

# Scientists Agree Fairy Tales are Over 4,000 Years Old

## VOCABULARY WORDS

1. date back /deɪt bæk/ (phrasal) to have existed for a particular length of time or since a particular time  
Example: This tradition dates back to medieval times.
2. evolution /ˌiː.vəˈluːʃən/ (noun) the way in which living things change and develop over millions of years  
Example: Are you familiar with Darwin's theory of evolution?
3. remarkable /rɪˈmɑːr.kə.bəl/ (adjective) unusual or special and therefore surprising and worth mentioning  
Example: Nelson Mandela was a truly remarkable man.
4. extinct /ɪkˈstɪŋkt/ (adjective) not now existing  
Example: There is concern that the giant panda will soon become extinct.
5. substantial /səbˈstæn.ʃəl/ large in size, value, or importance  
Example: The findings show a substantial difference between the opinions of men and women.



The 19th-century fairy tale collector Wilhelm Grimm said fairy tales dated back thousands of years. Scientists now support this. They say many popular fairy tales could be over 4,000 years old.

Scientist Jamshid Tehrani said the oldest known fairy tale **dates back** 6,000 years to the Bronze Age. This is a time when humans first started making metal tools. Dr Tehrani studied the **evolution** of early languages. He found strong links between a tale called "The Smith and the Devil" and an ancient language that dates to around 6,000 years ago.

Dr Tehrani analyzed 275 tales for elements of culture that existed before people spoke English. He said well-known tales, like "Beauty and the Beast," are at least 4,000 years old.

Dr Tehrani said: "It's **remarkable** that these stories have survived so long without being written down. They are older than the English language and would have been first told in a language that is now **extinct**." He added that the new findings suggest that: "A **substantial** number of magical tales have existed in Indo-European oral traditions long before they were written down."

## DISCUSSION

1. What fairy tales did you like as a kid?
2. Do you think it's OK that Disney makes movies of fairy tales?
3. What are the similarities between many fairy tales?
4. What do you know about the fairy tale 'Beauty and the Beast'?
5. Who is your favorite fairy tale character and why?