The Princess and the Pea

Once upon a time there was a prince, who wanted to marry a princess, but she had to be a real princess.

That’s why he travelled all around the world to find one, but everywhere there was something wrong.

There were plenty of princesses, but he couldn’t quite work out if they were real princesses; there was always something that wasn’t quite right.

Eventually he came home again, but he was so sad because he so much wanted to have a real princess.

One evening the weather became dreadful; there was thunder and lightning; the rain poured down; it was quite frightening! Then, there was a knock at the town gate, and the old king went out to open it.

It was a princess who stood outside, but my goodness, what a sight she was with the rain and the bad weather! Water was running down her hair and clothes, and it was running into the tips of her shoes and out of the heels – and she said she was a real princess.

“Well, we shall soon find out,” thought the old queen, but she didn’t say anything. Went into the bedroom, took off all the duvets and placed a pea on the bottom of the bed. Then she took twenty mattresses and laid them on top of the pea, and then placed another twenty feather duvets on top of the mattresses.

The princess had to spend the night there. In the morning they asked her how she had slept.

“Oh, badly, terribly” said the princess. “I barely closed my eyes the whole night. Goodness knows what there must have been in the bed. I have been lying on something so hard that I am simply black and blue all over my body. It is so dreadful!”

Then they could see that she was a real princess, because through twenty mattresses and through twenty feather duvets she had felt the pea. Nobody could be so sensitive without being a real princess.

The prince then made her his wife, because now he knew that he had found a real princess.

And the pea was placed in the art-museum, where it is still to be seen – unless someone has taken it.

Well, that was a true story.
The Princess and the Pea

The moral of the story: Since this story was written by Hans Christian Andersen, we can only guess the meaning of it, but perhaps the story is all about exaggeration and the fun that comes from its use.

The Princess and the Pea

The fairytale *The Princess and the Pea* is about a prince that travels all over the world to find his beloved.

And just like the prince in this tale, Andersen also travelled the world to find inspiration and happiness.

In October 1862, captivated by the beauty of Málaga, Andersen wrote:

“In no other Spanish city have I felt as happy and as comfortable as in Málaga – the city life, the nature, the sea view – I couldn’t be without any of it and I found it so rich; and on top of all this, which is even more important to me – the people of Málaga are so lovable.”

Q&A fun

The fairytale *The Princess and the Pea* is the shortest fairytale Hans Christian Andersen ever wrote.

It is also one of his first fairytales and was in the first pamphlet he released in 1835.

**Question 1:** *The Princess and the Pea* is a story about a prince that travels all over the world because…?

A1: The prince wanted to buy apples.
A2: The prince wanted to marry a princess.
A3: The prince liked to travel.

**Question 2:** Was the princess dry or wet when she knocked at the town gate?

A1: The princess’s hair and clothes were dry and fine.
A2: The princess had a nice haircut, lovely clothes and a dog with her.
A3: The princess had water running down her hair and clothes.

**Question 3:** How many mattresses did the princess sleep on?

A1: Ten mattresses.
A2: Twenty mattresses.
A3: Thirty mattresses.
Many years ago there lived an emperor, who was so tremendously fond of beautiful new clothes, that he spent all his money on being dressed up properly.

He wasn’t interested in his soldiers, wasn’t interested in comedy or driving in the forest, unless it gave him the opportunity to show off his new clothes.

He had a dress for every hour of the day, and just as people say of a king that he is in the council having a meeting, here they always said, “The emperor is in the closet.”

In the big city where he lived, so much fun was going on – every day lots of strangers were arriving.

One day two fraudsters arrived. They pretended to be weavers and said that they knew how to weave the most beautiful clothes that you could ever imagine. Not only were the colours and patterns extraordinarily beautiful, but the clothes that were sewed from this material had the peculiarity of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for his position or was hopelessly stupid.

“Such clothes must be wonderful to have,” thought the emperor. “By wearing such clothes, I could find out which men in my empire are unfit for the positions they have been appointed to; I would be able to tell the clever from the stupid! Yes, such clothes must be woven to me at once.” And he gave the two fraudsters lots of money up front, so that they could start their work right away.

They set up two looms, pretended that they were working, but there was nothing at all on the looms. They boldly demanded the finest silk and the purest gold, but they stuffed it into their own pockets, and worked on the empty looms until late night.

“Well, now I wonder how far they have come with my clothes,” thought the emperor, but he felt a bit strange when thinking of the person who was hopelessly stupid or unfit for his position, could not see it. Well, he thought that he didn’t have to be afraid of that, but he preferred to send someone else to be the first to inspect it.

Everyone in the city knew what special powers the clothes had and everyone was keen to see how incompetent or stupid his neighbour was.

“I will send my honest old minister to the weavers,” thought the emperor. “He is the best one to see how the clothes looks like, because he is intelligent and no one is doing his job better than him.”

The good-natured old minister entered the hall where the two fraudsters sat and worked at the empty looms. “My goodness!” thought the old minister and opened his eyes wide, “I can’t see a thing!” But he didn’t say that.
Both of the fraudsters asked him if he could be so kind to step closer, and they asked if the pattern wasn’t beautiful and the colours lovely. Then they pointed at the empty looms, and the poor old minister continued opening his eyes wide – but he couldn’t see a thing, because there was nothing. “Oh, good Lord,” he thought, “should I be stupid? That I never thought about myself, and nobody must know about it! Am I not competent? No, it is not an option for me to say that I can’t see the clothes.”

“Well, you are not saying anything about it,” said the one that weaved. “Oh, it is pretty, very lovely,” said the old minister and looked through his glasses. “The pattern and the colours. Yes, I shall tell the emperor that it really pleases me.”

“Well, we are happy to hear that,” said both the weavers, and then they mentioned the name of the colours, and the special pattern. The old minister listened carefully so as to be able to repeat it when he came back to the emperor. And that was what he did.

The fraudsters demanded more money, more silk and gold – they needed it for their weaving. They stuffed everything into their own pockets. Not a thread was put on the loom, but they kept going on as before – to weave at the empty loom.

Soon after, the emperor sent another honest official to see how the weaving was going, and if the clothes would soon be finished. The same thing happened to him as to the minister – he looked and looked but as nothing was there but the empty looms, he could not see a thing. “Well, isn't it a beautiful piece of work?” said the two fraudsters and showed and explained the beautiful pattern that wasn’t there at all.

“I'm not stupid,” thought the man. “So it is my good position I am not fit for? That is quite funny. But one should not be affected by it.” And then he praised the clothing that he could not see and assured them how happy he was with the beautiful colours and lovely pattern. “Yes, it is definitely the best,” he told the emperor.

Everyone in town was talking about the magnificent clothing. Then the emperor wanted to see it for himself, while it was still on the loom.

With a great entourage of carefully selected men, among them the two old honest officials, who had been there before, he went over to the two smart fraudsters, who were now weaving with all their might, but without yarn or thread.

“Yes, isn’t it magnificent?” said both of the honest officials. “Would Your Majesty please take a look? What a pattern? What colours?” And then they pointed at the empty loom, because they thought that the others could probably see the clothing.

“What on earth!” the emperor thought, “I don’t see a thing! This is terrible! Am I stupid? Am I unfit to be the emperor? This is the most horrible thing that could happen to me!”
“Oh, it is very beautiful,” said the emperor, “it has my greatest approval,” and he nodded contentedly and looked at the empty loom with great respect – he didn’t want to say that he couldn’t see a thing.

The entire entourage he had with him, looked and looked, but they didn’t get more out of it than all the others, yet, they all said like the emperor, “Oh, it is very beautiful.” and they advised him to wear these splendid new clothes for the first time during the big parade that was soon to happen. “It is magnificent; pretty; excellent.” they said person to person, and they were all so incredibly pleased with it. The emperor gave each of the fraudsters a Knight’s Cross to hang from his button hole, and the title of Imperial Weaver.

The fraudsters stayed up the whole night, with more than sixteen candles burning, before that morning when the procession was to take place - people could see that they were busy finishing the emperor’s new clothes. They pretended to take the clothes off the loom, they cut the air with big scissors, they sewed with a needle without thread, and when they had finished, they said, “Look, now the clothes are done.”

The emperor, together with his finest knights-awarded men, went over to see it himself, and when they entered the room, both fraudsters held one arm up as if they were holding something, and said, “Look, here is the trousers, here is the robe, here is the mantle,” and so they continued. “It is as light as spider web. You would think you had nothing on your body, but that’s exactly the beauty of it.” “Yes,” said all the honourable men, but they couldn’t see a thing, because there was nothing to see.

“No, will Your Imperial Majesty most graciously, please take off your clothes?” said the fraudsters. “Then we shall dress you with the new ones, over there, in front of the big mirror.”

The emperor took off all his clothes, and the fraudsters behaved as if they were handing him each piece of the new that supposed to have been sewn, and they put their arms around his waist, as if attaching something – it was his long train clothing – and the emperor turned and twisted in front of the mirror. “Goodness, how well it suits. How lovely it fits.” they all said. “What a pattern. What colours. It must be worth a fortune.”

“Outside they are waiting with the canopy that will be raised above His Majesty for the procession,” said the Chief Master of Ceremonies.

“Yes, I am done,” said the emperor. “Doesn’t it fit well?” And then he turned once more in front of the mirror, just to make it look that he was examining his best suit properly.

The chamberlains, who were to carry the long train of pure silk, were moving their hands above the floor as if they were picking up the silk train, but they were just holding on to air, because they dared not let anyone notice that they could not see anything.
And then the emperor walked in the procession under the lovely canopy, and all the people in the streets and in the windows said, “Goodness, how the emperor’s new clothes are unique. What a lovely silk train he has on his coat. How well it fits.” Nobody dared to let anyone notice that they could not see anything, because that would have meant that you were not fit for your position or hopelessly stupid.

None of the other clothes in the emperor’s closet had ever been such a success.

“But he hasn’t got anything on!” said a little child.

“Good Lord, listen to the voice of the innocent,” said the father, and people whispered to one another, what the child had said, “He hasn’t got anything on, a little child says, he hasn’t got anything on!” “He hasn’t got anything on!” shouted all the people together.

And the emperor felt most uncomfortable, for it seemed to him, that the people were right. But he thought to himself, “I must carry on until the end of the procession.” And he walked even prouder than before, and the chamberlains walked along carrying the long train clothing – that wasn’t there at all.

Story written by Hans Christian Andersen (1837)  
Click here to listen to a free MP3 taster

Translated from the original Danish version by Benjamin Kurzweil in 2009. Unabridged version. Probably the best and most accurate English translation in the world of “The Emperor’s New Clothes”.

In December 2013 Benjamin Kurzweil recorded The Emperor’s New Clothes with funny cartoon-style music bed.

(Please note that this version is from December 2013 and is a slightly amended version of the 2009 translation, in order to adapt it better for the audio version that was recorded in December 2013.)

Q&A fun

The fairytale The Emperor’s New Clothes is the funniest tale Hans Christian Andersen ever wrote. The second funniest is “It is Quite True” (the feather that became five dead hens).

The Emperor’s New Clothes was published 7th April 1837, when Andersen was only 32 and full of fun.

Question 1: The Emperor’s New Clothes is a story about an emperor that is very fond of new clothes. How often was the emperor wearing a new dress during the day?

A1: Three times a day.
A2: Five times a day.
A3: Every hour of the day.

Question 2: How many fraudsters arrived?

A1: One.
A2: Two.
A3: Three.
Question 3: The fraudsters had a selling point about the clothes they made. What was the special feature about the clothes?

A1: The emperor could make a yearly wish and become very rich.
A2: The emperor could tell the clever from the stupid.
A3: The emperor would receive the most beautiful clothes in the world.

Question 4: What is it the fraudsters have in common with politicians?

A1: Fraudsters and politicians are both telling stories to reach their goals.
A2: Fraudsters are stealing for their own benefit, whereas politicians work for the people.
A3: Fraudsters and politicians are selling hope they cannot fulfil.

Question 5: Do you think the ministers and civil servants at Westminster are afraid of admitting they don’t understand the Prime Minister, like in this tale?

A1: No, *The Emperor’s New Clothes* is just pure fantasy and has no connection to real life.
A2: Yes, it happens every day at Westminster!
A3: No, politicians are not that bad – the newspapers like to exaggerate.

Question 6: In the original medieval Spanish tale, who is then revealing that the King of Castalia is riding completely naked through the capital city?

A1: An Indian.
A2: A black African.

Question 7: In Hans Christian Andersen’s remake of the medieval Spanish tale, who is revealing that the emperor is walking naked through the city?

A2: A professor.
A3: A young child.

**Introduction to The Emperor’s New Clothes**

The original medieval Spanish tale is about a king and three fraudsters that call themselves the best weavers and tailors in the world, and now they want to sew clothes to the King of Castalia, in order to make good money.

The clothes are so subtle and of such a fantastic quality that only the person, who is son of his presumed father, can see it, whereas anyone that says to be his father’s son, but is not, will not be able to see the clothes. All the courts men and ministers, who fear for not being their father’s son, therefore praise the invisible clothes, but at the end the fraud is revealed.

It is not revealed by a nice little, sharp boy – as described in Andersen’s tale - but by a black African, who rubs his eyes and thereafter walks directly to the king’s procession. In front of the king – who is sitting on a horse – the black African says boldly, “Your Majesty, I have never had the honour to know my father, and actually I can’t be bothered to know who he is. That is why I dare telling you – right up in your face – that you are riding completely naked through the capital city!”
Don Juan Manuel, Prince of Villena (1282 – 1348) was a Spanish prince often engaged in wars against the Moors; the Moors were Muslims from the Maghreb countries in North Africa and Andalusia in Spain.

But it was not the wars he became known for – he became known after his death for his collection of Spanish tales, *El Conde Lucanor*.

*Tales of Count Lucanor* (1328 – 1335) is a collection of 50 short stories based on Greek Aesop, Indian Panchatantra, Persian tales and tales from Jewish and Arabic literature. Hans Christian Andersen’s tale *The Emperor’s New Clothes* is a remake of tale 7 in *Tales of Count Lucanor* that has the title "Of that which happened to a King and three Impostors".

When comparing Prince Don Juan Manuel’s version with Andersen’s version, it becomes clear that Andersen’s remake has a much stronger narrative style and much stronger humour – superior to Prince Don Juan Manuel’s version. Although Andersen took virtually the whole plot from Prince Don Juan Manuel’s version, Andersen clearly perfected the story in every way.

The stories in *Tales of Count Lucanor* are kicked off through a dialog between Count Lucanor and his adviser Patronio; Count Lucanor asks a question, where upon Patronio gives him the answer by telling Count Lucanor a story. Prince Don Juan Manuel concludes the story with a short verse (a song) condensing the moral of the story into a short, concrete statement – a moral style similar to that of Aesop’s Fables.

**Spain in a constant state of war**

Prince Don Juan Manuel prided himself mostly with his battles and victories, and barely made a mention of his authorship, because he did not regarded it as being noble – it would indicate that he had time to engage in something that during the European Middle Ages was considered for the lower classes.

Spain was during the European Middle Ages in a constant state of war – especially with the Moors – and that is why Prince Don Juan Manuel was mostly engaged in battles, because that was considered a very fine act among the upper ranks of nobility (the High Nobility), but Prince Don Juan Manuel is not remembered for his victories and defeats on the battlefield – he is remembered for his authorship.

When Prince Don Juan Manuel had finished his *Tales of Count Lucanor*, he gave the complete handwritten manuscript to the monks of Peñafiel in the province of Valladolid in Spain – hundred years before the invention of printing – so that they could give it to the generations to come, who would regard the arts of peace nobler than the arts of war.
Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

When Prince Don Juan Manuel was born, Spain had been in war with the Moors – on and off – for almost 600 years (from year 711 at The Battle of Guadalete to year 1282) and throughout his life, he had only experienced war, and was sucked into the logic of revenge.

Prince Don Juan Manuel was quite wealthy – he had the right to mint coins – you would naturally place him at the upper end of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Nevertheless was Prince Don Juan Manuel’s way of thinking coloured by the way of thinking during the European Middle Ages, and in terms of his thinking, you would place him at the bottom of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

But all that changed. Eventually – during the last twenty years of his life – he moved further up Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and his way of thinking reached level four and level five (illustrated in Maslow’s pyramid). Prince Don Juan Manuel’s proud attitude toward wars changed, because he gradually, gradually realised that most of the wars with the Moors were purposeless, and the huge loss of his countrymen and even the enemy – the Moors – affected him and an inner urge for time for contemplation became more and more apparent.

During the last twenty years of his life – "el Scritor" or "the writer" as he was nicknamed – he retired, so that he could dedicate his time to literature at the Peñafiel Castle, which included a Dominican monastery.

Prince Don Juan Manuel was realistic enough to realise, that he could not share his thoughts in El Conde Lucanor with the Spanish people and the nobility, because it was not in line with the Zeitgeist (the spirit of the time) – publishing such stories would make him liable of lese-majesty (the crime of violating majesty).

That is why Prince Don Juan Manuel gave the complete manuscript to the monks of Peñafiel, where he had founded a Dominican monastery, because he hoped that they would give it to enlightened nobles, who would spend more of their energy on the arts of peace than the arts of war.

Forgotten for nearly 200 years

El Conde Lucanor first found its way into print in 1575, when it was published in Seville. It was again printed in Madrid in 1642, and then it was forgotten for nearly two hundred years. In the 19th century it was reprinted again, in a contemporary translation – a German version printed in Stuttgart in 1839, a French version printed in Paris in 1840, and a Spanish version printed in Barcelona in 1853.

Hans Christian Andersen did not know the Spanish work El Conde Lucanor, but he had read one of the stories – Of that which happened to a King and three Impostors – in a German translation entitled: So ist der Lauf der Welt. (In English: That’s the way of the world).

The Emperor’s New Clothes was published the 7th April 1837 in Copenhagen in Danish, and translated from the original Danish into an up-to-date English version by Benjamin Kurzweil in 2009.

In December 2013 Benjamin Kurzweil recorded The Emperor’s New Clothes in Danish and English with funny cartoon-style music bed.

The Emperor’s New Clothes has indeed been on a long journey, and it is Hans Christian Andersen’s most funny and entertaining tale.
The true richness of modern society

To understand the context, it is worth mentioning that Prince Don Juan Manuel fought with King Alfonso XI of Castile against the Moors – and believe it or not – Prince Don Juan Manuel also formed an alliance with King Mahomet III, the Moorish ruler of Granada, and together they declared war against King Alfonso XI! But Prince Don Juan Manuel lost against King Alfonso XI of Castile, and had to flee to Seville.

The animosity Prince Don Juan Manuel held against the young King Alfonso XI of Castile is shown in the tale “Of that which happened to a King and three Impostors”.

Hans Christian Andersen had initially chosen the title “The King’s New Clothes”, but changed the title in the final draft to “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, in order not to offend the King of Denmark (lese-majesty; the crime of violating majesty).

The change of title made it look like Andersen made a mockery of Emperor Napoleon of France – a kind of mockery fully acceptable for the Danish royal court; but the citizens of Denmark could read between the lines.

Today the citizens of Denmark and Spain express their opinion about their leaders without fearing imprisonment or the death penalty. That is the true richness of modern Western society.

Reading skills is the mother of all skills

Reading skills is the mother of all skills. Whatever you will be doing in your life, good reading skills will be the foundation to success for most people – there are of course exceptions.

In the preface of the book, "Andersen and strategies of reading – practical activities in the school", the Spanish professor Dr. Eloy Martos Núñez writes:

“...texts such as The Ugly Duckling and The Emperor’s New Clothes are prototypes of reading experiences of great importance to education, culture, and the actual building of citizenship. At the same time they are products of the opportunity to improve children’s literacy skills."

In this way you kill two birds with one stone, according to Professor Dr. Eloy Martos Núñez.

In part 1 of the same book, "Andersen and strategies of reading – practical activities in the school", the Brazilian Professor Ana Maria Martins da Costa Santos writes:

"Hans Christian Andersen revealed the vulnerability of the rich and the powerful, and makes apparent the spiritual strength, intelligence and sensitivity of the poor, particularly the children... The richness of Andersen’s texts allows them to be explored at different levels and by different audiences.... We chose to develop a method of work enabling teachers to bring Hans Christian Andersen’s tales into the classroom, and by applying reading comprehension strategies, we made possible to teach students to understand the text more deeply than simply decoding the text.... The use of reading strategies will help teachers develop meaningful activities for the performance of critical reading and aesthetics with their students."

World Heritage Literature

Hans Christian Andersen's stories are universal in their message and suitable for all generations and cultures, and have become part of world heritage literature.

By Benjamin Kurzweil, June 2014, London, Britain.
It was so lovely out in the country – it was summer!

The wheat stood yellow, the oats green, the hay had been stacked in the green meadows, and there went the stork on his long red legs, chattering in Egyptian – for he had learnt that language from his mother.

Around the fields and meadows there were vast woods, and in the middle of the woods, there were deep lakes – yes, it was really lovely out in the country.

Right in the sunshine, there lay an old manor-house with deep canals around it, and from the wall down to the water grew great leaves – they were so tall that small children could stand under the biggest of them.

It was just as wild under the leaves as in a wild forest, yet here sat a duck on her nest.

She was waiting for her little ducklings to hatch out, but she was rather tired of it now because the sitting had lasted so long and she rarely had a visitor – the other ducks much preferred swimming around in the canals than running up and sitting under a leaf to gossip with her.

The eggs began to crack

At last, one after another, the eggs began to crack. “Peep, peep,” they said. All the eggs had come alive and the ducklings were poking their heads out into the big world.

“Quack, quack,” said the mother duck and then the ducklings quacked quickly and looked around under the green leaves, and their mother let them look as much as they wanted to, for green is good for the eyes.

“Wow, how big the world is,” said the young ones, for they had so much more space than when they were inside their eggs.

“Do you think this is the whole world?” said their mother. “It stretches a long way over to the other side of the garden, right into the parson’s field, but I have never been there. You are all here now, aren’t you?”

Then she got up, saying, “No, I don’t have all of you; the biggest egg is still there. How much more time will it take? I am getting really fed up waiting for it!” Then she sat down again.
What's up, duck?

“Quack, quack, quack, err, wha...wha – what's up, duck?” said an old duck who had come to pay a visit.

“This last egg is taking such a long time,” said the mother-duck. “It just won’t hatch; but now you must see the others. They are the loveliest ducklings I have ever seen. They all look like their father, the wretch; he never comes to visit me.”

“Let me look at that egg that won’t hatch,” said the old duck. “I'll bet it’s a turkey’s egg. I was once cheated like that too, and I had my sorrow and pain with the young ones, because they are afraid of the water. Yes, believe me, I couldn’t get them out. I quacked and clacked but it didn’t help. Let me see the egg. Yes, it is a turkey's egg. Listen to me, teach the other children to swim, but that one – just get rid of it!”

“I’ll sit on it a little longer,” said the mother-duck. “I have been sitting so long now that I can wait a bit more, even if I have to wait until the end of the season.”

“Well, whatever.” said the old duck, and off she went.

The big egg cracked

At last the big egg cracked. “Peep, peep,” said the young one as he tumbled out.

He was very big and rather ugly. The mother-duck looked at him. “It is a terribly big duckling,” she said. “None of the others look like that. Hopefully it is not a turkey-chick. Well, we shall soon find out – into the water he shall go, even if I have to kick him in myself.”

That day the weather was really heavenly, with the sun shining on all the green leaves. The ducklings’ mother came out with all her family and went down to the water.

"Splash!"

She jumped into the water.

“Quack, quack,” she said and, one after another, the ducklings plopped in.

The water rushed over their heads, but they came up again at once and floated beautifully; their legs moved automatically and all of them were out in the water – even the ugly grey duckling joined in the swimming.

“No, it is not a turkey,” said the mother-duck. “Look how beautifully he uses his legs and how straight he holds himself. He is my own little one. He is quite handsome if you look at him properly.”
“Quack! Quack! Now, come along with me and let me show you the world and introduce you all to the duck-yard; but mind yourselves and stay close to me, so that nobody steps on you; and keep a sharp lookout for the cat!”

Inside the duck-yard

So they went into the duck-yard.

There was a terrible noise going on, for there were two families fighting over the head of an eel, and then after all that fighting, it was the cat that got it.

“Look! That’s the way of the world,” said the mother-duck licking her bill, for she would have liked the eel’s head too.

“Use your legs,” she said.

“Hurry yourselves along and bow your heads to that old duck over there. She is the most distinguished of them all. She has Spanish blood, which is why she is so solid-looking.

Did you notice she has a red ribbon tied around her leg? That is something very special; it is the greatest distinction any duck can have and it really means a lot. It means that they don’t want to get rid of her and that she shall be known by both animals and humans.

Hurry up now. Don’t turn your toes in. A well-brought-up duckling turns its toes out, like father and mother. Come on now, bow your heads and say Quack.”

And so they did; but the other ducks round about looked at them and said quite loudly, “look at that, we shall have to share with that lot as well – as if there weren’t enough of us as it is. Oh my goodness how that one duckling looks – we won’t tolerate him.”
Straight away, one duck flew at him and bit him in the neck. “Leave him alone,” said the mother-duck. “He is not harming anyone.” “Yes, but he is too big and peculiar,” said the duck that had pecked him. “Because of that he deserves to be bullied.”

“Pretty children the mother has there,” said the old duck with the red ribbon round her leg. “Every one of them pretty, except that one – he didn’t turn out successfully. I wish you could make him over again.”

“That is not possible, Your Grace,” said the ducklings’ mother. “He is not good-looking, but he is very good natured and he swims so beautifully; like the others. Well, I dare say he even swims a bit better than them. I believe he will grow quite handsome and, in time, get a little smaller! He has lain too long in the egg, so he hasn’t yet got the right shape.”

Then she preened at his neck and smoothed the rest of his body.

“Besides, he is a drake,” she said, “and so it doesn't matter so much. I believe he will be strong and he will make it.”

“The other ducklings are beautiful,” said the old duck. “Anyway, make yourselves at home, and if you find an eel’s head, then you can bring it to me.”

So they made themselves at home. But the poor duckling – the last to hatch out of the egg – was pecked, pushed and mocked by the other ducks and hens, because he was so ugly-looking.

“He is too big,” they all said, and the turkey-cock, who had been born with spurs on his feet, and therefore thought he was an emperor, puffed himself up like a ship in full sail, went right up to him and shouted until he was red in the face.

The poor duckling did not know where to stand or where to go; he was so miserable at being so ugly and at being the laughing-stock of the whole duck-yard.

The first day passed

And so the first day passed, but it soon became worse and worse.

The poor duckling was being chased by everyone. Even his own brothers and sisters were evil towards him and kept on saying, “If only the cat would get you, you ugly thing.” Even his mother would say, “I wish you were far away.” The ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and even the girl who fed the animals kicked him.

Because of all this trouble he ran off and flew away over the fence, but the little birds in the bushes jumped, terrified, into the air. “That’s because I am so ugly,” thought the duckling, shutting his eyes, yet he ran on all the same.

The wild ducks

Then he came out into the great marsh where the wild ducks lived and there he lay the whole night. He was so tired and unhappy.

In the morning the wild ducks flew up and took a look at their new comrade. “What kind of fellow are you?” they asked as the duckling turned from one to another, greeting them as well as he could.

“You are so ugly,” said the wild ducks, “but that makes no difference to us as long as you don't marry into our family.”

The poor thing, he had never thought about getting married. If only he could just have some peace, rest in the rushes and drink a little of the marsh water.
Two wild ganders

There he lay for two whole days before eventually there came two wild geese or, more correctly, two wild ganders, for they were cocks. It was not long since they had hatched, and were therefore very lively.

“Listen, pal,” they said, “you are so ugly that we have come to like you. Do you want to come along with us and be a bird of passage? Listen, not far away from here, in another marsh, are some sweet, lovely wild geese; young ladies every one of them, and they can say ‘Quack’. You could probably become a hit with the ladies, as hot as you are ha-ha-ha….”

Bang! Bang!

“Bang! Bang!” it suddenly echoed from above.

Both the ganders fell down dead in the rushes, and the water became red with blood.

“Bang! Bang!” it sounded again and flocks of wild geese flew up from the rushes; again fresh shots rang out.

A big shoot was in progress; the hunters lay ready all round the marsh; some even sat up in the trees on the branches that stretched far out over the rushes. The blue smoke from the guns drifted like clouds amongst the dark trees and hung far out over the water.

The dogs came running through the mud – Splash! Splash! Rushes and reeds swayed on all sides.

It was terrifying for the poor duckling, which turned its head to the side to hide it under its wing, but at that very moment there stood next to him a terrifyingly big dog. Its tongue was hanging out of its mouth, showing sharp teeth and – splash!

It went off again without touching him.

“Oh, thank goodness,” sighed the duckling, “I am so ugly that even the dog doesn’t want to bite me.”

So he lay quite still while the bullets whistled in the rushes and shot after shot went bang.

It was late in the day before all was quiet again, but the poor duckling dared not move. He waited several more hours before he looked around, and then hurried away from the marsh as fast as he could.

He ran over fields and meadows, but there was a strong wind that made it difficult for the duckling to get away.

The little farmhouse

Towards evening he reached a poor little farmhouse.

It was so poorly maintained that it hardly knew which way to fall, so it remained standing.

The wind whistled around the duckling so that he had to sit down to withstand it, yet it became worse and worse.

Then he noticed that the farmhouse door had come off one of its hinges and was hanging so twisted that he could slip into the living room through the crack, so that was what he did.

An old woman lived in the farmhouse with her cat and her hen. The cat, which she called Sonny, could arch his back and purr; he could even give out sparks if you stroked his fur the wrong way.
The hen had short little legs, so she was called ‘Chicky short-legs’. She laid well, and the woman was as fond of her as if she were her own child.

The next morning the strange duckling was spotted at once. The cat began to purr and the hen to cluck.

“Uh, what’s that?” said the old woman, looking all around her. But her sight wasn’t good and so she thought the duckling was a fat duck that had strayed away.

“My goodness what a nice catch,” she said. “I can have duck-eggs now, if only it isn’t a drake. Well, this we have to try.”

And so the duckling was taken on trial for three weeks, but no eggs appeared.

The cat and the hen

Now, the cat was the master of the house and the hen was the mistress. Their favourite saying was ‘Us and them’ – for they believed that they were better than the rest of the world.

The duckling thought that one could have a different opinion, but the hen would not hear of it.

“It’s so lovely floating on the water,” said the duckling, “so lovely to get it over your head and to dive down to the bottom.”

“Yes, that must be a great pleasure,” said the hen. “You must have lost your mind. Ask the cat, who is the cleverest person I know; ask him whether he likes floating on water or diving to the bottom! I’ll leave myself out of it. – Please, ask our mistress; ask the old woman yourself, for there is no one in the world cleverer than she. Do you think she has the desire to float or to get water over her head?”
“You don’t understand me,” said the duckling.

“Yes! We don’t understand you. Who should then understand you? Don’t tell me that you are cleverer than the cat and the old woman, not to mention myself.

Don’t make a fool of yourself, child, and thank the good Lord for all the good things that have been done for you.

Haven’t you come into a warm room and found company that you can learn something from? But you are foolish and it isn’t easy to make company with you. Trust me; my intentions are good for you. I’m saying unpleasant things to you, but that’s how you can tell your true friends. Now, just make sure that you lay eggs and learn to purr, or give out sparks.”

“I think I will go out into the wide world,” said the duckling.

“Well, go on then,” said the hen.

Floating on the water

The duckling went on his way, floating on the water and dived below the surface, but none of the other animals would have anything to do with him because of his ugliness.

Autumn came

Eventually, autumn came.

The leaves in the woods turned yellow and brown; the wind caught them and they danced around.

Up in the air it looked cold and the clouds hung heavy with hail and snow-flakes.

The raven perched on the fence, screaming “Oy! Oy!” from the sheer cold.

Just thinking about it was enough to make you feel frozen. The poor duckling did not feel well.

One evening, when there was a lovely sunset, a flock of large and beautiful birds came out of the bushes. The duckling had never seen such handsome birds. They were shining white and had long graceful necks.

The birds were swans.

They uttered a strange noise, spread their splendid great wings and flew away from the cold regions to warmer countries and open lakes.

They rose so high, so high, and the ugly duckling felt strange as he watched them. He wheeled around in the water and craned his neck in their direction, letting out a cry so loud and strange that it scared even himself.

Ah! He could not forget those lovely birds, those fortunate birds, and as soon as he lost sight of them he dived right down to the bottom.
When he came up again he seemed to be quite out of his mind. He did not know what the birds were called, or where they were flying to, yet he felt drawn more deeply to them than he had ever been to anything.

He did not envy them at all. How could it possibly enter his mind to wish himself such loveliness? He would have been happy if the ducks could have just tolerated him – that poor, ugly creature.

**Winter came**

The winter grew cold, so cold.

The duckling had to swim round and round in the water to keep it from freezing completely, but every night the hole in which he swam became smaller and smaller.

It froze so that the ice-crust creaked and the duckling had to use his legs all the time to prevent the water from icing over.

Finally he became lifeless, lay very quiet and froze with the ice.

**A farmer saved the ugly duckling**

Early in the morning, a farmer passed by.

He saw the duck, went out and broke up the ice with his wooden shoe.

He carried the duck home to his wife, where it recovered.

The children wanted to play with him, but the duckling thought they meant to hurt him.

In panic he flew right into the milk bowl so that the milk splashed out into the room. The wife shouted and raised her hands over her head, but then he flew into the tub where the butter was kept; then into the barrel of flour and out again.

My goodness what a sight he was!

The wife screamed and struck at him with the fire-tongs whilst the children were running around and falling over each other trying to catch the duckling.

They laughed and they shouted.

Fortunately the door was wide open, so he was able to rush out into the bushes and onto the newly-fallen snow – where he lay as if in hibernation.
Spring came

It would be far too sad to tell you about all the want and misery he had to go through that harsh winter.

He was lying among the reeds in the marsh when the sun began to shine warmly again. The larks were singing – it was lovely spring.

All at once he stretched his wings.

They ruffled together and felt stronger than before, carrying him swiftly away.

Before he realised it, he was in a great garden where the apple-trees stood in bloom and the lilacs dangled, sweet-scented on their long green boughs right down to the winding water in the canals.

Ah! It was beautiful here in fresh spring.

Right in front of him, out of the thicket, came three lovely white swans, ruffling their feathers and floating lightly on the water.

The duckling recognised the magnificent birds and a strange sadness fell upon him.

“I will fly over to those majestic birds and I know they will kill me, because I – being so ugly – have dared to come near them. Yet that doesn’t matter. It is better to be killed by them than to be snapped at by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the girl who looks after the poultry-yard, and suffer through the winter.” So he flew out onto the water and swam towards the beautiful swans.

They saw him, and came towards him with ruffled feathers.

“Yes, kill me, kill me!” said the poor creature, bowing his head down towards the water, awaiting his death!

But what did he see in the clear water? He saw his own reflection beneath him.

He was no longer a clumsy, dark-grey, ugly unattractive bird,

– he had become a swan!

It doesn’t matter if you were born in a duck-yard as long as you had been lying in a swan’s egg.
I never dreamed of so much happiness

He felt really happy at having gone through so much hardship and suffering.

He could now appreciate his good fortune, appreciate all the loveliness that greeted him – the great swans swam around him and stroked him with their beaks.

Some little children came into the garden and threw bread and grain into the water, and the youngest shouted, “There is a new one.”

The other children joined in joyfully, saying, “Yes, there is a new one.”

They clapped and danced around, running after mum and dad.

While bread and cake were thrown into the water they all said, “The new one is the most beautiful of them all. He is so young and so beautiful.”

Even the old swans bowed before him.

Then he felt quite shy and hid his head under his wings; he didn’t know what to do with himself.

He was much too happy, but not at all proud, because a good heart is never proud.

He thought of the time when he had been persecuted and ridiculed, and now he heard them all saying he was the loveliest of all the lovely birds.

The lilacs bowed their branches right down to the water next to him and the sun shone warm and welcoming.

Then, he ruffled his feathers, raised his slender neck and with a heart full of joy he shouted,

“I never dreamed of so much happiness, when I was the ugly duckling!”

Written by Hans Christian Andersen (1843).
Translated from the original Danish into English by Benjamin Kurzweil in 2008. Unabridged version.

Illustrations:
Vilhelm Pedersen (painted 1847-1848).
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The Ugly Duckling

Andersen wrote the first word to this fable in August 1842, “The Cygnet”.

It took over a year until “The Cygnet” had reached the form Andersen liked; exactly in October 1843 where he wrote, “I finally finished the tale of the young swan,” and then he changed the title to “The Ugly Duckling”.

The fable was published the following month, 11th November 1843.
Q&A fun for The Ugly Duckling

The Ugly Duckling is a story about a young swan that is being chased all over the duck-yard because…?

**Question 1:** Why is the ugly duckling being chased all over the duck-yard?

A1: The ugly duckling was full of lice.
A2: The young swan looked different from the other ducks.
A3: The ugly duckling was eating the other ducks' food.

**Question 2:** Why did the other ducks think that the young swan is a duckling?

A1: The young swan talked like a duck.
A2: The young swan walked like a duck.
A3: The young swan was born in a duck's nest.

**Question 3:** Who is chattering in Egyptian?

A1: The stork.
A2: The cat.
A3: The hen.

**Question 4:** What language do they speak in Egypt?

A1: Egyptian.
A2: Farsi.
A3: Arabic.

**Question 5:** Who had a red ribbon tied around the leg?

A1: The goose.
A2: The Spanish duck.
A3: The stork.

**Question 6:** To whom should the mother duck bring an eel's head in case she should find one?

A1: The Spanish duck.
A2: The goose.
A3: The cat.

**Question 7:** Who allows the mother duck and her ducklings into the duck-yard?

A1: The cat.
A2: The goose.
A3: The Spanish duck.

**Question 8:** Who says: “I dare say that he swims even a bit better than them.”

A1: The ducklings' mother.
A2: The Spanish duck.
A3: The swans.
Question 9: The ugly duckling was nearly eaten by…
A1: A fox.
A2: A dog.
A3: A cat.

Question 10: Why did the dog turn away from the duckling?
A1: The duckling had not taken a shower that day.
A2: The duckling scared the dog by his singing.
A3: The duckling was simply so ugly looking.

Question 11: Who lived in the farmhouse?
A1: An old man with his cat and hen.
A2: An old woman with her cat and hen.
A3: A young man with his crocodile.

Question 12: The hen asked the ugly duckling to lay eggs. Why was this impossible for the duckling?
A1: The duckling was too young.
A2: The duckling was sick.
A3: The duckling was a drake.

Question 13: When the winter was over and spring came, the ugly duckling saw the beautiful swans. What did the ugly duckling think about the swans when he saw them coming towards him?
A1: The swans will kiss me.
A2: The swans will kill me.
A3: The swans will teach me how to dance.

Question 14: When meeting the swans, what did the ugly duckling see in the clear water?
A1: The ugly duckling saw he was sad.
A2: The ugly duckling saw his reflection.
A3: The ugly duckling saw he was a swan (which he had always been).

Question 15: When was *The Ugly Duckling* published?
A1: The 11th November 1843.
A2: The 17th November 1843.
A3: The 17th November 1943.

Question 16: What is the national bird of Denmark?
A1: The sparrow.
A2: The swan.
A3: The owl.

Question 17: What skill is the mother of all skills?
A1: Dancing skills is the mother of all skills. Wherever you will be travelling in your life, good dancing skills will give you a job entertaining tourists.

A2: Shouting skills is the mother of all skills. Whenever you will be going to a pub, good shouting skills will give you a beer more quickly.

A3: Reading skills is the mother of all skills. Whatever choice you will make or education you will be taking in your life, good reading skills will be the foundation to success.
Short analysis of The Ugly Duckling

The story of The Ugly Duckling can be divided into several scenes. I will make a brief commentary on some of the scenes. The story starts with a happy mood opening scene, “It was so lovely out in the country”. Do not forget to stress the ‘so’.

The story glides slowly from a happy mood scene to a fun mood scene from the sentence, “At last, one after another”; and drifts slowly from a fun mood to the funny scene – “what’s up, duck?”

In this scene it becomes obvious that we are living in an environment that cannot accommodate someone that deviates from the norm. Notice that this scene is not only outside the duck-yard, but also before the egg has hatched. Even in this environment, the mother-duck is being told to get rid of the egg.

Later inside the duck-yard, the mother-duck is being told the same by another old duck; the duck with Spanish blood and a red ribbon around her leg. Although life outside the duck-yard is being described as lovely, it is really no different than inside the duck-yard or in any other scene in the story. If you are different, then you will be pecked upon. Only together with the swans did the young swan find a group or community where it was welcomed.

The young swan is mistakenly named duckling by everyone, because it came together with a group of ducklings, so the other ducks perception of the young swan (cygnet) is that of a duckling. The young swan itself is not aware of its true identity, because of its negative social legacy. Only at the very end, it realises its true identity. The young swan did not have to do anything to become a swan, it was already a swan. It just had to grow. By being the pure being it was, it eventually became an adult swan. It was more a matter of a mental transformation.

From the sentence, “So they went into the duck-yard,” we enter into the bully scenes inside the duck-yard. Followed by the funny “wild ducks” scene; followed by the funny “wild geese” scene. You will notice that Andersen is constantly changing the dynamics throughout the story going from sad to fun and from funny scenes to sad scenes with short dialogs throughout the story. It keeps up the momentum.

After the “wild geese” scene, you enter into a sad scene, “It was late in the day”, and “Towards evening”. From this sad scene the story glides into the funniest scene of the story, “An old woman lived in the farmhouse”; the scene with the hen and cat.

The lack of understanding is underlined in the scene with the hen and the cat. What makes their narrow-mindedness so grotesque is the fact that a hen cannot understand a cat's nature and vice-versa. But the hen and the cat have decided that what they are doing is useful and correct. What is so contributory about to purring? Not much more than to float on water. You could say that the hen actually does contribute to something; she lays an egg every day. But the hen is not doing this by making an extra effort. It is a passive feminine act carried out by hens. Because the hen and the aristocratic cat cannot see any relevance in any aspect of the swan’s nature, they are forcing the swan to change its nature into their nature. If the swan cannot change its nature, it is downgraded in the hierarchy and advised to keep quiet. The hen is clearly bullying the young swan. The reader/listener can see how impossible it is to ask a cygnet (a baby swan) to lay eggs or to purr. The behaviour of the hen and cat as more superior is something that we see everyday in countless situations and is not just something that happened in Andersen’s life.

From this funny scene the story glides into several small sad scenes, starting with, “Eventually autumn came”, going to “One evening there was a lovely sunset” and continuing with “The winter grew so cold, so cold”. By now the reader/listener may think that the ugly duckling has frozen to death.

Quickly Andersen changes the sad momentum into a funny scene, “The children wanted to play with him”. The next scene, “He was lying among the reeds in the marsh” is part of the turning point scene that comes right after. You will notice the way I read this scene like the calm before the storm. “All at once he stretched his wings”. Now we have reached the turning point which ends with the peak of the story: “he had become a swan!” The rest of the scenes are joy and happiness. In the final scene the young swan looks back and remembers the time when it was persecuted and ridiculed. The fact that the young swan did not give up during its hardship throughout the story makes the joy that bit sweeter.

schools, universities, educational institutions

World Heritage Literature
When Andersen read *The Ugly Duckling* in front of an audience, he read the story with deep intensity and the audience could clearly tell that Andersen was sharing more than a story with them.

Hans Christian Andersen was excellent in the read-aloud genre; but it had to be done in the Danish language. He felt very uncomfortable when reading in front of a German audience, because he was not as fluent in German as he was in Danish.

Andersen’s command of English improved gradually throughout his life, and it seems that he felt even more uncomfortable speaking English than German. Yet, his English was good enough to realise that the first English translations of his stories were poor translations and it saddened him a great deal.

Hans Christian Andersen wrote his stories for the purpose of read-aloud, hence his lavish use of punctuation marks, such as hyphens, commas and exclamation marks. European written languages, unlike music notes, do not have a universal sign system that makes the reader understand the flow, which is why many Danes misunderstood much of Andersen’s writings until they heard him reading in person. Only after his readers had been listening to his read-aloud, during his many performances, they said: “Only now we could really understand Andersen’s tales. It was only when one had been listening to his reading, that his tales could be seen in the proper light and perspective”.

Andersen scholar and English translator R P Keighwin wrote in 1935:

Andersen sprinkled his narrative with every kind of conversational touch; crisp lively openings to catch the listener’s attention at a swoop; frequent asides or parentheses; little bits of Copenhagen slang; much grammatical licence, and, above all, a free use of particles – those nods and nudges of speech, with which Danish (like Greek) is so richly endowed. That’s how Andersen maintained the conversational tone in his tales.

Andersen's friend Edvard Collin wrote:

Whether the tale was his own or someone else’s, the way of telling it was completely his own, and so lively that children were thrilled. Andersen enjoyed giving his humour free rein; his speaking was without stop, richly adorned with the figures of speech well known to children, and with gestures to match the situation. Even the driest sentence came to life.

In the foreword to the Danish “*Kunstudgave*” – Art Edition – published in 1930, the former Danish Minister of Finance, Edvard Brandes, also described his impression of Andersen's way of read-aloud:

His voice was deep, clean [smooth] and flexible; it could catch speed and slow down with great ease. His recitation was not so dramatic; not like an actor. Andersen read the fairytales differently from the actors, neither more richly nor with greater profundity, but with a tone of intensity constantly in the background; like the brown colour you see on old paintings – you could tell that he had felt the word, felt the sentence, felt the conversation with his sensitive nerves.

George W Griffin, an American consul placed in Copenhagen, wrote about Andersen's reading skills after listening to Andersen's read-aloud performances in Danish in Copenhagen:

He is a remarkably fine reader, and has often been compared in this respect to Dickens. Dickens was in truth a superb reader, but I am inclined to think that Andersen's manner is far more impressive and eloquent. Both of these men have always read to crowded houses. Dickens' voice was perhaps better suited for the stage than the reading desk. It was stronger and louder than Andersen's, but nothing like as mellow and musical. I heard Dickens read the death-bed scene of *Little Nell* in New York, and I was moved to tears, but I knew that the author himself was reading the story; but when I heard Andersen reading the story of *The Little Girl with the Matches*, I did not think of the author at all, but wept like a child, unconscious of everything around me.