

Briar Rose
a play for First Grade

by

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Author's note:

This play is one of a group of plays written for the classes I taught at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York from 1982–1991 and at The Hartsbrook School in Hadley, MA from 1991-1999. The theme of each play was chosen to address a particular class's issues and interests, and the characters were rendered with specific students in mind.

When other teachers and classes have performed my plays, I have encouraged them to adapt or revise the play as necessary to derive the maximum pedagogical value from it. Other class's performances have showed me artistic dimensions of my plays that I could not have imagined, and I have always been grateful to see that my work has taken on new life.

I have posted my plays on the Online Waldorf Library as Microsoft Word documents so that they can easily be downloaded and changed. I have purposely given few stage directions so that teachers and students will make the plays more their own.

Dear Colleagues: I hope that these plays will serve you well as inspiration, as a scaffold on which to build your own creation, or as a script to make your own. Please don't hesitate to take whatever liberties you wish so that the play may serve you in your work. If you have questions, don't hesitate to phone or email me.

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Song: Sing a song of Briar Rose,
Who sleeps amid the gloom;
Sing a song of Briar Rose,
High in her tower room.

Sing a song of Briar Rose,
Your prince will come at last;
Sing a song of Briar Rose,
When hundred years have passed.

Sing a song of Briar Rose,
The prince comes for thy sake.
Sing a song of Briar Rose,
And he shall thee awake.

Chorus: It happened once upon a time
A king and queen did reign,
And though they long wished for a child
Their prayers were all in vain.

The queen went out to bathe herself
One bright and sunny day,
When from the water crept a frog
Who unto her did say:

Frog: O noble queen, your dearest wish
Will soon fulfilled be;
This very year a pretty child
Will soon be born to thee.

Chorus: A girl was born as was foretold
Before the year had passed;
The king and queen were overjoyed
To have a child at last.

King: Prepare a feast to celebrate
Our new-born daughter's birth;
Invite our friends and relatives
To share our joy and mirth.

And that they may our daughter bless
With goodness, truth, and light,
The thirteen wise ones of our land
We shall also invite.

Chorus: But there were only twelve gold plates
With which to serve thirteen,
And so one wise one was not asked
To join the king and queen.

Then came the people to the feast,
O how they danced and ate!
And for the twelve a special place
Gleamed with a golden plate.

Wise ones: Now let us bless the newborn child
That she may thrive and grow;
And let us laud and honor her
And gifts on her bestow.

First: Virtue is the gift I bring,
Fairest daughter of the king.

Second: Grace shall be my precious gift,
That it may thy soul uplift.

Third: Truth's the gift I think is best,
May thy words with it be blessed.

Fourth: Wisdom will thee well befit,
Always guard and cherish it.

Fifth: Beauty is my gift most rare,
None will e'er with thee compare.

Sixth: Wealth is thine to do thy part,
Share it well with warmth of heart.

Seventh: May true happiness be thine,
With its joy may thy soul shine.

Eighth: Kindness is the gift I grant,
Care for man and beast and plant.

Ninth: Friendship will be thine always,
Blessing thee and all thy days.

Tenth: I will grant thee piety,
May the Lord watch over thee.

Eleventh: Take this gift of peace of soul,
Be thou ever true and whole.

Thirteenth: Since I have been scorned and slighted
Left for last and not invited,
Ye who gather in this hall—
Hear what will this babe befall:

When the princess turns fifteen,
She will find a spindle keen,
Prick her finger deep thereby,
Then she will fall down and die!

Twelfth: This evil curse must run its course
And cannot be undone,
But I can soften its sharp sting
That good from it may come.

The princess shall not die that day
But only fall asleep;
And for one hundred years must stay
Wrapped in her slumber deep.

King: I will not wait the dreaded day
That she the spindle find—
Burn every spindle in the land
That this might ease my mind.

Spindle song
and dance: Bring your spindle, bring your spindle
Quickly to this hall;
That we may a fire kindle
And burn them one and all.

Stoke the fire ever higher
With these spindles all;
They will make a flaming pyre
In the king's own hall.

Throw your spindle, throw your spindle
On the fire tall;
We won't let that fire dwindle
Till we've burned them all.

Now the spindles, now the spindles
Burned to ash are all,
See how we the fates have swindled
And great ill forestalled.

Chorus: The years went by their merry way
And passed without a care,
And every month and week and day
The princess grew more fair.

Chorus: She was more wise and virtuous
Than ever we can tell
So patient, kind, and generous
That all did love her well.

'Twas on her fifteenth birthday morn
The king and queen were out,
The princess wanted to explore
The palace round about.

Into each chamber, nook and room
She peered quite curiously,
And when she saw a winding stair
She went up carefully.

There at the top she found a room
Locked with a rusty key,
She turned the key, unlatched the door
And entered eagerly.

Princess: Good day, old mother, what is this
That you are doing here?

Thirteenth: Why I am spinning flax, my child,
Draw near, you need not fear.

Princess: And what is this between your hands
That to and fro does fly?

Thirteenth: It is a spindle, dearest child,
Why, would you like to try?

Chorus: No sooner had the princess ta'en
The spindle with its thread,
She pricked her finger on the point
And fell upon the bed.

And at that moment when she fell
Into her peaceful sleep,
Throughout the palace everything
Was wrapped in slumber deep.

The king, the queen, and all the court
Upon their seats sank down;
The horses and the spotted hounds
Lay sleeping on the ground.

Chorus: The pigeons on the red tiled roof,
 The flies upon the wall,
 The fire in the fireplace,
 All sound asleep did fall.
 The cook who was about to give
 The scullion boy a smack,
 Fell fast asleep with outstretched arm
 And lay upon his back.

Then all around the castle wall
 A hedge of briars grew,
 Until the very towers tall
 Were fully hid from view.

Hedge song: Sleep, O sleep sweet Briar Rose,
 One day your prince will surely come,
 Sleep, O sleep sweet Briar Rose,
 Till hundred years are done.

Sleep, O sleep sweet Briar Rose,
 Our thorns will keep you safe and sound,
 Sleep, O sleep sweet Briar Rose,
 Until you shall be found.

Sleep, O sleep sweet Briar Rose,
 Our flowers blossom for his sake,
 Sleep, O sleep sweet Briar Rose,
 Till he comes thee to wake.

Chorus: And o'er the years a legend spread
 Of sleeping Briar Rose,
 And many king's sons came to try
 To end her deep repose.

But O, the hedge, with fingers strong
 And thorns as sharp as knives,
 Held fast the princes in its grip
 And many lost their lives.

The years passed on until one day
 A prince came to that land,
 To find and wake the princess fair
 And thereby win her hand.

But now the hundred years had passed
 As he the hedge drew nigh;
 It blossomed with red roses bright
 And safely let him by.

Chorus: Then searched he everywhere for her,
And sought amid the gloom,
Until the winding stair he climbed
And found the secret room.

Prince: Awake my princess, now the time
Has come for you to rise,
And you shall be my own true bride
So fair and true and wise.

Chorus: The princess woke up at his word
And saw the prince so fine;
She placed her hand into his own
And said,

Briar Rose: "I will be thine."

Chorus: And as the two walked down the stairs
The king and queen arose,
And warmly thanked the noble prince
Who'd waken Briar Rose.

The horses and the hounds awoke
The pigeons slept no more
The flies stirred on the kitchen wall
The fire began to roar.

The cook who was about to give
The scullion boy a smack,
Awoke, and with his outstretched arm
Gave him a mighty whack.

And then the wedding feast was held
And all did dance and sing,
And wished the prince and Briar Rose
Great joy in everything.

Wedding Dance