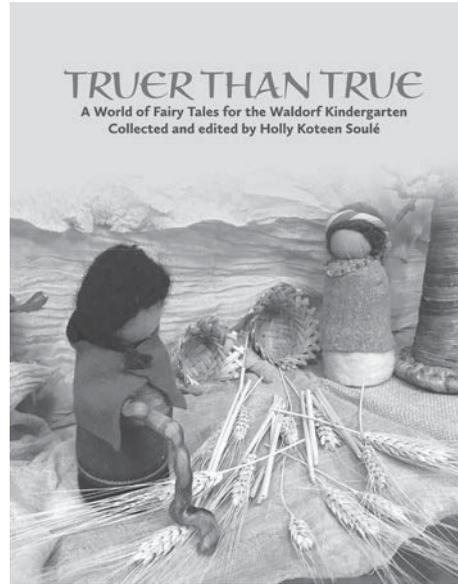


***Truer Than True: A
World of Fairy Tales
for the Waldorf
Kindergarten***
(WECAN, 2021)
Holly Koteen-Soulé
Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

The stories collected in *Truer Than True: A World of Fairy Tales for the Waldorf Kindergarten* are a generously shared treasure. Speaking of her deep interest in international fairy tales, author Holly Koteen-Soulé tells us in the introduction:

“It was important to me that the children in my class were exposed to a variety of cultures through the story curriculum, and especially that children in the class with a particular cultural heritage heard stories from their own culture. In our current times, the need for cultural inclusivity, along with other aspects of diversity awareness and sensitivity, has become more pressing than ever.”



Holly has shared her story collection, each story written out lovingly by hand, with the students at Sound Circle Center teacher training institute over the years. The urgent cry for recognition and celebration of diversity and inclusivity that exploded in the summer of 2019 moved her to offer a selection to the wider Waldorf community. WECAN gratefully leapt to the opportunity.

The four sections indicate stories coming from Africa, Asia, Europe and Russia, and the Americas. The twenty-six stories are diverse in more ways than one. They all, of course, come from different geographies, languages, and cultures. Diversity comes in the gender perspective with many of the stories centering around female heroes who save others and guide their own destinies. Holly shared that her classroom practice was to alternate any story featuring a male protagonist with the next story featuring a female character. Six of the

stories have previously been shared in other WECAN publications, so these may be familiar to readers. *Truer Than True* now puts them together with twenty more stories for easy access.

The book is illustrated with full-color photographs of puppet plays Holly created for selected stories. These puppets and their arrangement on the puppet stage make the story visually come alive. The puppets and presentation are beautiful and effective by themselves. Additionally, we readers see practical examples to inspire how we might create puppets and staging for the children in our care.

Readers will probably be in a rush to get to the stories themselves, and that is understandable. Each story is a treat in its unique way. However, Laurie Clark's foreword about "acting out" and "playing" the story should not be skipped. There are great ideas shared here to keep the children engaged with a story over an extended time.

Also not to be missed is Holly's introduction, "The Oral Story as Guide, Teacher, and Healer," which is as important as the stories themselves. Many years of study, research, contemplation, and experience of these stories with children are embedded in the introduction. The result is a reasoned and accessible discussion of the place of fairy tales in our times. In a undogmatic way, she opens a doorway for modern readers to consider the value of the fairy tale tradition—which exists in all cultures worldwide. These stories offer pictures of experiences open to all

humanity while still honoring the differing pictures of place, culture, race, and time. Stories from culture to culture resonate with one another and provide nourishment for human souls.

With these philosophical and pedagogical discussions come practical suggestions for preparing the fairy tale—choosing the story, learning it "by heart," finding one's own relation to the story, and actually telling it. Puppet plays and "acting it out as a play" are also considered.

The final words of the introduction help put the importance of this fairy tale resource into perspective for our times:

"Waldorf education stands on the threshold between its first and second hundred years. Teachers are asking many questions about what could be left behind, and what needs to be brought forward into our work in the coming century. We tell many kinds of stories in our early childhood day—nature stories, everyday stories, and therapeutic stories. All of these are critically important antidotes to our technological age. The fairy tale is unique, however, in its capacity to offer seeds of solace and social healing to the soul-in-becoming, and to be a wise and tender guide for us all, in both childhood and adulthood. It is my firm conviction that, with a deepened understanding of how fairy tales work and a wider cultural palette from which to choose, fairy tales will remain a revered part of Waldorf early childhood education." ♦