



The Maid of the North: Feminist Folk Tales from Around the World

Ethel Johnston Phelps

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The Maid of the North weaves together tales about a woman's right to freedom of will and choice. In this collection of mostly nineteenth-century folk and fairy tales, Ethel Johnston Phelps's heroines successfully portray women as being spirited, courageous and smart. This type of heroine is not easily found in most collections; in most traditional folk and fairy tales we encounter women are portrayed as being good, obedient, submissive, and, of course, beautiful. These women—and girls—are resourceful; they take action to solve a problem and use cleverness or shrewd common sense to solve the dilemmas they face.

The tales themselves are part of an oral tradition that document a generation according to the values of the time. Phelps has given these older tales a fresh, contemporary retelling for a new generation of readers, young and old. She shapes each story—adding or omitting details—to reflect her sense of a feminist folk or fairy tale.

The twenty-one tales collected represent a wide variety of countries; approximately seventeen ethnic cultures from North America to Europe to Asia tell a story in which women play a leading or crucial role in the story.

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