Sophie
Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Sophie…

Neil
And I'm Neil. So, Sophie I watched Snow White and the Huntsman on TV last night.

Sophie
Oh, you mean the modern retelling of the story Snow White? Did you enjoy it, Neil?

Neil
It was OK. But the seven dwarves were no fun. I prefer the original Disney cartoon version.

Sophie
Don't be silly, Neil. Walt Disney didn't invent the story. The movie you watched is a remake, a film that has been made again, but the fairy tale is very old.

Neil
Well, that may be true, but I still prefer the Disney version with funny dwarves. In the new version, even the names of the dwarves are different and, you know, serious looking.

Sophie
But this new version is for young adults – it's a different genre – or style – of film. Names like Sneezy, Dopey, Happy and Grumpy are too childish.

Neil
Hmm. What's wrong with childish?

Sophie
It's right up your street, isn't it Neil?

Neil
Too right.
Sophie
Anyway, fairy tales are the subject of today's show, and I have a question for you: which movie star played the role of the evil fairy in Maleficent, a 2014 film based on the fairy tale Sleeping Beauty? Was it…
a) Cate Blanchett?
b) Angelina Jolie?
Or c) Meryl Streep?

Neil
Well, I'll go for a) Cate Blanchett. She often plays evil characters. I can't forget her in the 2008 movie Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull.

Sophie
Well, we'll find out if you chose the right movie star later on in the programme. But to return to the idea of childish fairy stories, let's listen to Diane Purkiss, a children's author, talking about how originally fairy tales were intended for an adult audience.

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Diane Purkiss, children's author
Interestingly there has been a bit of a move towards seeing fairy tales as an adult, or at any rate a young adult – a dark sort of genre. And that's natural because actually in the past fairy tales were told by adults to adults in William Shakespeare's time. It's only in the Victorian era that they become moral children's tales and it looks like we're going back to the inception of fairy stories now with a more adult take on them.

Neil
Diane Purkiss. So these Hollywood remakes aimed at the teen market are actually returning fairy tales to an adult audience.

Sophie
That's right, Neil. And dark here means scary or frightening. The Victorians **toned down** this dark content – or made it less forceful. They also introduced a **moral** – or message about what's right and wrong – to the tales.

Neil
And **inception** means the beginning. So fairy tales began as a dark genre.

Sophie
Can you give us some examples of dark stories written by the brothers Grimm, Neil?

Neil
Well… I have a list here. Let's see. In The Frog Prince the princess doesn't kiss the frog, she throws it… she throws it against the wall! Hmm, yes.
Sophie
Hmm. I prefer the kiss version.

Neil
And in Little Red Riding Hood don't believe that version where the wolf shuts granny in a cupboard. In the real version he gobbles her up and then eats Red Riding Hood for dessert.

Sophie
Charming. And to **gobble something up** means to eat it very fast. OK, that's enough. Let's move on. Did you know that some of the stories – like Beauty and the Beast, Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and Snow White go back much further than the earliest written stories – even the ones in Latin and Greek?

Neil
No, I didn't. To be honest, Sophie, I thought Walt Disney had written them.

Sophie
Oh Neil… well research suggests that some fairy tales date back to well before the brothers Grimm and even Shakespeare. Let's hear more from Dr Jamie Tehrani, anthropologist at Durham University in the UK.

**INSERT**
Dr Jamie Tehrani, anthropologist at Durham University
Dr J Tehrani: So these fairy tales that we've looked at – we've been able to trace back, really, thousands of years – probably sort of 4-6,000 years is the origin of many famous European folk tales, stories such as Beauty and the Beast.
BBC Reporter: What, 6,000 years?!
Dr J Tehrani: Yep, going right back to the Bronze Age.
BBC Reporter: Good heavens!
Dr J Tehrani: We've been able to trace the transmission across generations of these stories much further back than is generally recognized.

Neil
But Sophie – if there's no written evidence of the stories from 6,000 years ago how does Dr Tehrani, who we've just heard from, know people were telling them?

Sophie
Well, dating languages isn't something I'm familiar with – I think it's a bit like looking at a few dinosaur bones and trying to reconstruct what dinosaurs looked like. But here you're trying to reconstruct stories without any actual bits. It must have been hard work for the researchers.

Neil
Indeed. Well, I think it's time to hear the quiz question again, Sophie.
Sophie
OK, I asked: Which movie star played the role of the evil fairy in Maleficent, a film based on the fairy tale Sleeping Beauty? Was it… a) Cate Blanchett? b) Angelina Jolie? Or c) Meryl Streep?

Neil
I said Cate Blanchett.

Sophie
And you were wrong. Angelina Jolie played the main character in the film Maleficent. Cate Blanchett played the elf queen Galadriel in Lord of the Rings. And Meryl Streep played a blue-haired witch in the 2014 film Into the Woods.

Neil
Now, can we hear those words again?

Sophie
OK!
remake
genre
dark
toned down
moral
inception
gobble up

Neil
Well, that's the end of today's spellbinding 6 Minute English. Don't forget to join us again soon!

Both
Bye.
Vocabulary

remake
a film that has been made again

genre
style or category (of a film, novel etc)

dark
scary or frightening

toned down
made less forceful

moral
message about what's right and wrong

inception
beginning

gobble up
eat something very quickly