Tales Online Instruction Manual

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Database Features

Complete List of Tales in Database:

A complete list of tales (without short summaries) linked to the full text is available from the search page. Titles will be added as tales are added to the database.

Many More Ways to Search:

The database is searchable in many more ways that the traditional categories of title, author or genre. In addition to these basic categories, Tales Online also allows tales to be searched both by Thompson motif keywords (such as terms that describe emotion, relationships, behavior, and character role), or by origin (including country, ethnic group or tribe, illustrator, or author). A full glossary is available which lists all the terms one can search by and their meanings. The search screen also contains a number of boxes which can be checked, allowing users to narrow their search parameters.

Short Summaries and Analysis:

On the results screen, (once a search has been entered and the results appear) along with the bibliographic information for a tale, each tale is accompanied by a short summary of the important elements of the tale so that the user can determine which tale(s) he/she is seeking.

Many stories also contain a short summary analysis, and each story has been assigned an appropriate tale type number (general theme), a series of motif numbers and descriptors for specific events within a tale, character roles, descriptions of settings within the tale, and keywords. .

A Variety of Additional Information:

Thompson Motif Index Linked to Tales:

The entire contents of the six volumes of Stith Thompson's Motif Index is included, and the appropriate motifs are linked to the tales in the database and included in the tale analysis. There is a descriptor for each motif so that terms entered can be searched even if the motif number is unknown to the user.

Variant Titles and Additional Notes:

For each tale, variant titles with all of their bibliographic information will be available.

Full Bibliographic Information:

Full bibliographic information is available for each of the source collections and journal articles.

Country:

The country where the tale was told and collected. For example, the tales in the Grimm's collection were collected in Germany.

Languages:

Original language: The language the tale/or collection was first published in.

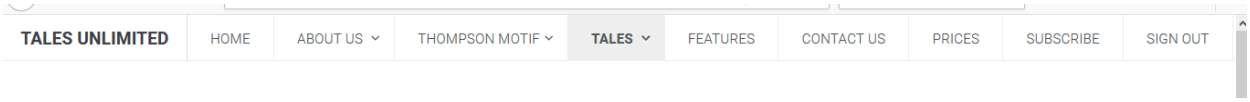
Published language: The language the tale analyzed in our database was published in.

Age Appropriateness:

Many of the tales been assigned an age appropriate level depending on its contents and language. The criteria for assigning "age appropriateness" was based on a judgement made about the appropriateness of each tale for various age groups as influenced by the content and its relationship to violence, explicit sexual references, and language.

Ethnic Groups:

Storyteller or collector's ethnic background



Menus

About Us Menu

About Us -General Information about Tales Unlimited

System Updates - List of major updates to the system

Thompson Motif Menu

Thompson Motif Instructions – Help on how to use the motif (also included in this manual)

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Stith Thompson Motif Index

What is the Stith Thompson Motif Index?

Just as the early publications of folktale collections led folklorists to realize that the same tales existed in different times and in different countries, it also led to the realization that there were certain details in folktales that showed up in many different tales. Some of these details were characters, such as the wicked stepmother or the wicked witch, while others were plot details, such as the importance of the number three, or the fact that trolls turn to stone when they are caught by the sunlight. Folklorists call these details motifs, and in 1955 Stith Thompson compiled a five volume list of these narrative elements, and a one volume index, into the Motif Index.

In 1966 he published a revised version of this index. We have entered most of the contents of the Motif Index into this section of the database. We have included in the database all of the motifs, descriptors, cross references, along with the general outline and detailed synopsis for each alphabet used. However, we have omitted the introductory material included by Thompson, his bibliography, and all of his abbreviated bibliographic references that appear in the printed volumes accompanying the majority of the motifs.

How does the Index work in the Tales Online database?

For each tale included in the Tales Online database, motif numbers along with their accompanying descriptors, characters and character roles have been indicated, and settings

identified along with the genre and age appropriateness. We have also assigned relevant keywords to each tale; words that are not contained in the short summaries, or descriptors.

All tale motifs have been linked to the entire Thompson Motif Index. As a result, entering an appropriate Motif number or descriptor or word within a descriptor will bring up all of the tales in the database which contain either the exact number or descriptor word if such a term(s) or number has been used.

Relevant terms

Motif: A motif may refer to a character, action, setting, or object.
Descriptor: a short verbal explanation of what each motif is about.

Motif number: a shorthand way of referring to specific details found in folktales. These usually consist of a letter and then a series of numbers.
Note: A small 'c' in front of a motif indicates that the tale includes a motif similar to, but not identical to, the listed motif. See the example below.

Motif examples

Direct motif example: The descriptor for motif A1010 is "Deluge," meaning that a tale marked with motif A1010 includes or describes world floods such as the one survived by Noah.

Related motif example: The descriptor for motif A123.3.1.1 is "Three-eyed god". There is no motif that indicates a god with nine eyes, so in this case an analyst might use cA123.3.1.1 to indicate that the god isn't actually a three-eyed god but is close.

About Tales Online

What Our Database Offers

Tales Online is a database of folktales, fairytales, myths of indigenous peoples, legends, sagas, and fables of world cultures in collections. All of the texts and notes are exact duplication of the original and no attempt has been made to either alter the style or wording contained in the original collection. Although at times the language is awkward, it is true to the original.

The collections contained in the database includes journal articles, archival material, and tales contained in printed volumes. Many tales are analyzed by a professional or advanced student folklorist.
The analysis includes:
-an identification of the "genre" of the tale
-A notation is made if the tale is field collected (spoken by a storyteller and recorded by a listener to be later published or archived) or adapted.
-"Tale type" and "motifs" which classify
-Individual events which occur within a tale
-Identification of characters appearing in the tale and their role
-Various settings that appear in the tale.

To aid in the user's search through the collection, a short summary for each tale appears on the results page along with the title and the source of the tale. This enables you to include all of the information for each tale in a bibliography if needed.

All tales in the public domain (not under copyright) contain the full text. Tales under copyright contain long summaries.

The Creative Vision of May Brottman
As creator and principle editor of Tales Online from its inception in 1997 to her passing in 2010, May's passion for folk literature of all types and its influence on society was a driving force in the development of this database. In addition to many years of teaching experience as an LRC Director and Teacher Librarian, May was also a long-time member of the following organizations; American Folklore Society, American Library Association, American Association of School Librarians, ALA-Reference and Adult Services Division ALA- Young Adult Library Services Association and the National Education Association. May's accomplishments include the publication of The LIRT Library Instruction Handbook, and she served on numerous professional committees and was involved in several developmental programs.

At the heart of the formation of Tales Online was May's vision of creating a platform that would give wider access to individual tales determined by individual needs. The database was initially produced in collaboration with the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana

University, and was first developed as a tool for folklore research. Today her family and collaborators are working to fulfill May's original vision by expanding access to the collection beyond folklore researchers and universities to include individual storytellers, artists, and anyone wishing to be inspired by the world's tales of old.

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