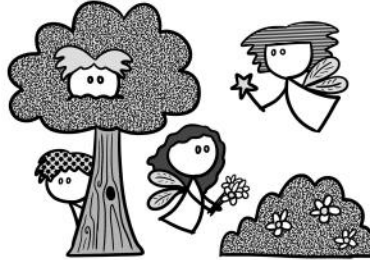


Magical Creatures



Trolls, witches and fairies, amongst others, were thought to roam the land and were documented in 16th-century fairy lore. Fairies, magic, witches or witchcraft are mentioned in a number of Shakespeare's plays, sometimes the cause of mischief and sometimes helpful. The changeling boy that Titania and Oberon are fighting over at the beginning of the play would have reminded audiences of stories about fairies kidnapping babies and replacing them with one of their own.

Puck, who is also sometimes called Robin Goodfellow in the play, also comes from English folklore. Goodfellow was a sprite that was known to be happy to do small bits of work in a household, like sweeping the front doorway for some cream, but he was also accused of stealing, making maids trip over and drop things, or for leading travellers down the wrong path:

Fairy: Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?
(Act II, Scene 1)

Fairy folk and woodland creatures exist in many stories around the world, for example in Germany, you might encounter a Kobold or be helped by a Heinzelmännchen in the household, and Nordic trolls and fairies people Scandinavian woods and islands.



Do you have stories of magical little people in your language too? How would you describe them? What are they known for? What do they look like - can you draw them?