Fairy Tale Collections | Libraries

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Fairy Tale Collections

USU Special Collections & Archives

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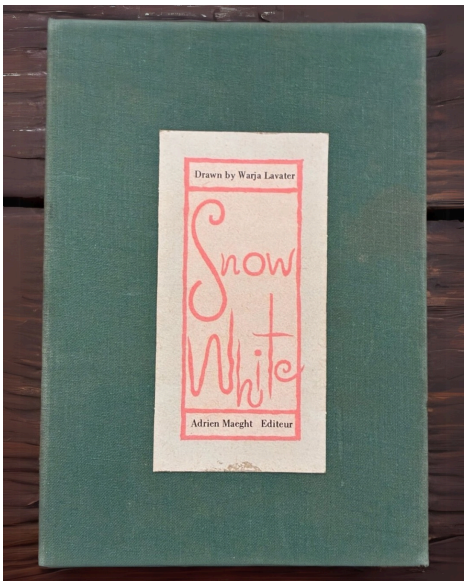
Sleeping Beauty wasn't in a glass case — but Snow White Was! Explore our fairy tale collections at USU Special Collections & Archives.

Visit The Snow White Collection

Not Sleeping Beauty—They're *Snow White* Cases



Have you ever walked through a museum or archives exhibit and admired the carefully displayed treasures beneath sleek glass enclosures? In the world of museums and archives, these glass display cases are sometimes colloquially called “Sleeping Beauty cases.” It’s a charming name--but it’s also a little bit off. What if we start calling them what they really are: Snow White cases.

Let's Call Them What They Really Are

Why the mixup? The term “Sleeping Beauty case” likely comes from the idea of something precious and beautiful being his away, protected, and undisturbed--much like the princess in Charles Perrault’s *La Belle au bois dormant* or the Brothers Grimm’s *Dornröschen* (*Little Briar Rose*). But if we think about the actual visual reference--a glass enclosure that allows you to look but not touch--the fairy tale that fits perfectly is Snow White.

In the Brothers Grimm version of *Snow White* (first published in 1812 in their *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*), after Snow White is poisoned by the apple, the dwarves place her in a glass coffin. They keep watch over her but are unable to revive her. The image of something beautiful, frozen in time and displayed under glass? That’s straight from Snow White’s story, not Sleeping Beauty’s story.

See The Story For Yourself In Special Collections & Archives

Here in Special Collections & Archives (SCA) at Utah State University, we're fortunate to hold several editions and translations of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales in our collections. These volumes not only preserve the text of beloved stories like Snow White but also capture their evolution and cultural impact over centuries. If you visit SCA, you'll find not only printed fairy tale collections, but also documentation about how these stories are told, retold, and adapted in communities around the world.

Come Explore The Fairy Tales In-Person

We'll be sharing highlights from our fairy tale collections on our social media. And if you'd like to visit and see these materials (and our own version of a Sleeping Beauty, err, Snow White case), stop by Special Collections & Archives on the lower level of Merrill-Cazier Library.

Credit

Special thanks to Dr. Claudia Schwabe, Professor of German in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, for pointing out the Sleeping Beauty vs. Snow White glass coffin detail.

See More Of Our Fairy Tale Collections