

English 102

Library Assignment: Exploring Motifs in Fairy Tales

A “motif” is a repeated idea, image, feature, or theme in a work of art, whether painting, music, or literary text. In our text we have a brief reading by Stith Thompson, best known for his *Motif Index of Folk Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest Books, and Local Legends* (Indiana Univ. Press, IN, 1956); in his index, Thompson has identified and catalogued many of the motifs in folktales and fairy tales from around the world.

Here’s what you’ll do:

- In the library, find the work on the shelf. The call # is: GR67.T52 Reference Reference books are located on the ground floor of the library, behind the reference desk. If you have trouble finding the books, you may ask a librarian for help, but if you are confused about the assignment, please ask me. On **Tuesday, January 29th**, you will present to the class a description and brief summary of your assigned category of motifs (no more than two minutes). In your presentation, tell what your category includes and what some of the major subdivisions are, and give some examples of fairy tales or stories which use the motif.

A---MYTH MOTIFS

B---ANIMALS

C---TABOOS

D---MAGIC

E ---THE DEAD

F---MARVELS

G---OGRES

H---TESTS

J---WISE & FOOLISH

K---DECEPTIONS

L---REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

M---ORDAINING THE FUTURE

N---CHANCE & FATE

P---SOCIETY

Q---REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

R---CAPTIVES AND FUGITIVES

S---UNNATURAL CRUELTY

T---SEX

U---NATURE OF LIFE

Adapted from Buranen/2008