 a chicken bone, which she did not have. The girl thought for a moment, and then took a knife and cut off<sup>2</sup> one of her fingers. With it, she opened the front door and went inside. On a table, there were seven plates and seven cups. She ate and drank a little from each. In the last cup, she **accidentally**  
20 dropped a ring that her parents had given her.

Eventually, the ravens returned for their meal. The girl **hid** behind the door and watched. When the seventh raven drank from his cup, something hit his mouth. The raven **recognized** it **immediately**—it was his parents’ ring. “I wish our sister  
25 were here,” he said, “and then we could be free.” At that moment, their sister ran to them, and **suddenly** the ravens were human again. The brothers kissed their sister, and all eight of them went home together happily.

“... and when he looked up, he saw seven black birds flying away.”

<sup>1</sup> **Misfortune** is bad luck.

<sup>2</sup> If you **cut** something **off**, or **cut off** something, you remove it with a knife or a similar tool.