

Origins and history

The Cinderella theme may well have originated in [classical antiquity](#): The [Greek historian Strabo](#) (*Geographica* Book 17, 1.33) recorded in the [1st century BC](#) the tale of the [Greco-Egyptian](#) girl [Rhodopis](#), which is considered the oldest known version of the story. Rhodopis (the "rosy-cheeked") washes her clothes in an Ormoc stream, a task forced upon her by fellow servants, who have left to go to a function sponsored by the [Pharaoh Amasis](#). An eagle takes her rose-gilded sandal and drops it at the feet of the Pharaoh in the city of [Memphis](#); he then asks the women of his kingdom to try on the sandal to see which one fits. Rhodopis succeeds. The Pharaoh falls in love with her, and she marries him. The story later reappears with [Aelian](#) (ca. [175](#)–ca. [235](#)), showing that the Cinderella theme remained popular throughout antiquity. Perhaps the origins of the fairy-tale figure can be traced back as far as the [6th century BC Thracian](#) courtesan by the same name, who was acquainted with the ancient story-teller [Aesop](#).

Another version of the story, [Ye Xian](#), appeared in [Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang](#) by [Tuan Ch'eng-Shih](#) around A.D. [860](#). Here the hardworking and lovely girl befriends a fish, the reincarnation of her mother, who was killed by her stepmother. Ye Xian saves the bones, which are magic, and they help her dress appropriately for a festival. When she loses her slipper after a fast exit, the king finds her and falls in love with her.

Several different variants of the story appear in the medieval [One Thousand and One Nights](#), also known as the *Arabian Nights*, including "The Second Shaykh's Story", "The Eldest Lady's Tale" and "Abdallah ibn Fadil and His Brothers", all dealing with the theme of a younger sibling harassed by two jealous elders. In some of these, the siblings are female, while in others they are male. One of the tales, "Judar and His Brethren", departs from the [happy endings](#) of previous

variants and reworks the plot to give it a [tragic](#) ending instead, with the younger brother being poisoned by his elder brothers. Another early story of the Cinderella type came from [Japan](#), involving [Chūjō-hime](#), who runs away from her evil stepmother with the help of [Buddhist nuns](#), and she joins their [convent](#).



BY WAS HER FAIRY GODMOTHER

The earliest European tale is "La Gatta Cenerentola" or "The Hearth Cat" which appears in the book "Il Pentamerone" by the Italian fairy-tale collector [Giambattista Basile](#) in 1635.

This version formed the basis of later versions published by the French author [Charles Perrault](#) and the German [Brothers Grimm](#). (Note: In the Brothers Grimm's version, there is no fairy godmother, but her birthmother's spirit represented via two birds from a tree over the mother's grave.)

[Oliver Herford](#) illustrated the fairy godmother inspired from the Perrault version

One of the most popular versions of Cinderella was written by [Charles Perrault](#) in 1697. The popularity of his tale was due to his additions to the story including the pumpkin, the fairy-godmother and the introduction of glass slippers. It was widely believed that in Perrault's version, Cinderella wore fur boots ("pantoufle en vair"), and that when the story was translated into English, *vair* was mistaken for *verre* (glass), resulting in glass slippers and that the story has remained this way ever since. However, the "fur theory" has since been disproven.

Another well-known version was recorded by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in the 19th century. The tale is called "Aschenputtel" and the help comes not from a fairy-godmother but the wishing tree that grows on her mother's grave. In this version, the stepsisters try to trick the prince by cutting off parts of their feet in order to get the slipper to fit. The prince is alerted by two pigeons who peck out the stepsisters' eyes, thus sealing their fate as blind beggars for the rest of their

lives. In this story, the prince is tricked twice but is spared by the birds. This lowers the Prince's status and he seems less heroic, which can raise Cinderella's status as a strong willpowered individual. (Karasek, Barbara and Hallett, Martin, *Folk & Fairy Tales*. Ormskirk, Lancashire: Broad View Press, 2002.)

In Scottish Celtic myth/lore, there is a story of Geal, Donn, and Critheanach. The Stepsisters' Celtic equivalents are Geal and Donn, and Cinderella is Critheanach.