

This dude named Propp published a book called Morphology of Folktales in the 1920s. Propp researched motifs found in Fairy Tales, and assigned functions to each motif. These functions, assembled in order, make up a fairy tale. These functions, when put into a coherent order, always make a feasible fairy tale, regardless of the characters involved. In fact, that is one of the points of these functions- the characters are not important, but the motifs that occur.

Here is an example of an incomplete function (each letter/symbol represents a motif found in fairy tales- don't worry, the list will be provided):

- $\alpha\beta\delta$etc

And so here, we have: α , a situation (once upon a time), β , a family member leaves home, δ , a prohibition is violated, etc. This easily becomes “Once upon a time, there was a boy who ran away from home....”

A α : the situation (once upon a time..)

B β : a family member leaves home

$\Gamma\gamma$: the hero is prohibited from something

$\Delta\delta$: the prohibition is violated

E ϵ : the villain attempts a recon mission

Z ζ : the villain receives information about victim

H η : villain attempts to deceive victim and take something of victim's belongings

$\Theta\theta$: victim submits to deception and unwittingly helps villain

A: villain causes harm or injury to family member

a: family members lacks something or desires something

B: misfortune or lack is made known; hero finds out and goes out on adventure

C: a challenger appears; another seeker decides on some kind of counterattack

^: the hero leaves home

D: hero is tested, attacked, etc, to prepare for the coming of a magical agent or helper

E: hero reactions to actions of a future donor

F: hero acquires use of a magical agent (sword, powder, rock, etc)

G: hero finds the object of search

H: Hero and villain join in direct combat

I: villain is defeated

J: Hero is branded

K initial lack or misfortune is now resolved

L: a false hero presents unfounded claims (I am the hero!)

M: a difficult task is proposed to the hero

N: the task is resolved

o: the hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country

Pr: hero is pursued
Q: The hero is recognized
Rs: rescue of hero from pursuit
T: Hero is given a new appearance (the heroic makeover)
EX: false hero or villain is exposed
U: villain is punished; Knock Out!
v: hero returns
W: hero is married and ascends the throne

Now once you put a function together, don't forget you need some characters and places. Make different categories for things like "Good guys," "bad guys," "places," and "items" (or more if you like, these are just some guidelines). Under each of these categories, place several types of each you would find in a fairy tale. For example, a "good guy" can be a princess, a knight, a prince, a pauper, a beggar, etc. Once you have a few items listed under each category, ta-da! You now have people places and things to drop into your scenario!

So with that, get cracking, and have fun!

(NOTE: The list of functions was taken from a class I took at Pennsic called the Fairy Tale Workshop and was taught by a wonderful Slavic lady from Eathlemarc who's name I currently do not remember. Just wanted to give as much credit as possible where credit is due).