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ENGL 362

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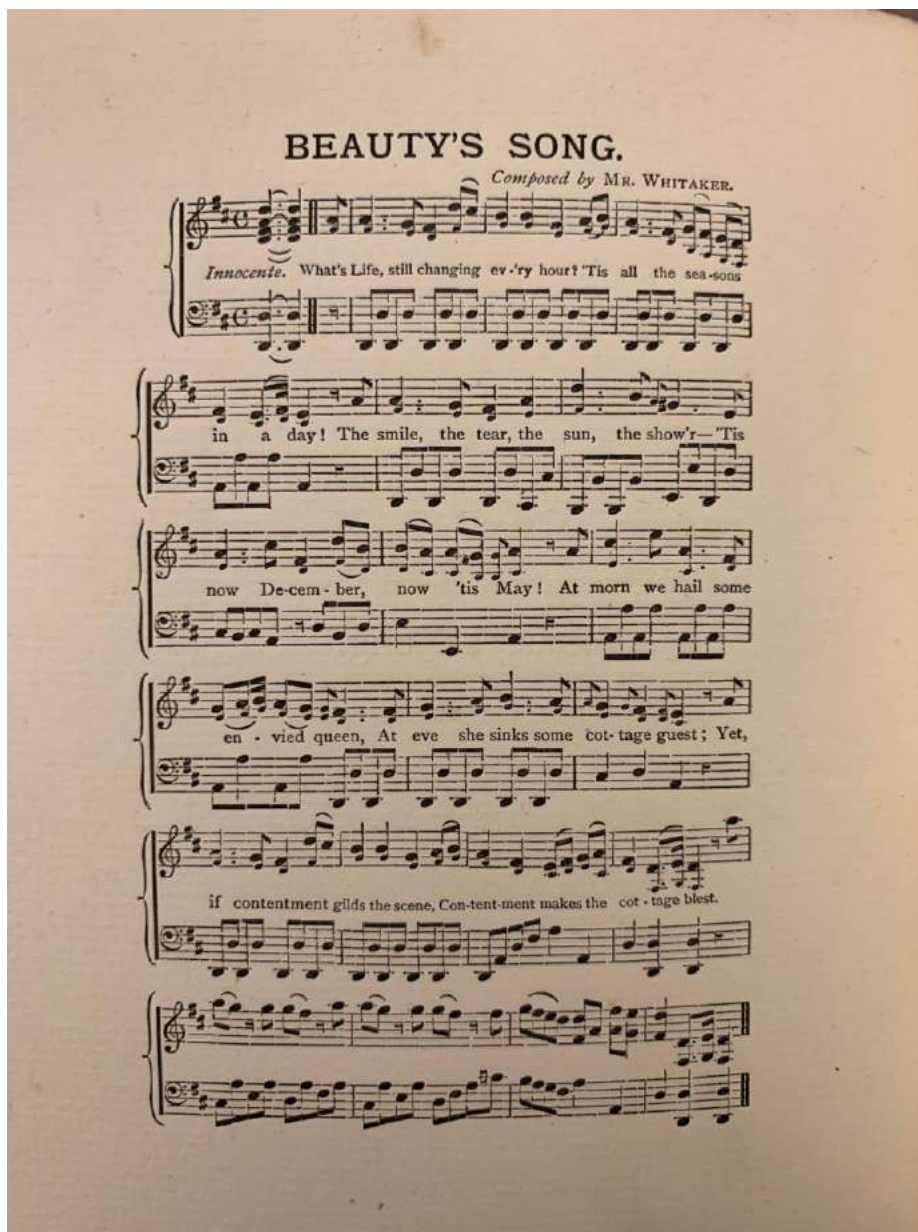
### RBSC Five Fairy Tales Assignment

For this assignment, I decided to rediscover some of the fairy tales I remember from my childhood. I was interested in reconciling the memory I have of specific tales and the way they appear to me now, with a focus on how they are shaped by illustrators in some of their earliest iterations. I have chosen four tales according to this criterion—the one exception to this running theme is the tale of Princess Belle-Etoile.

#### 1. CHARLES LAMB, *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*

Belle was undeniably my favourite Disney princess growing up. I admired her for her compassion, intellect and familial sacrifice, and in turn, have grown to recognize and love the tale that granted her this agency (as opposed to other Disney princesses who simply experience their respective narratives). With my predisposed fondness of the tale, this edition of *Beauty and the Beast* became an even more obvious choice for several reasons. First, the tale is written in rhyming verse, which infuses the tale with a liveliness and sing-song quality. Moreover, its likeness to song is complemented with two full pages of sheet music for “Beauty’s Song”. As a classically trained pianist and lifelong music lover, this definitely pulled on my heartstrings. Finally, I was intrigued by the beautiful, Renaissance-style illustrations by the anonymous artist. This is most noticeable in Beauty’s silhouette—which is drawn in the Renaissance era’s characteristically soft, yet full and curvy way—but also in the realistic proportions of the other

characters' bodies and faces as well. Indeed, this juxtaposition between the attempt to portray the human realistically and the mythical nature of the story makes this edition especially unique.



Lamb, Charles. *The Beauty and the Beast*. Composed by John Whitaker. London, Field & Tuer, 1887, n.p.

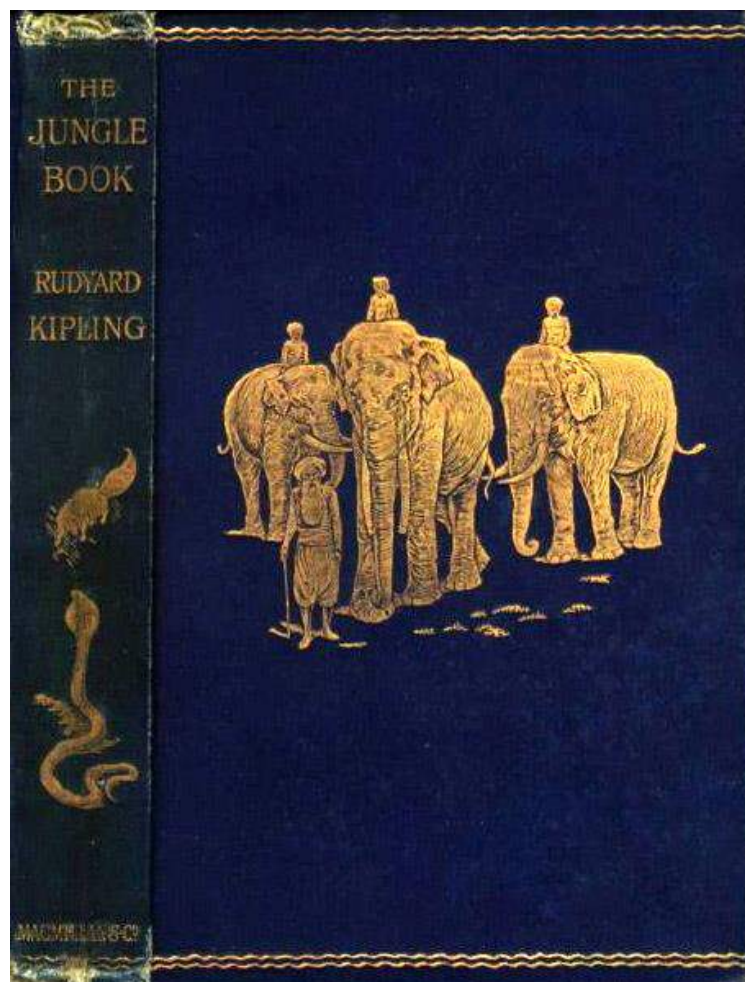


Lamb, Charles. *The Beauty and the Beast*. Illustrated by Anonymous. London, Field & Tuer, 1887, n.p.

## 2. RUDYARD KIPLING, *THE JUNGLE BOOK*

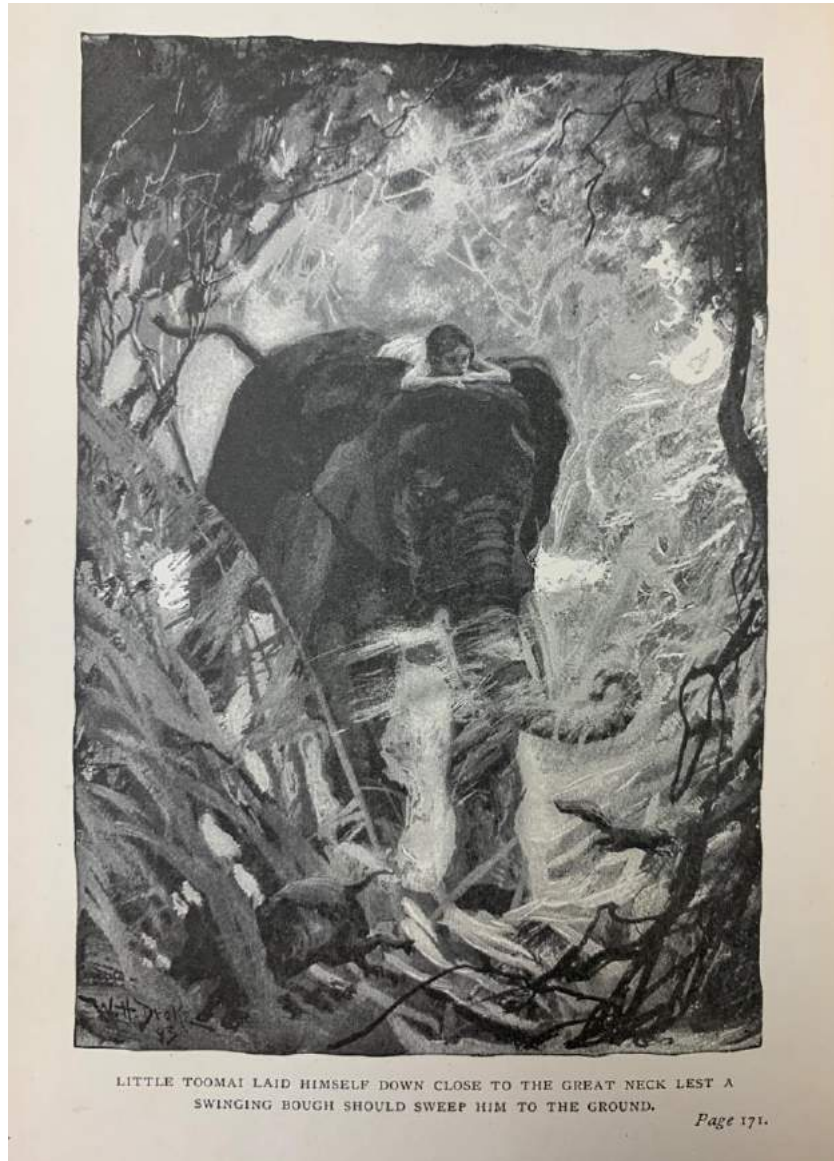
*The Jungle Book* is another story I often heard as a child, filtered once again through Disney's adaptation. Unlike *Beauty and the Beast*, there were many differences between the one by Rudyard Kipling and the one I grew up with, the most notable being that *The Jungle Book* is not one tale, but a collection of them. Nevertheless, the aesthetics of this book—the blue cloth

binding with golden gilt edges and the embossed elephants on the cover—made it an obvious choice. Moreover, because one of the three illustrators of this book was also a renowned painter and the medium of painting inherently permits a greater manipulation of shadow and light, animals and environments look almost photorealistic. Indeed, in this particular illustration from the tale “Toomai of the Elephants,” Drake effectively mimics the way light filters through the canopy, evoking a sense of wilderness and mystery. The use of multiple mediums presents a refreshing diversity that I have never seen in fairy tale books before.



Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book*. London, Macmillan and Co., 1894. Cover.



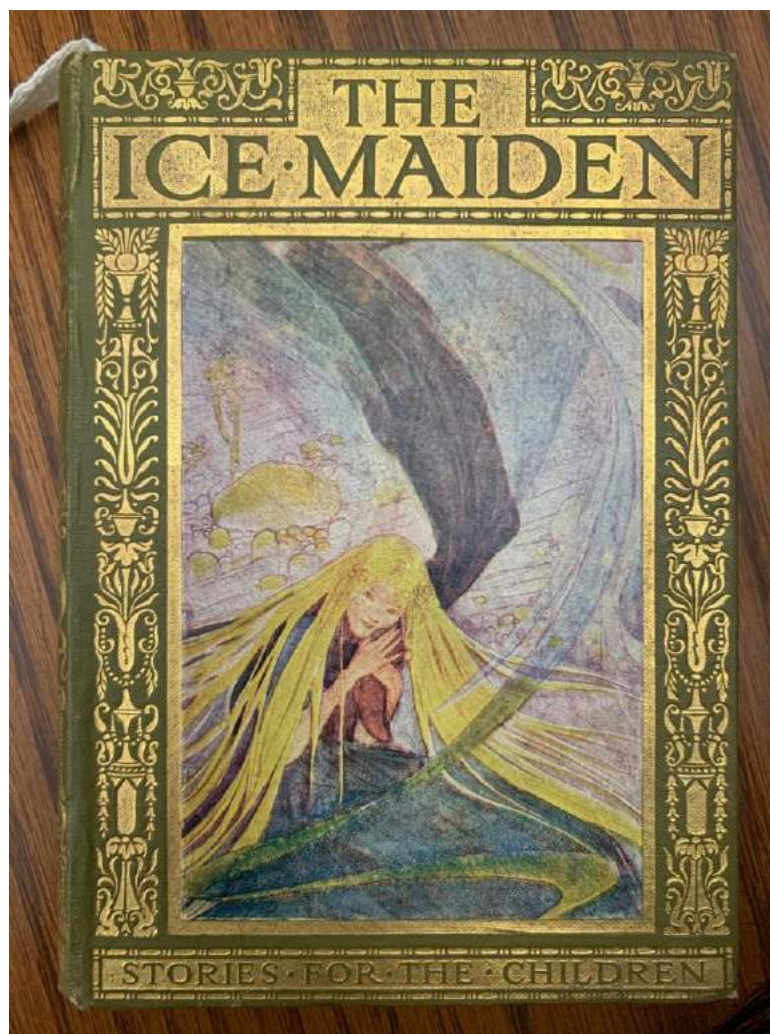


Kipling, Rudyard. *The Jungle Book*. Illustrated by W.H. Drake. London, Macmillan and Co., 1894, p. 171.

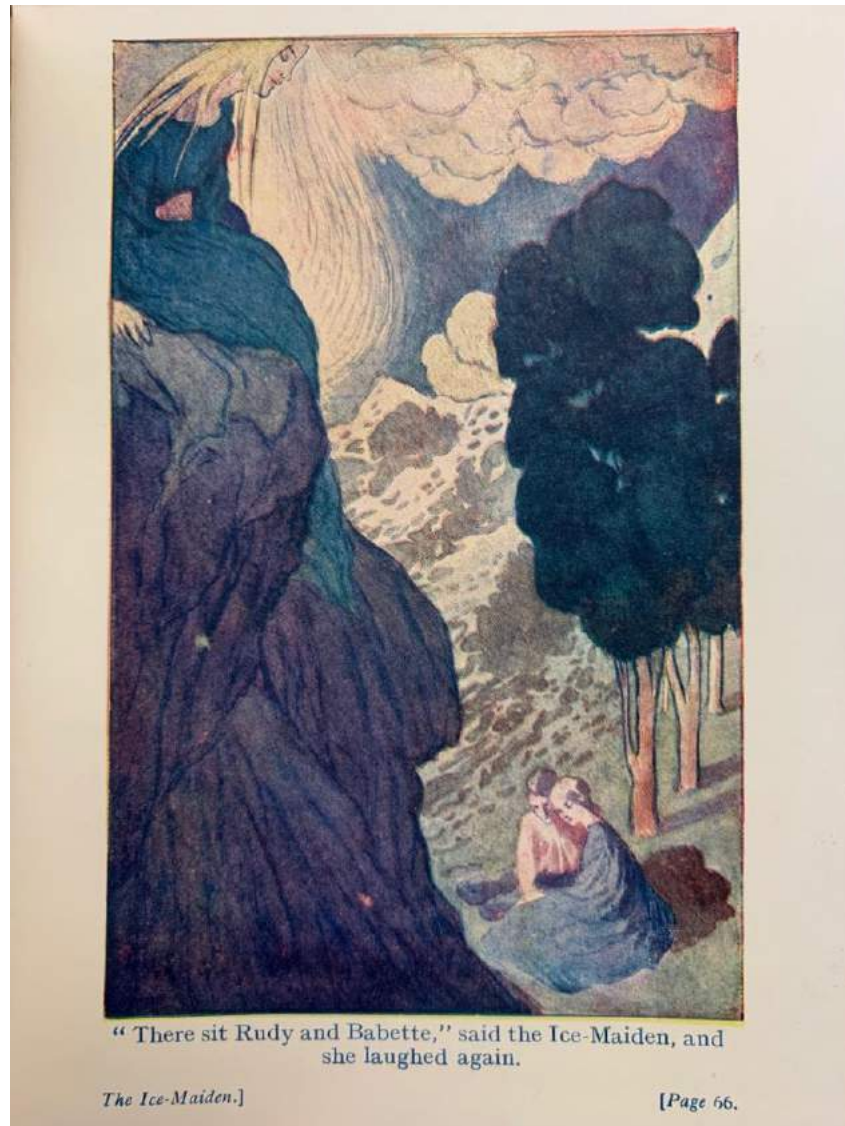
### 3. HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN, *ICE MAIDEN*

As a child, the tale of the Ice Maiden frightened me for obvious reasons—even today, I am unsettled by the bleakness of this story and its personification of death as a lingering figure waiting to claim its next victim. This is why I was drawn to the illustrations by Susan B. Pearse in this particular edition: Pearse depicts the Ice Maiden in an almost angelic light. In the illustration in which the Ice Maiden overlooks Rudy and Babette, for instance, as sunlight shines

through her long white-blond hair, each strand resembles a radiating ray of light. Despite the tragic and cruel fate she is about to inflict on the young lovers, the Ice Maiden appears sweet, and with the added detail of her hand on her stomach, maternal. Similarly, the cover depicts the Ice Maiden seemingly mid-caress; yet, the full-sized illustration inside the book reveals that the object she is clutching is Rudy's boot, and she is about to drown him. This dissonance poses questions related to deception, illusion and death—in conjunction with an exquisitely embellished cover, I knew I had to include *Ice Maiden* as one of my five books.



Andersen, Hans Christian. *Ice Maiden*. Illustrated by Susan Beatrice Pearse. London, Ward, Lock & Co., 1900. Cover.



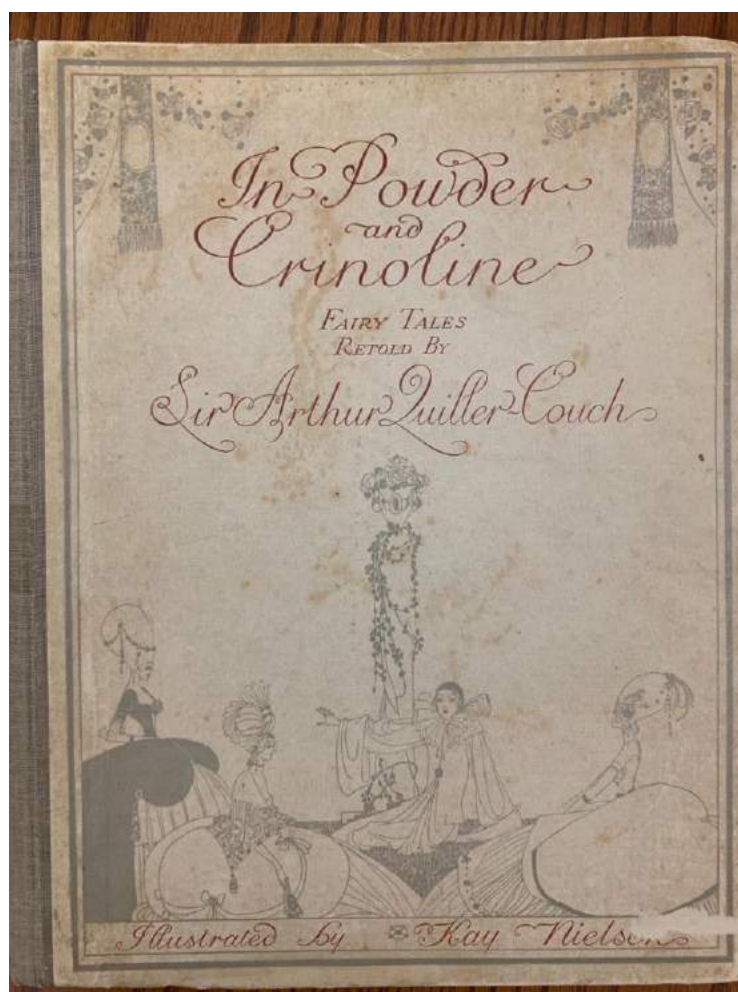
Andersen, Hans Christian. *Ice Maiden*. Illustrated by Susan Beatrice Pearse. London, Ward, Lock & Co., 1900, p. 66.

#### 4. ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH, *IN POWDER AND CRINOLINE*

"The Twelve Dancing Princesses" has long been one of my favourite tales, due to its playful portrayal of sisterly solidarity and teenager-esque rebellion. I made a great effort to avoid choosing a book presented to us during class, but the illustrations by Kay Nielsen were truly too alluring to pass up. In one illustration from "The Twelve Dancing Princesses," for instance, Nielsen's depiction of the princesses with disproportionately long legs, and trees with trunks



even impossibly longer, gives the impression that these tales are unfolding in an entirely different world. Yet, the details—like the subtle hunch in the princesses’ shoulders—convey a sense of tension and urgency. Indeed, Nielsen’s illustrations are whimsical enough to build up the imaginary worlds of these tales yet sophisticated enough to communicate subtle emotion. The title of this book is also another aspect I love. “In Powder and Crinoline” cleverly captures the essence of this entire collection: the pages are ornately adorned with the faint outline of flowery drapes and bouquets, enhancing the pomp of the book itself.



Quiller-Couch, Arthur, *In Powder and Crinoline*. Illustrated by Kay Nielsen. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1913. Cover.





Quiller-Couch, Arthur, *In Powder and Crinoline*. Illustrated by Kay Nielsen. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1913, n.p.

##### 5. WALTER CRANE, *PRINCESS BELLE-ÉTOILE*

As mentioned, this tale is the only of my five that I had never heard; yet, it has quickly become one of my all-time favourites. Like my other selections, *Princess Belle-Etoile* is absolutely stunning: Crane uses vivid colours and thick, bold strokes, which work to create eye-catching, full-page illustrations. Beyond the aesthetics of the book, however, I was also compelled by the tale's rejection of conventional gender roles. It is Princess Belle-Etoile who successfully completes a chivalric quest to rescue Prince Cheri, Prince Petit-Soleil, and Prince

Heureux, among three hundred other men who had attempted to capture the little green bird. By cross-dressing as a knight and resolving the secret of their true ancestry, Belle-Etoile both literally and figuratively takes on the role of the hero. Through the lens of this feminist reading, Crane's illustrations are even more intriguing because the characters are often depicted in androgynously. In the first illustration of the four children in a cradle, for instance, Belle-Etoile's angelic face is indiscernible from that of her cousin and brothers. It is only from her longer hair that readers can tell the girl and boys apart. Similarly, Crane's illustration of Belle-Etoile rescuing Prince Cheri is also quite gender-ambiguous, with no clear masculine or feminine facial structure.



Crane, Walter, *Princess Belle-Etoile*. Illustrated by Walter Crane. London, Routledge, 1874, facing p. 1.





Crane, Walter, *Princess Belle-Etoile*. Illustrated by Walter Crane. London, Routledge, 1874, facing p. 16.

As enthralling these fairy tales were when I first heard them as orally-reproduced bedtime stories, this assignment has demonstrated that physical editions are invaluable. Indeed, the aesthetic components of a book can reinforce, refute, or complicate certain readings of a tale, and subsequently prove that children's tales are not just for children.

Word count: 1050

## Works Cited

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