

THROUGH TALES AND LEGENDS: THE WORLDVIEW OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE

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Abstract: This article analyzes the national worldview, values, and social consciousness of the British people through one of their richest examples of oral creativity — fairy tales and legends. The study explores the historical genesis of British folklore, its connections with Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman cultural layers, and its role in shaping public consciousness. The struggle between good and evil, courage, justice, diligence, respect for nature, and humanity reflected in these tales represent the moral ideals of the people. Furthermore, through their artistic structure and symbolic system, these stories express the spiritual world, historical memory, and cultural heritage of the nation. Examples such as Jack and the Beanstalk, Tom Thumb, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight were analyzed to reveal the semantic layers of folkloric motifs. Fairy tales not only reflect the worldview of the past but have also maintained their significance in modern culture. Contemporary works such as Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings, and The Chronicles of Narnia demonstrate the continuity of ancient ideas and symbols from British folklore. The results show that British fairy tales and legends serve as a crucial spiritual source uniting national identity, cultural heritage, and social consciousness.

Аннотация: В данной статье анализируются национальное мировоззрение, культурные ценности и социальное сознание британского народа через одно из самых богатых проявлений устного творчества — сказки и легенды. Исследование рассматривает историческое формирование британского фольклора, его связь с кельтскими, англосаксонскими и нормандскими культурными слоями, а также его роль в формировании общественного сознания. Нравственные идеалы, отражённые в этих произведениях — борьба добра со злом, мужество, справедливость, трудолюбие, уважение к природе и человеческое достоинство — демонстрируют этическую основу британской культуры.

Анализ художественной структуры и символической системы позволяет раскрыть духовный мир, историческую память и культурное наследие, закодированные в этих произведениях. Такие примеры, как Джек и бобовый стебель, Маленький Том и Сэр Гавейн и Зелёный рыцарь, были рассмотрены для выявления смысловых уровней и фольклорных мотивов. Британские сказки не только отражают мировоззрение прошлого, но и сохраняют своё значение в современной культуре. Современные произведения, такие как Гарри Поттер, Властелин колец и Хроники Нарнии, демонстрируют преемственность древних идей и символов. Результаты исследования показывают, что британские сказки и легенды выступают важным духовным источником, объединяющим национальную идентичность, культурное наследие и социальное сознание.

Keywords: Oral folklore, British folklore, fairy tales and legends, struggle between good and evil, symbols and imagery, cultural heritage, social consciousness, moral values, national identity, unity of nature and humanity, magical beings (elves, mermaids, wizards), relationship between folklore and literature, mythological motifs, social criticism, cultural identity.

INTRODUCTION

Oral folklore is one of the oldest cultural layers expressing a nation's historical memory, spiritual heritage, and social thinking. It embodies people's lifestyle, beliefs, dreams, and values. Among oral genres, fairy tales and legends passed from generation to generation express people's understanding of good and evil and their philosophical attitude toward life.

The British people have developed a rich folklore tradition influenced by Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and Scandinavian cultures, giving it a distinct national color. British folklore includes works such as Robin Hood, King Arthur, Beowulf, and Scottish and Irish legends, all of which express values like justice, courage, patriotism, loyalty, and humanity.

As folklorist Jacqueline Simpson (2000) stated, "Folklore is the oral memory of a people, expressing their historical experience through symbols." According to her, every fairy tale is not only an artistic production but also an utterance of the people's spirit and cultural identity. Similarly, researchers such as Marina Warner and Katharine Briggs have analyzed the ancient components of British folklore to better comprehend national mentality and historical evolution.

Today, British fairy tales and legends are studied not only as folklore but also as vital cultural sources shaping national identity. They are reinterpreted in modern literature, cinema, and theatre, playing a key role in transmitting cultural heritage to new generations.

The aim of this research is to analyze how the worldview, social values, and cultural identity of the British people are reflected in their fairy tales and legends, to interpret their symbolic meanings, and to explore their role in expressing the national spirit.

METHODS

This study employs qualitative analysis, focusing on the interpretation of text content, symbolic systems, and cultural context. The social, moral, symbolic, and aesthetic layers of British fairy tales and legends were analyzed and compared with theoretical sources.

Theoretical references include works by Jacqueline Simpson (1991, 2000), Richard Dorson (1968), Marina Warner (1994, 2018), Juliette Wood, Thomas Green (1997), Linda Dégh (1995), and Joseph Harris (2008). These works helped explore the historical roots, genre characteristics, and symbolic meanings of British folklore.

The analysis focused on Jack and the Beanstalk, Tom Thumb, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, as well as legendary figures such as elves, mermaids, wizards, and knights. These examples reveal the people's understanding of morality, social norms, and worldview evolution. Methods used included symbol and motif analysis, mythological structure analysis, and the semiotic approach, which helped uncover hidden meanings, spiritual functions of images, and their interpretation in the historical-cultural context.

RESULTS

The study identified several key aspects representing the British worldview, moral values, and social thought as expressed in fairy tales and legends:

- Struggle between Good and Evil: Central to British folklore. As Marina Warner (1994) noted, such conflicts symbolically represent human morality and social choices.

- Harmony between Nature and Humans: Magical beings like elves, mermaids, and forest spirits reflect ancient Celtic beliefs about the sacredness of nature (Simpson, 1991).
 - Courage, Diligence, and Justice: Heroes in tales like Jack and the Beanstalk and Tom Thumb embody the people's ideals of perseverance and hope.
 - Folklore as Social Criticism: Some 19th-century stories subtly criticize class inequality and imperial ideologies (Harris, 2008).
 - Strengthening National Identity: As Linda Dégh (1995) emphasized, folklore preserves collective memory and plays an active role in shaping national identity.
- Overall, British fairy tales and legends represent the artistic expression of moral ideals and social transformations, transmitting national consciousness and spiritual heritage across generations.

Discussion

Findings show that British tales and legends have served as powerful instruments for strengthening moral values, historical memory, and social unity. They adapt to changing times, reflecting contemporary social realities while maintaining ethical principles.

The endurance of British folklore proves that these tales have not only preserved past moral standards but have also inspired modern literature and culture. For instance, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* revive ancient mythical motifs such as magical creatures, heroic trials, and the eternal struggle between good and evil (Tolkien, 1939; Warner, 2018).

These tales continue to serve as cultural codes preserving collective memory and social cohesion. Thus, British folklore is not merely a relic of the past but a living mechanism ensuring cultural continuity and stability.

In conclusion, British fairy tales and legends embody the eternal expression of the national spirit — a harmonious synthesis of cultural heritage, historical memory, and social consciousness. Their modern reinterpretations in literature and cinema reaffirm the universality and continuity of oral creativity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of British fairy tales and legends reveals that they are not merely entertaining stories, but complex cultural texts that reflect the nation's collective consciousness, historical evolution, and moral framework. These narratives serve as a mirror of social values and as a mechanism for preserving and transmitting cultural identity across generations. Through their rich symbolism, allegorical depth, and moral orientation, they encapsulate the essence of British national character — resilience, justice, loyalty, and a deep respect for nature and humanity.

The analysis demonstrates that the struggle between good and evil, the pursuit of justice, and the belief in moral victory are central to British folklore. Such themes have persisted through centuries, maintaining their relevance in shaping the ethical and social ideals of the nation. Figures like Jack, Sir Gawain, and Robin Hood exemplify the archetype of the common hero — brave, clever, and morally upright — whose triumphs embody the people's faith in fairness and courage.

Furthermore, the research highlights the continuity between traditional folklore and modern British culture. The influence of ancient myths and fairy-tale motifs can be traced in the works of modern writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling. Their stories revive and reinterpret timeless folkloric symbols — magical creatures, moral trials, and heroic quests — for

contemporary audiences, proving that folklore remains a living, adaptable, and creative force in cultural life.

British fairy tales and legends also serve as tools of social reflection and critique. Through metaphor and allegory, they express people's responses to social injustice, power dynamics, and moral dilemmas. The symbolic confrontation between virtue and vice often represents broader societal tensions, providing a platform for communal self-expression and resistance.

Moreover, these narratives preserve ecological and humanistic wisdom that modern society continues to value. The harmony between nature and humanity depicted through elves, fairies, and forest spirits underscores a worldview rooted in environmental awareness and respect for the natural order — a concept strikingly relevant to today's global concerns.

Ultimately, British folklore acts as a cultural bridge connecting the past and the present, reinforcing collective identity and ensuring the transmission of moral and aesthetic values. Its adaptability has allowed it to transcend time, uniting the mythical imagination of the past with the creative expressions of the modern world. Thus, British fairy tales and legends remain not only a reflection of historical consciousness but also an enduring testament to the human capacity for imagination, hope, and moral resilience.

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