

Booktrust fairy tales research

In May 2013 Booktrust commissioned Opinium to conduct a survey about fairy tales in advance of National Bookstart Week 2013. The poll took place online between 24 and 30 May 2013 with a sample of 1,001 UK parents (aged 18+) with children aged 0-11 years old. If parents had more than one child they were asked to answer with reference to their youngest child.

Respondents were asked if they read fairy tales with or to their children, and were asked a follow up question about why they did or did not do this. Respondents were asked to select their favourite fairy tale from a list of 17 options, from which they could select up to three. Respondents were then asked to select their child's favourite fairy tale from the same list, again selecting up to three options. In the same way, respondents were asked to select their child's favourite fairy tale character from a list of 21 options.

The results were as follows:

- The favourite fairy tale among girls was Cinderella (34%) and for boys it was Jack and the Beanstalk (27%). Similarly, Mums also preferred Cinderella (32%) and Dads also preferred Jack and the Beanstalk (30%).
- The favourite fairy tale character for girls was Cinderella: 44% of parents reported that Cinderella is their daughter's favourite character. For boys the favourite character was Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk, reported by 21% of parents on behalf of their sons.
 - The ugly step sisters from Cinderella were the least popular characters overall: Just 1% reported that the Ugly Step Sisters were their child's favourite character.
- Across the UK, 70% of parents of 0-11 year old children report reading fairy tales with or to their child, meaning that 3 in 10 parents do not read fairy tales with their children.
- Of the UK parents who do read fairy tales with their child, the top three reasons are:
 - They help with children's reading skills/literacy (64%)
 - They are fun and make children laugh (60%)
 - It is part of their daily reading routine (48%)
- Of the UK parents who say they do not read fairy tales with or to their child, the top three reasons are:
 - Their child is too old for this (51%)
 - Their child is too young for this (23%)
 - Their child doesn't like fairy tales (17%)
- Where parents said 'my child is too old for this' their children tended to be aged seven and older, and where parents said 'my child is too young for this' children tended to be aged two or less:
 - Of the 155 parents who said 'my child is too old for this', 97% had children aged 7-11
 - Of the 70 parents who said 'my child is too young for this', 94% had children aged 0-2
- Where parents said 'my child doesn't like fairy tales' their child was overwhelmingly more likely to be male than female: 84% of the 51 parents that said this were talking about their son. [N.B: the sample size here is relatively small].

See overleaf for data tables.

Favourite fairy tales:

The top five fairy tales for **parents**:

1. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	24%
2. Cinderella	24%
3. The Three Little Pigs	24%
4. Jack and the Beanstalk	23%
5. Snow White	21%

The top five fairy tales for **children**:

1. The Three Little Pigs	22%
2. Jack and the Beanstalk	20%
3. Cinderella	19%
4. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	18%
5. Snow White	16%

The top five fairy tales for **mums**:

1. Cinderella	32%
2. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	26%
3. Snow White	25%
4. The Three Little Pigs	23%
5. Beauty and the Beast	18%

The top five fairy tales for **girls**:

1. Cinderella	34%
2. Snow White	27%
3. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	20%
4. The Three Little Pigs	17%
5. Rapunzel	17%

The top five fairy tales for **dads**:

1. Jack and the Beanstalk	30%
2. The Three Little Pigs	25%
3. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	22%
4. Snow White	16%
5. Cinderella	15%

The top five fairy tales for **boys**:

1. Jack and the Beanstalk	27%
2. The Three Little Pigs	26%
3. The Gingerbread Man	17%
4. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	16%
5. Pinocchio	11%

Favourite fairy tale characters:

The top ten fairy tale characters for **children**:

1. Cinderella	23%	6. Goldilocks	10%
2. Puss in Boots	15%	7. Little Red Riding Hood	9%
3. Jack (Jack and the Beanstalk)	14%	8. The big bad wolf (Three Little Pigs)	9%
4. The gingerbread man	13%	9. Fairy godmother (Cinderella)	6%
5. The three bears	12%	10. Hansel and Gretel	6%

The top ten fairy tale characters for **girls**:

1. Cinderella	44%
2. Goldilocks	14%
3. Puss in Boots	12%
4. Little Red Riding Hood	12%
5. Fairy godmother (Cinderella)	12%
6. The three bears	11%
7. The gingerbread man	9%
8. Jack (Jack and the Beanstalk)	6%
9. The big bad wolf (Three Little Pigs)	6%
10. The Beast (Beauty and the Beast)	6%

The top ten fairy tale characters for **boys**:

1. Jack (Jack and the Beanstalk)	21%
2. Puss in Boots	18%
3. The gingerbread man	16%
4. The three bears	13%
5. The big bad wolf (Three Little Pigs)	12%
6. Hansel and Gretel	8%
7. Rumpelstiltskin	8%
8. The troll (Three Billy Goats Gruff)	8%
9. Little Red Riding Hood	7%
10. The wolf (Little Red Riding Hood)	7%

Do you read fairy tales with or to your child?

Yes 70%
No 30%

Routed question (n=699): For which, if any, of the following reasons do you read fairy tales to your child? (Select all that apply).

They help with children's reading skills/literacy	64%
They are fun and make children laugh	60%
It is part of our daily reading routine	48%
They help children come up with their own stories	45%
They carry on traditions	43%
They teach children important lessons about life	36%
They are a break from the real world	36%
They help children understand other stories	33%
Other	2%
None of these	1%

Routed question (n=302): For which, if any, of the following reason don't you read fairy tales to your child? (Select all that apply).

My child is too old for this	51%
My child is too young for this	23%
My child doesn't like fairy tales	17%
I hadn't thought about doing this	7%
Fairy tales are old fashioned	6%
I don't have time for this	3%
Fairy tales are too scary	3%
Fairy tales are too boring	3%
Other	6%
None of these	4%

For those answering 'My child is too old for this' (n=155), age breakdown was as follows:

Under 1	0%	6 yrs old	1%
1 yr old	0%	7 yrs old	6%
2 yrs old	0%	8 yrs old	11%
3 yrs old	0%	9 yrs old	14%
4 yrs old	0%	10 yrs old	29%
5 yrs old	1%	11 yrs old	37%

For those answering 'My child is too young for this' (n=70), age breakdown was as follows:

Under 1	43%	6 yrs old	0%
1 yr old	43%	7 yrs old	0%
2 yrs old	9%	8 yrs old	0%
3 yrs old	0%	9 yrs old	0%
4 yrs old	4%	10 yrs old	0%
5 yrs old	0%	11 yrs old	1%

For those answering 'My child doesn't like fairy tales' (n=51), gender breakdown was as follows:

Male	84%
Female	16%