“This complete, unexpurgated, and insightfully annotated English-language edition of the Grimms’ tales keeps readers anchored in the timeless world of the fairy tale. It will be treasured by all lovers of stories. Irresistible and unputdownable.”
—Shelley Frisch, translator of Kafka: The Years of Insight

“This English translation of the landmark first edition of Grimms’ folk and fairy tales makes available a very important text to everyone with an interest in these stories.”
—Donald Haase, Wayne State University

“Jack Zipes’ translations of the 156 tales in this significant edition are truly exquisite.”
—Ulrich C. Knoepflmacher, author of Ventures into Childland: Victorians, Fairy Tales, and Femininity

When Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published their Children’s and Household Tales in 1812, followed by a second companion volume in 1815, they had no idea that such stories as “Rapunzel,” “Hansel and Gretel,” and “Cinderella” would become the most celebrated in the world. Yet few people today are familiar with the majority of tales from the two volumes, for in the next four decades the Grimms would publish six other editions, each extensively revised in content and style. For the very first time, The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm makes available in English all 156 stories from the 1812 and 1815 editions. These narrative gems, newly translated and brought together in one beautiful book—are accompanied by sumptuous new illustrations from award-winning artist Andrea Dezsö.

From “The Frog King” to “The Golden Key,” wondrous worlds unfold—heroes and heroines are rewarded, weaker animals triumph over the strong, and simple bumpkins prove themselves not so simple after all. Esteemed fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes offers accessible translations that retain the spare description and engaging storytelling style of the originals. Indeed, this is what makes the tales from the 1812 and 1815 editions unique—they reflect diverse voices, rooted in oral traditions, that are absent from the Grimms’ later, more embellished collections of tales. Zipes’s introduction gives important historical context, and the book includes the Grimms’ prefaces and notes.

A delight to read, The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm presents these peerless stories to a whole new generation of readers.

Jack Zipes is the translator of The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm (Bantam), the editor of The Great Fairy Tale Tradition (Norton), and the author of Grimm Legacies (Princeton), among many other books. He is professor emeritus of German and comparative literature at the University of Minnesota.
An interview with Jack Zipes

What sets this edition of tales apart from all the other ones that have been published? What makes it special?

The first edition is special and significant because one can still hear and ascertain the different voices of the people who provided the tales to the Grimms. These voices were effaced in later editions. If one studies the seven editions published by the Grimms, one can trace the continual editing of Wilhelm Grimm, who transformed the tales into aesthetically pleasing literary works. He also deleted many tales that appeared to be French stories, and he added Christian references, folk proverbs, ornate description, and moralistic comments. The tales in the first edition are curt, blunt, raw, and dazzling in their naivete, that is, in their frank approach to the fantastic and absurd situations in people’s lives. In fact, many of the tales are more kafkaesque than Kafka’s tales.

Of the less well-known stories in the collection, which did you find uniquely fascinating?

It is difficult to respond to this question because there are so many lesser-known stories that I appreciate, even in the final seventh edition. That being said, here are some of the tales that I find uniquely fascinating because of their subversive artistic and social aspects: “Riffraff,” “Nasty Flax Spinning,” “Herr Fix-It-Up,” “How Children Played at Slaughtering,” “The Sparrow and his Four Children,” “The Tablecloth, the Knapsack, the Cannon Hat, and the Horn,” “Herr Korbes,” and “Okerlo.”

Could you speak a bit about the translation process—how did you decide on a certain vernacular or tone?

Many of the tales were published in dialect, and there were also anachronistic sayings and expressions that were particular to the period and region in which the tales were collected. Some translators have tried to contrive a special style and to use quaint English idioms and expressions to make it appear that the tales are from some other time and country. The result, I believe, is artificiality. It is next to impossible to translate these tales in a literal and faithful manner that might capture their “authenticity,” something that the Grimms themselves endeavored to do. Therefore, I chose a contemporary American colloquial style that I believe would make the tales accessible and convey their unusual qualities. Translation involves interpretation and mediation, and I hope to have shaped the tales and to have captured their spirit.