

# Tales of Wonder

Discovering Your  
Story in Fairy Tales

 ESCAPADEMEDIA



8 x 60' 4K



*Tales of Wonder* is a documentary series that explores the history and meaning of the world's favorite fairy tales – the magic, the mystery and mythology. Everyone has their favorite fairytale. We look to answer why these stories have endured and evolved across the centuries.

Welcome to a series that retells these magical tales in the context of where they came from and what they can teach us about ourselves and each other as we grapple with life in the 21st century. Each episode will focus on one popular tale. From *Cinderella's* journey from China over 1,000 years ago into Europe, through to *The Snow Queen* and its modern-day retelling as Disney's *Frozen*.

We'll reveal to the audience the hidden meanings within each story, and guide the viewers to see the connection to their lives.

Through stunning visual investigation and integral conversations, we look at why these tales make such an impression and stay with us, and why their universal themes travel across cultures and distances. These stories invite us to face and challenge our own fears, by exposing demons and social limitations. The heroines & heroes of these time-honored tales show us how to live full and courageous lives despite obstacles and challenges.

To take the viewer on an exhilarating journey linking the ordinary world and the extraordinary world of fairy tales, we will use 'magical helpers' – much like a fairy godmother – to unlock the mysterious and supernatural world of each story. To appeal to a broad audience, the magical helpers will range in age and experience from a teen influencer, to a titan of business, through to a charismatic psychologist and fairy tale academic (who holds a Doctorate in the subject matter and is considered a world expert.)

Our magical helpers will create a narrative thread that shows us how they've swept aside the cinders of their lives such as fear and hate – just like Cinderella – or how their lives changed when they befriended a mouse or kissed a frog or looked beyond the immediate facade of a person or situation.

The visual treatment for each episode will move between animation and magical-

looking live-action cinematography of real-life people and places, interwoven with a dramatic storyline. The series will use the story-telling structure of fairy tales to trace the cultural origins of these stories and demonstrate why they still carry universal messages of love, compassion, courage, resilience, and good overcoming evil.

This unique series is ultimately about hope - connecting us to our past and present and a way forward rooted in love, resilience and compassion.

The series will be supported by a strong online offering to allow audience interaction and further exploration.



# Episode Synopsis - Fairy Tales

## **Episode 1: Cinderella**

'Cinderella', often called the world's favourite fairytale, originated in China 1,000 years ago and travelled the Silk Roads to Europe. This episode will explore the story's long history, from the French version that introduced the glass slipper, to contemporary retellings such as Disney's iconic 1950 cartoon and the 2015 live-action remake with Lily James.

The key message of 'Cinderella' is that kindness and perseverance will overcome injustice. Our 'magical helpers' - a psychologist, a respected leader and a young influencer - will share how Cinderella helped them overcome challenges in their lives, and show how it can help others do the same. It will also debunk the 'Cinderella syndrome' (women who fear independence), proving that Cinderella changes her own world by the strength of her spirit.

**'Cinderella' gives us hope that we can survive unfairness, and triumph in the end.**

## **Episode 2: The Snow Queen**

'The Snow Queen' by Hans Christian Andersen was first published in Christmas 1844. Based on an old Norwegian tale about a young woman who travels into the icy wastelands to save her beloved, a prince cursed into the shape of a bear, it inspired C.S. Lewis's *White Witch of Narnia*, Philip

Pullman's *The Golden Compass*, and Disney's 2013 smash hit *Frozen*.

The key message of *The Snow Queen* is that love will overcome hate. Our 'magical helpers' will examine the story's different versions to show that, by learning to love ourselves and others, we can prevail against cruelty, prejudice and spite. It will also interrogate the astonishing cultural significance of *Frozen*, showing how fairy tales strike a chord with people of all ages, genders, nationalities and belief systems by expressing universal fears and longings.

**'The Snow Queen' gives us hope that the warmth of love can melt the coldest of hearts.**



## **Episode 3: Rapunzel**

'Rapunzel' is one of the world's oldest and most widespread fairy tales. This episode will examine some of the many 'Maiden in Tower' stories

that appear in Ancient Greece, Iraq, Italy, France, and Germany, as well as in Disney's popular musical fantasy, *Tangled*.

The key message of Rapunzel is that we can escape from imprisonment. Rapunzel has often been misinterpreted as a story of 'a passive princess waiting patiently for her prince'. Our 'magical helpers' will show how the story expresses the universal human fear of loss of autonomy, with the tower symbolizing anything that holds us back from living our best life. In *Tangled*, the heroine must liberate herself from

an over-protective and manipulative mother, but for others they may need to leave an abusive relationship, quit a toxic work environment, or face their own crippling fears.

**‘Rapunzel’ gives us hope that we can be free.**

#### **Episode 4: Beauty & the Beast**

‘Beauty & the Beast’ has its roots in the myth of ‘Cupid & Psyche’, written more than two thousand years ago. Telling the story of a woman who marries a beast to atone for some kind of misdeed, there are hundreds of different versions around the world, including Disney’s popular animated and live-action films.

The key message of Beauty & the Beast is the importance of not judging by appearances. Our ‘magical helpers’ will, by sharing their own life experiences, show how important it is to look beneath the surface to see a person’s true worth, thereby gaining insight and empathy. Our society’s emphasis on narrow ideals of beauty can cause such harm; fairy tales like Beauty & the Beast teach us to be wiser, more tolerant and more compassionate.

**‘Beauty & the Beast’ gives us hope we will be loved for our inner beauty.**

#### **Episode 5: Little Red Riding Hood**

‘Little Red Riding Hood’ is a European fairy tale about a girl who encounters

the Big Bad Wolf in the forest. In some versions, she is eaten. In some, she is rescued. In many, she outwits the wolf. In the 2011 Hollywood production starring Amanda Seyfried, the heroine embraces the wolf and her wild side.

The key message of Little Red Riding Hood is to have faith in your instincts. Our ‘magical helpers’ will show how the story has changed over time, from a lesson warning the young to take care on their journey in life, to a more contemporary interpretation in which the wolf represents the wild, free, and sometimes dangerous side of human



nature. This episode will also explore how the motifs of the red hood, the dark forest, and the seductive wolf have entered into our cultural visual language, signifying sexual awakening and freedom.

**‘Little Red Riding Hood’ teaches us to trust ourselves.**

#### **Episode 6: Jack and the Beanstalk**

‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ is thought to have originated more than five thousand years ago, and tells the story of how three magical beans help a young man kill a giant and win his fortune. Modern adaptations include Disney’s Mickey and the Beanstalk (1947), a film by The Three Stooges; and a 2013 live-action adaption called *Jack the Giant Slayer*.

The key message of Jack and the Beanstalk is to seize opportunity when it comes. Our ‘magical helpers’ will show – through their own life stories

and experiences – how quick wits and resourcefulness can overcome even the greatest of giants. The villain in the tale can represent anything huge, slow, and selfish, such as multi-national corporations, government-operated monopolies, or a tyrannical boss.

**‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ teaches us that ordinary folk can take on the giants of the world, and win.**

### **Episode 7: Bluebeard**

‘Bluebeard’ was first told by Charles Perrault in France in the 17th century, but there are older versions including one referenced by William Shakespeare. The story’s key motifs – the murderous bridegroom, the hidden chamber, the last-minute escape – have worked their way into many modern movies and TV shows, as well as fiction such as Margaret Atwood’s *Bluebeard’s Egg* and Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber*.

The key message of Bluebeard is that monsters can be overcome. The story shows how malevolence can lurk under the fine facade of any human, but that such evil can be recognized and thwarted. In this episode, our ‘magical helpers’ will explore real-life inspirations for Bluebeard, and how the story’s pervasive cultural influence is plugged into the modern fascination with psychopaths and serial killers. It will also discuss the importance of facing and

vanquishing the ogres of our own lives.

**‘Bluebeard’ teaches us to beware.**

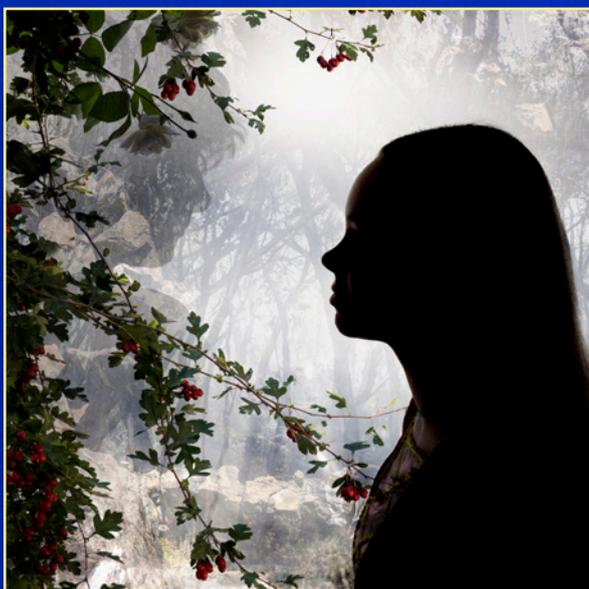
### **Episode 8: Sleeping Beauty**

‘Sleeping Beauty’ has been linked to ancient myths of spring and resurrection, with the hundred-year sleep of the princess relating to the hundred days of winter. When the sleeping princess wakes, so does the whole world. Life can begin again. And so her awakening is the end of her life as a child and her growth into a new life as a woman.

The key message of Sleeping Beauty is not to be afraid of growing up. In this episode, our ‘magical helpers’ look at the history of the tale from its mythic roots to such modern retellings as *Sleeping Beauty*, the 1959 Disney animated musical film. In this version, Aurora speaks only 18 lines of dialogue, and is awake for only 18

minutes of screen time. This has led many to criticize Sleeping Beauty for the passivity of its heroine. However, this episode will prove this to be too simple an interpretation of an ancient tale of life and death, fate and love.

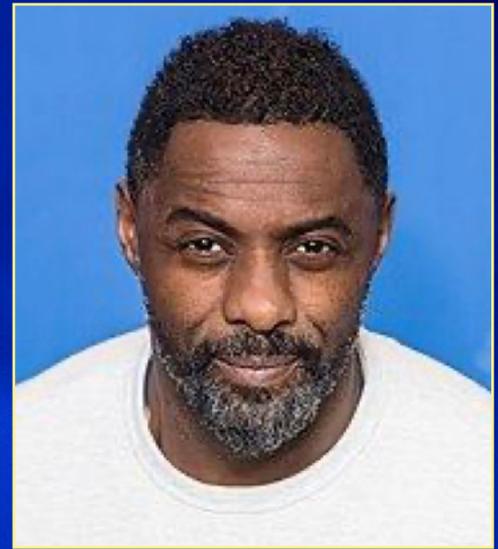
**‘Sleeping Beauty’ reminds us that change is inevitable and can lead to growth.**



## Experts

### POSSIBLE HOST:

**Idris Elba** is an English actor, writer, producer, rapper, singer, and DJ. He is best known for his role as DCI John Luther in the BBC One series 'Luther', and Nelson Mandela in the biographical film 'Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom'. He has also appeared in Ridley Scott's 'American Gangster', 'Thor' and its sequels, 'Pacific Rim', and 'Beasts of No Nation', for which he received BAFTA and Golden Globe nominations for Best Supporting Actor. He voiced Shere Khan in the live action/CGI adaptation of 'The Jungle Book', Fluke in 'Finding Dory', and played the role of Krall in 'Star Trek Beyond'. He made his directorial debut in 2018 with an adaptation of the 1992 novel *Yardie* by **Victor Headley**.



He has been nominated four times for a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor, winning one, and nominated five times for an Emmy Award.

### STORYTELLER

**Dr Kate Forsyth** is a bestselling novelist, poet, and essayist. She has won many awards, including the 2015 American Library Association award for Best Historical Fiction for her novel *Bitter Greens*; the William Atheling Jr Award for Criticism for her doctoral exegesis, *The Rebirth of Rapunzel: A Mythic Biography of the Maiden in the Tower*; and a silver medal in the 2018 US Readers Favorite book awards for *Vasilisa the Wise & Other Tales of Brave Young Women*. Kate has a BA in literature, a MA in creative writing and a Doctorate of Creative Arts in fairy tale studies, and is also an accredited master storyteller with the Australian Guild of Storytellers.



## Magical Helpers

In fairy tales, the hero often meets 'a magical helper' who provides supernatural assistance that enables them to succeed in their quest.

The fairy godmother is a well-known form of this character. Other types of magical helpers include various kinds of animals such as birds, frogs, fish, foxes, crows, wolves. Often the magical helper is the spirit of a dead mother, embodied within a tree or a talisman.

## POSSIBLE 'MAGICAL HELPERS':

**The Youthful Helper - someone who is real & relatable and will appeal to a young audience:**

**Nikita Gill** - a young 'Insta' poet who draws upon fairy tales in her work and uses social media to engage her audience. She has 559,000 followers on Instagram and has been described as 'one of the most exciting young writers working today'.

She has also performed a spoken poetry event called *Maidens, Myths, and Monsters*, and done a TED talk "*Why I'd rather be the Wicked Witch than Snow White*"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gxs5krfzTkU&t=91s>



**The Mature Helper - someone who is a leader in their field and has life experience to offer:**

**Kenneth Branagh**, through a long and celebrated career, has come to be recognised as one of the most formidable actors and directors of his generation. Nominated for five Academy Awards and five Golden Globes, and winner of three BAFTAs and two Emmy Awards, as well as being appointed a Knight Bachelor. He is famous for his film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. He directed the 2015 live action adaptation of Disney's '*Cinderella*'.



**The Wise Old Woman or Man:**

**Sheila Kohler** is an author and psychologist who teaches at Princeton University.

She is the author of many books including a memoir '*Once We Were Sisters*', '*Dreaming for Freud*', '*Becoming Jane Eyre*' and '*Cracks*' which was made into a film directed by **Jordan Scott** and starring **Eva Green**.

She wrote an article for '*Psychology Now*': "*On the Importance of Fairy Tales - should we continue to read these frightening stories to our children?*" Jun 06, 2014

Fairy tales have been with us for a long time ...

Some of these stories, like Cinderella, are truly universal, existing all over the world in all languages from Zulu to Swedish, with slight variations: the glass slipper may become a grass one, for example, but in them, surely, we find proof of our common humanity.



**PRODUCTION BUDGET:** €2 million

**DELIVERY:** TBA

**PRODUCTION COMPANY:** Raggari Films  
[www.raggarifilmi.fi](http://www.raggarifilmi.fi)

**PRODUCER:** Minna Dufton

**DIRECTOR:** Saara Helene Rawat

**CREATIVE CONSULTANT:** Kate Forsyth

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:** Anthony Mrsnik  
Escapade Media

**HOST:** Idris Elba

**STORYTELLER:** Kate Forsyth

**CAST:** The cast will consist of a Host (mostly VO), a Storyteller, and three Experts in the area (a psychologist / fairy tale expert; a high-profile person of weight / fame / profile; and, a young adult), each representing a key message to the audience

**DISTRIBUTOR:** Escapade Media  
Natalie Lawley  
[www.escapademediacom.au](http://www.escapademediacom.au)

**RIGHTS:** All Rights available including Format

For more information:  
Natalie Lawley  
[natalie@escapademediacom.au](mailto:natalie@escapademediacom.au)  
[www.escapademediacom.au](http://www.escapademediacom.au)

 **ESCAPADEMEDIA**

