

Tour guide

Fabulous from A to Z

How many ZETTEL [slips of paper] did Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm cover with their notes, and how many books did they write? How far-reaching was their international network of correspondents? Where does the TREPPE [stair] lead us, or the path taken by Little Red Cap? Entries taken from Grimms' German Dictionary will lead you on a journey of discovery through the GRIMM WORLD, where you will find interesting and surprising facts, interactive elements, artistic installations and valuable originals. A presentation which sometimes resembles the fairy tale hedge of thorns and at other times the open pages of a book.

Ä ÄRSCHLEIN [LITTLE ARSE]

Because the Grimms' untraditional approach was to describe the actual use of language, their dictionary included words of the "most casual, crude, unaffected language" – curses and insults, exclamations, and onomatopoeia. In addition to AUTSCH, BUMBS, JANHAGEL and PISSBLUME, the dictionary also lists KRASS, which is ubiquitous in German youth slang today, but was a common expletive even in the Grimms' time. Give us a modern-day "offensive" word, and receive one from the Grimms' dictionary in exchange!



Antoni Miralda,
Banquet Table Tales, 2015,
QUITTE [Quince],
Photography:
N. Frank

B BUCH [BOOK]

Drawing on their collections of material, and enmeshed in their network, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm became extremely prolific authors. They published on a broad spectrum of literary, linguistic, legal, mythological, and historical topics in a variety of formats. Among their publications are quite a few books, including numerous editions of texts in ancient and foreign languages and transcriptions of oral texts, and journal articles and reviews. Because of their research in historical linguistics and literature, the Brothers Grimm are considered the co-founders of German studies.

C CASSEL [CASSEL]

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm spent the longest period of their lives, about 30 years, in Cassel, which is spelled Kassel today. Until they moved to Göttingen to take up their professorships, they lived here with various combinations of their siblings: first together with their sister Lotte, then with their brother, the artist Ludwig Emil Grimm, who later became a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts. Ludwig Emil Grimm recorded the brothers' years in Kassel in illustrated stories, making him a forerunner of the comic-illustrated. As he wrote on his pictures, he mainly drew from life and, like his brothers, no doubt he embellished it here and there.

D DORNENHECKE [HEDGE OF THORNS]

A hundred years had passed and the day had come for everything to reawaken. The hedge of thorns opened and let the prince pass to awaken the Sleeping Beauty. And in the end they married and lived happily ever after. Almost all of the "Children's and household tales" tell of a child's transition from the family to the larger society. In mastering the dangers and challenges along the way, the heroes and heroines grow and practise how to live. Come inside! Come and lose your way with Little Red Cap, look in the magic mirror, take a seat at the table with the seven dwarfs, push the witch in the oven, let the wolf eat you up, and meet the wild man!

E ERZÄHLENHÖREN [HEAR TELL]

The spoken form of a folk tale, the Grimms felt, was a more reliable document than the written form because of its "purity" and immediacy, which they wanted to preserve in the modern age. But among their sources were both written and oral versions of many old tales. In transcribing and adapting the tales, Wilhelm Grimm gave them the characteristic tone of oral narrative which would make them suitable for modern mothers to read aloud to their children. The Grimms' great achievement was to transform the material of folk narrative into "children's and household tales" for the bourgeois audience. Since their publication, the Grimms' fairy tales have been translated into countless languages. Let us tell you one of them!

F FROTEUFEL [DEMON]

The Grimms' dictionary project, originally expected to take seven to ten years, is still unfinished today. FROTEUFEL was the last entry Jacob Grimm completed before his death in 1863. Wilhelm had been working on words that started with the letter D when he died four years earlier. Not until 1971, over a hundred years later, did the published dictionary include words from A to Z and the list of sources cited. But by then the Grimms' entries, and others by later contributors, were outdated, and the editors began working on a revised edition. FROTEUFEL recounts the history of the Grimms' "German dictionary" in fourteen scenes.

G GLÜCK [GOOD FORTUNE]

The adventures of a fairy tale are made meaningful by the fortune that awaits the hero at the end: it may be a marriage that brings with it a new social position, or a whole kingdom; or it may be the good fortune of losing everything and being free of all care. "There is no one under the sun as fortunate as I", says Hans in Luck on returning home to his mother empty-handed. We asked the writer and filmmaker Alexander Kluge about luck, fortune, and happiness.

H HOLZWURZEL [WOODEN ROOT]

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm also called their work "research into roots". In searching for the origins of and the relationships between words, their goal was to reconstruct the ancient roots of the Germanic languages, researching their own linguistic culture in the process. To the Grimms, roots consist mainly of countless bifurcations: "All words seem to me to be the divided, and still dividing, emanations of a miraculous origin." The Chinese artist Ai Weiwei has brought us roots from China.

I ILLUMINIEREN [ILLUMINATE]

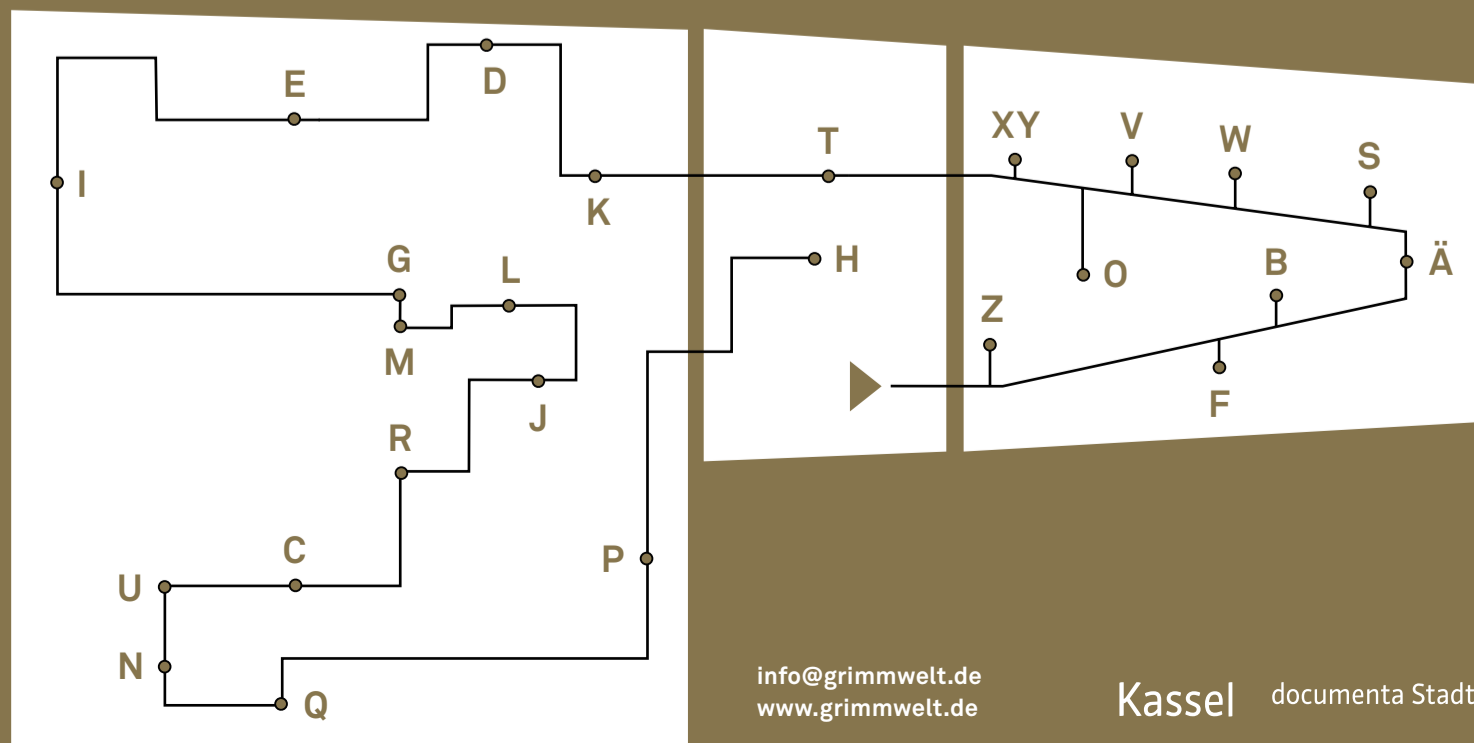
The fairy tale collection by the Brothers Grimm gave rise to a new wealth of images in the early 19th century – images no longer rooted in classical antiquity or Christianity, but in the world of language and fantasy. The Grimms' "Children's and household tales" did not become a best-seller until 1825, when they brought out a limited edition of selected tales with illustrations by their brother Ludwig Emil Grimm. Since then, countless adaptations in various media, especially film, have ensured the continued popularity of the fairy tales to the present day. In the process, the subject matter of the original texts has been changed and mixed together. ILLUMINIEREN displays the wealth of images unleashed by the Grimms' texts.

J JAWORT [WORD OF ASSENT]

In 1850, the comedy "One must marry" was performed in several theatres in the German-speaking countries. Written by Alexander Wilhelmi, the play makes fun of the two "book-worms" and "parchment moths" Jacob and Wilhelm Zorn, who never raise their eyes from their books long enough to think of love. The allusion to the Grimms is obvious: in 1825, at the age of 39, Wilhelm Grimm had married his friend and neighbour of many years, Dorothea Wild, and Jacob remained unmarried all his life. The brothers' relationship was very close, and nothing could part them. They lived together under one roof until Wilhelm's death.

K KLEINWESEN [LITTLE CREATURE]

Contemporaries accused the Brothers Grimm of devoting themselves to imperceptible details, of "revering the insignificant". The fairy tales and sagas, riddles and rhymes they collected were considered "lesser forms" of literature. Moreover, the texts themselves are teeming with countless little creatures: dwarfs, imps, and brownies, lice, beetles, and manikins. They have astounding and capricious powers, and often turn the world upside down. Little creatures inspired not only the Romantic poets: the artist team of Lutz & Guggisberg have also caught the bug.



L *LEBENSLÄUFER [AUTOBIOGRAPHER]*

A personal presentation was a regular part of a scholar's life in the 19th century. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm not only sat for portraits again and again, but they also wrote their biography on several occasions, reaffirming their origins and their history. A life as it is lived, remembered only in fragments, becomes in writing a chronologically ordered biography – in German, a “Lebenslauf”, “life's course”. *LEBENSLÄUFER* presents the life story of the Brothers Grimm as told by themselves.

M *MUTTER [MOTHER]*

The protagonists in the Grimms' fairy tales, like the Grimms themselves in their biography, are always described in relation to their family. Almost all of the most popular tales describe conflicts between parents and children. In their personal writings, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm set their lives in relation to their origins and the influence of their parents. In neither case, however, do we find the staid, secure family of 19th-century ideals, with a strong father, a loving mother, and an innocent child. Instead we see a mixture of family configurations more like the patchwork families of our own time.

Ai Weiwei, *Colored Roots 2009 – 2015*,
HOLZWURZEL [Wooden root], Photography: D. Rothen



N *NACHLASZ [LEGACY]*

From the early 19th century, families fostered a culture of remembrance and preservation and attached great value to the cultivation of personal traditions. Thanks to that culture, many objects from the lives of the Brothers Grimm have been preserved. Even in their lifetimes, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm made notes on objects in their surroundings, creating an archive of their memories. When their household was dissolved after their deaths, most of the objects in it were passed on first to their descendants, and later to archives and museums. Much of what was known about the objects was lost in the process. Some of the Grimms' household possessions are now together again here in Kassel. What they can tell us can be reconstructed through research.

O *ORGANISIERUNG [ORGANISING]*

Science is based on communication, and communication in the Grimms' day took place, when face-to-face meetings were impossible, mainly through letters. The web of people and institutions in which the Grimm brothers moved almost seems like a modern research network. Their fellow scholars in Germany and abroad, numerous assistants and contributors to their collecting projects, and, not least, their political allies made up a network of some 1,400 correspondents. The tremendous productivity of the Brothers Grimm is due not only to their diligence and their genius, but also to their many connections.

P *PHANTASIEGESTALT [FIGURE OF FANTASY]*

The Brothers Grimm explicitly intended their fairy tales for children. They were proponents of the Romantic notion of childhood as a time of purity and innocence, which they mobilized to defend imagination against the rationality of modern life. And their strategy seems to be working even today: almost everyone remembers the Grimms and their fairy tales in one way or another. Almost every child still grows up with fairy tales, they are always mingled in with childish fantasies and fears, making them a little “grimmesque”.

Q *QUITTE [QUINCE]*

In the Grimms' time, people ate what they had – if they had. Most people lived in poverty, and famine befell the country again and again. The fairy tales reflect this fact in countless images of plentiful food, such as an inexhaustible porridge or a witch's tempting house built of cakes. The cooking in the Grimms' household was a typical bourgeois mixture of abundance and economy: Dorothea Grimm's recipes indicate that they ate well and made good use of leftovers. Like Wilhelm and Jacob, she too collected texts, only her collection was used in the kitchen.

R *ROTKAPPE [RED CAP]*

“Little Red Cap” or “Little Red Riding-Hood” is a reminder that life's paths are not straight. Ignoring her parents' warning, the girl with the red hat strays from the path, encounters a wolf, and gets eaten up: a tale too grim for children, one might think. But the story of Rotkäppchen is extremely popular, especially among educators: it has been found in schoolbooks since the 1860s. Even today, parents are fond of warning their children against the dangers of a headstrong, self-determined life. But disobedience may be a way of conquering fear. In any case, the urge to stray from prescribed paths seems to be perennial.

S *SPRACHSCHATZ [WEALTH OF WORDS]*

The “German dictionary”, the Grimms' greatest project, is still the most comprehensive dictionary of the German language today with some 320,000 headwords. In 1838, when Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm began working on it, Germany was still divided into almost forty separate states. In the absence of political unity, their project was to establish the historically evolved treasure of the German language as a cultural monument. The dictionary was published not all at once, but in instalments over a period of more than one hundred years. The “typosopher” Ecke Bonk has created an artistic interpretation of the Grimms' linguistic treasure.

T *TREPPE [STAIR]*

In the Grimms' conception of language, the meaning of a word originates not only from its usage and history: the sound influences its sense, too. The Grimms saw the given name Ute as related to Mutter [mother] and gut [good]. Bär [bear] was associated with Gebären [childbearing]; the Schöffe [a lay judge] was a Schöpfer [creator] in the courtroom, just as a poet is schaffend [productive]. Someone who is arm [poor] needs to be helped: we take them in our arms. The Grimms' lexical research, in keeping with the Romanticism of the times, was often guided by sensual and physical associations. The “trip-trap” of footsteps embodies the meaning of Treppe, the word for stairs.

U *UNDING [MONSTROUS THING]*

Sometimes even in real life, familiar things rise up against us. But in fairy tales, they reveal their full potential for strangeness, nonsense, and unpredictability: a talking sausage; a dust-pan and broom mixed up in a brawl; or just a missing thirteenth plate. Things refuse their usual functions and shake the foundations of domestic and social order. Wayward things are manifestations of an aesthetics of the nonsensical and fantastic, invented in the Romantic period to redeem the imagination.

V *VOLKSMÄRCHEN [FOLK TALES]*

The Brothers Grimm are best known as collectors and editors of fairy tales. Their “Children's and household tales” are one of the most-read books in the world today, and owe their unique success primarily to the popular narrative tone in which they were set down on paper by Wilhelm Grimm. The Grimms collected their fairy tales not only from oral narration, but also compared them with written sources, and they arranged and edited the material heavily. Wilhelm Grimm revised and expanded the tales from each edition to the next. In fact, the Brothers Grimm with their “Children's and household tales” created a new literary genre, the “Grimm genre”.

W *WORTARBEIT [WORK ON WORDS]*

Words are not static. They do not have fixed, unchanging meanings. Language changes constantly in every age and place, even today. The Grimms were not interested in establishing abstract definitions for individual words, but in raising people's awareness of the continuing changes and variations that they undergo in use. A “natural history of words”, as they called their dictionary, would draw attention not just to a word in isolation, but more to its associations and connections with other words. The Grimms' lexicographic work highlights the endlessly productive combinatorics of language.

XY *XY (UNGELÖST) [X VS. Y]*

Who do the fairy tales belong to? The people, or the Grimms? This question was debated in court in the 1860s. In a collection of fairy tales offered by the Leipzig publisher Otto Wigand in collaboration with the educator Ferdinand Schmidt, 64 tales were taken from the Grimms' “Children's and household tales”; and four of them copied word for word. The publisher felt he was within his rights: after all, if the fairy tales were collected from the people – the Grimms themselves had said so – then they must be in the public domain. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm sued, saying Wigand's book violated their copyright, and ultimately won. Around 1860, the literary authorship of such collections was a legal grey area, and the copyright issues debated then remain controversial in our digital age.



Interior view
TREPPE
[Stair], 2015,
Photography:
H. Soremski

Z *ZETTEL [SLIP OF PAPER]*

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's works are based on huge collections of source material. Their studies, centered on early literature and historical linguistics, always began with compiling, indexing, and glossing the available sources. These were primarily written texts, but the Grimms also transcribed oral traditions. They wrote the material they collected mainly on loose sheets and slips of paper, or in the margins of books before developing it in new texts for publication. Their unbound papers and notes represent the core of the Grimm brothers' productive energy, and offer an insight into the creation of their work.