

This study guide was designed to enhance student learning before and after your visit to the Dallas Puppet Theater. Sleeping Beauty is a clever retelling of the classic French fairy tale brought to life through the magic of beautifully hand-crafted marionettes, or string puppets. This thrilling show is the perfect accompaniment to a thematic unit on folklore, fantasy, fairy tales or children's literature.



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Synopsis

Our story begins on the day of the christening of the new, beautiful Princess Aurora, the daughter that the King and Queen have been hoping for.

Faithful Jester John has been given the job of guarding the palace to make certain that no uninvited guests arrive. After greeting a number of interesting people, Jester John meets up with a very suspicious person who has no invitation. He stops her entering, but is enchanted by a mysterious spell, and suddenly, he cannot move! What trouble does this uninvited guest plan to cause?

The king, meanwhile, is inviting people to visit the new princess in her beautiful new home. Three fairies come to bring the princess special gifts, but suddenly, there is a terrible ruckus as the uninvited guest arrives! What trouble will she cause, and what gift does she bring for the new princess?

After a terrible burst of anger, the uninvited guest leaves, but not before cursing the princess and saying that she will die by pricking her finger on the thorn of a rose! All hope seems lost, until the Fairy Queen Clothilde arrives and modifies the curse. The princess will not die, but will sleep for 100 years if she pricks her finger on a rose's thorn. The King orders all of the rose bushes in the kingdom destroyed, but will even this save the Princess from the curse?

16 years later, the Princess and her companion Pipin the monkey are playing in the garden when a strange old woman stops by. She happens to have a flower that the Princess has never seen before, and this flower is the beginning of all kinds of trouble!

What will happen to Princess Aurora? Who is the old lady? Is there a prince in the future?

Find out in the Dallas Puppet Theater's production of Sleeping Beauty!



Background

The story of Sleeping Beauty has been a favorite for many years. The story appears in Charles Perrault's famous 1697 *Histoires, or Stories of Past Times*.

. . . about the author

Charles Perrault (1628-1703) was one of the leading intellectuals of his time in Parisian society. Little could he have guessed that his name would live on as a teller of traditional children's stories!

Trained as a lawyer, Perrault worked for a while in the French king's court, where he had responsibility for the royal buildings. Even then, Perrault was writing verse. In 1671 he became a member of the hugely prestigious Académie Française. At the time, there was a furious debate going on about whether modern literature was better or worse than ancient literature. In poetry and prose, Perrault championed the cause of modern literature, arguing that as civilization progresses, so literature improves. It is therefore ironic that this kind of argument should help to usher in a period of change called the European Enlightenment, which was not receptive to tales of magic and fantasy – precisely the kind of tales for which Perrault was to become famous!

Perrault had already turned a few fairy tales into verse when, in 1697, he published under the name of his ten-year-old son, Pierre, a small book containing eight simple stories with the unassuming title, *Stories, or Tales from Times Past, with Morals*. There was an additional title in the frontispiece: *Tales of Mother Goose*. No one knows why Perrault saw a traditional tale teller as "Mother Goose," but the frontispiece of the book showed an old peasant woman sitting by a fire, with children around her listening to her stories.

The stories were an immediate success, and over the years the original eight tales were put together with Perrault's earlier fairy-tale verses and other traditional tales, including those retold by writers other than Perrault. Perrault did not invent these stories, but retold them in a straightforward way, with charming wit and style. It was the first time some of these stories had ever been written down. And so he preserved for future generations some of the most famous stories of all time: 'Cinderella', 'Puss in Boots,' 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Sleeping Beauty.'



. . . about the story

Extreme violence permeates his original version, which continues the story after the Prince and the Princess are united. As Perrault tells it, the blissful couple do indeed marry and bear two children. But the Prince never tells his family about the marriage, and Sleeping Beauty never questions his decision. Soon the Prince must leave for war. He finally tells his mother about the marriage and leaves his wife under her care. But the Prince's mother hates children and practices cannibalism, and she viciously persecutes Sleeping Beauty. Moments before the mother throws her two grandchildren into a pit of venomous vipers, the Prince fortuitously returns from war and pushes his own mother into the deadly pit.

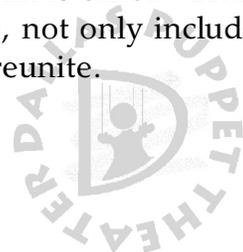
Of course, this version is nothing like the story as told to young children in modern times. As in most fairy tales, Sleeping Beauty usually ends right after the boy kisses the girl and they live happily ever after. However, puppets preceded Disney into the world of adapting Sleeping Beauty for the screen.

Disney's version was not the first film adaptation of the Sleeping Beauty tales, nor was it the first animated version. German pioneer animator Lotte Reiniger, who was best known for shadow puppet animation, produced at least two artistically advanced animated adaptations of the Sleeping Beauty tale. One version appeared as early as 1922.

Friz Freleng, who directed Bugs Bunny cartoons, made a 1942 adaptation called "Foney Fables" that incorporated elements of many old fairy tales. In the "Sleeping Beauty" segment of this cartoon, Prince Charming yells at Sleeping Beauty for sleeping in. Even Popeye entered the mix with 1947's "Wotta Knight." Bluto and Popeye fight over Olive Oyl, playing tug-of-war with her pigtailed in a battle for her love.

Most young people are familiar with the story from the Disney movie, which used some of the Tchaikovsky score for its background music, and ends right after the "traditional" kiss that awakens Princess Aurora.

No version of the story previous to Perrault's has Sleeping Beauty awakened with the kiss of the Prince. One version penned by the Brothers Grimm is called "Briar Rose," from their Children's and Household Tales (1812-1815), not only includes this element but ends the story when the Prince and the Princess reunite.



. . . about the composer

Sleeping Beauty was composed by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Russian composer, the foremost of the 19th century.

Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk, in the western Ural area of the country. He studied law in Saint Petersburg and took music classes at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. There his teachers included Russian composer and pianist Anton Rubinstein, from whom Tchaikovsky subsequently took advanced instruction in orchestration. In 1866 composer-pianist Nicholas Rubinstein, Anton's brother, obtained for Tchaikovsky the post of teacher of harmony at the Moscow Conservatory.

There the young composer met dramatist Aleksandr Nikolayevich Ostrovsky, who wrote the libretto (story) for Tchaikovsky's first opera, *The Voyevoda* (1868). From this period also date Tchaikovsky's operas *Undine* (1869) and *The Oprichnik* (1872); the Piano Concerto no. 1 in B-flat Minor (1875); the symphonies no. 1 (called "Winter Daydreams," 1868), no. 2 (1873; subsequently revised and titled "Little Russian"), and no. 3 (1875); and the overture *Romeo and Juliet* (1869; revised in 1870 and 1880). The B-flat piano concerto was dedicated originally to Nicholas Rubinstein, who pronounced it unplayable. Deeply injured, Tchaikovsky made extensive alterations in the work and reinscribed it to German pianist Hans Guido von Bülow, who rewarded the courtesy by performing the concerto on the occasion of his first concert tour of the United States (1875-1876). Rubinstein later acknowledged the merit of the revised composition and made it a part of his own repertoire. Well known for its dramatic first movement and skillful use of folklike melodies, it subsequently became one of the most frequently played of all piano concertos.

From 1887 to 1891 Tchaikovsky made several highly successful concert tours, conducting his own works before large, enthusiastic audiences in the major cities of Europe and the United States. He composed one of his finest operas, *The Queen of Spades*, in 1890. Early in 1893 the composer began work on his Symphony no. 6 in B Minor, subsequently titled *Pathétique* by his brother Modest. The first performance of the work, given at Saint Petersburg on October 28, 1893, under the composer's direction, was indifferently received. Tchaikovsky died nine days later.



. . . about the ballet

Before Tchaikovsky's version, several ballet productions were based on the "sleeping beauty" theme, amongst which one from Eugène Scribe: in the winter of 1828–1829, the French playwright furnished a four-act mimed scenario as a basis for Aumer's choreography of a four-act ballet-pantomime *La Belle au bois dormant*. Scribe wisely omitted the violence of the second part of Perrault's tale for the ballet, which was set by Hérold and first staged at the Académie Royale, Paris, April 27, 1829. Though Hérold popularized his piece with a piano Rondo brilliant based on themes from the music, he was not successful in getting the ballet staged again.

When Ivan Vsevolozhsky, the Director of the Imperial Theatres in Saint Petersburg, wrote to Tchaikovsky on May 25, 1888, suggesting a ballet based on Perrault's tale, he also cut the violent second half, climaxed the action with the Awakening Kiss, and followed with a conventional festive last act, a series of bravura variations.

Although Tchaikovsky was maybe not all that eager to compose a new ballet (remembering that the reception of his *Swan Lake* ballet music, staged eleven seasons earlier, had only been lukewarm), he set to work.

As a result, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky created the score of *The Sleeping Beauty* for the Imperial Ballet at St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theater. First performed January 3, 1890, the now-classic ballet was originally created in a legendary demonstration of passion, Tchaikovsky supposedly composed the entire score in only forty days. As an interesting testament to the beauty and perfection of the music, Walt Disney actually wanted an original score for his motion picture and spent a great deal of time attempting to develop one. In the end, however, he decided that the classical grandeur of the ballet's score, full of waltzes, did not need to be mimicked, but rather used outright. George Bruns adapted it.

Besides being Tchaikovsky's first major success in ballet composition, it set a new standard for what is now called "Classical Ballet", and remained one of the all time favorites in the whole of the ballet repertoire.



. . . about Sleeping Beauty and related things on the internet

http://www.gwu.edu/~folktale/GERM232/sleepingb/Perrault_version.html

Read Charles Perrault's original version of The Sleeping Beauty (La Belle au bois dormant) in French.

<http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~wbarker/fairies/grimm/163.html>

Read The Glass Coffin, a Sleeping Beauty story by the Brothers Grimm.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleeping_Beauty#Sleeping_Beauty_ballets

Comprehensive information on the folktale The Sleeping Beauty on Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia.

<http://www.fpx.de/fp/Disney/Scripts/SleepingBeauty/>

Read the script of Walt Disney's 1959 animated film Sleeping Beauty.

<http://www.worldartswest.org/plm/guide/activitypages/movemusic/puppetry.shtml>

Feeling creative? Get inspired by a brief article on the magic of object puppetry.

<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/index.html>

The SurLaLune Fairy Tale Pages features annotated fairy tales.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/starslp/>

Visit the "Star Sleeper for Kids" Web Site to learn about the importance of a good night's sleep.



The performers at the Dallas Puppet Theater love to get drawings and letters inspired by their performance! It gives us an idea of what captures the imagination and of what you like to see! It's a learning experience for them!

Please send any pictures or comments to:

Dallas Puppet Theater, Inc.
C/o the Women's Museum
3800 Parry Ave
Dallas, TX 75226-1229



Classroom activities

Vocabulary and language

Following are some words from the show that may be unfamiliar to some students. Using context clues from the sentences below, most of which are taken from the script, ask students to use context clues to guess the meaning of each word.

activate
christening
decorum
seemly
destiny
farce
glimmers
innocent
mesmerizing
revenge
perennial
radiant

- activate..... But, if we are to **activate** the spell, it must be done quickly.
- christening..... How dare you not invite me to your daughter's **christening**.
- decorum & seemly..... A little more **decorum** at such a moment would be more **seemly**.
- destiny..... Come meet your **destiny**!
- farce..... We'll play out this **farce**.
- glimmers..... See how the needle **glimmers**.
- innocent..... Do not harm this **innocent** child.
- mesmerizing.....It's **mesmerizing**, isn't it?
- perennial..... Those little **perennial** weeds!
- radiant..... It means **radiant** light, doesn't it?
- revenge.....My **revenge** is complete!

Ask students to look up the definition of each word using a computer or dictionary.



More classroom activities

- Read *Sleeping Beauty* in Class. Discuss the characters, settings and themes of the story. What would it be like to live in the time of the fairy tale? What do the characters do for work, for play? What do they wear. What kinds of flowers would be in the garden? What is the moral of the tale? Do different students find different themes in the story?
- Read different versions of the story in class. How are they the same? How are they different? How did the differences change the characters and the themes?
- What would it be like to sleep for 100 years? What would students find different if this happened to them? What changes do they think they would see? What changes do they think *Sleeping Beauty* would see? How would they feel about missing 100 years?
- Have students create their own modern *Sleeping Beauty* story. What would the different characters do or say in modern times? How can a spell be cast today? What would the different gifts to the princess be?
- Ask students to draw *Sleeping Beauty*, the Prince, or the Fairies as a traditional character from the story. Now ask them to draw the same character as it would appear today. How are they the same, and how are they different?
- Have students discuss how the Dallas Puppet Theater's *Sleeping Beauty* is different from other versions with which they are familiar. Did using puppets make telling the story different? What parts did the puppets make better?
- Have students write a thank you letter to the Women's Museum and to the Dallas Puppet Theater,. What did they remember most? What was their favorite part of the story? What parts of the museum look most interesting for a future visit?
- Have students do research on other stories that are similar to *Sleeping Beauty*. What female authors have told stories or written books based on this story? How has the role of a Princess changed since fairy tale times? What might a modern princess be expected to do in ruling a country?

