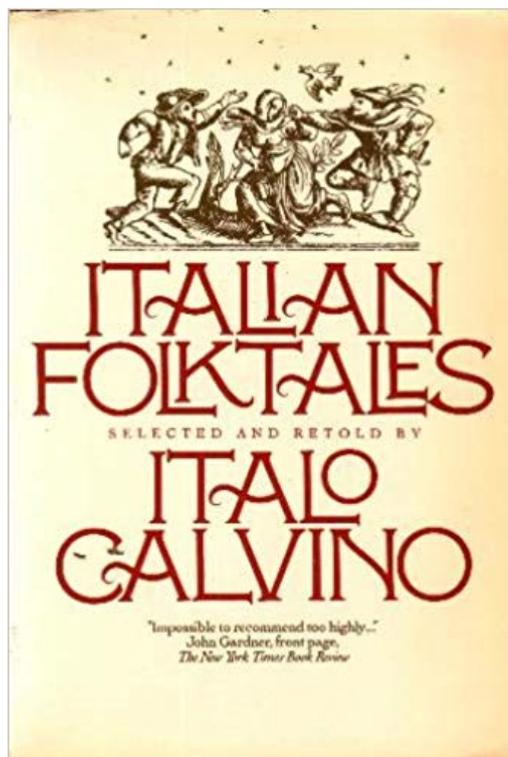


## Italian Folktales (Pantheon Fairy Tale & Folklore Library) by Italo Calvino



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**Author:** Italo Calvino

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## Reviews of the Italian Folktales (Pantheon Fairy Tale & Folklore Library) by Italo Calvino

### Flash\_back

I have -- temporarily, I hope -- mislaid my paperback edition of this book. I bought the Kindle edition prior to a trip. There are not nearly as many of the stories as in the paperback edition. I feel cheated.

Update: I found my paperback edition. It contains 200 tales. The Kindle edition has 53.

## **Boyn**

Italian Folktales by Italo Calvino is a marvelous collection of stories akin to Grimms Fairy Tales, or Charles Parrault's Tales of Mother Goose. As the preface explains, Italy lacked, until this book, a 'comprehensive book of Italian folk tales, one that would be representative of the entire country and intended for popular consumption as well.' Calvino must have expended an immense effort, working through 19th century source materials, to compile these stories, but none of this scholarly toil is recorded in the book except for brief mention in the preface. The book includes no information about where and when each story appeared, what variations exist, echoes in neighboring countries, none of that. This is not a work of anthropology or literary history but, as the title says, a collection of folk tales. What distinguishes the book isn't scholarly embellishment but the fact that the stories are collected, assembled, edited, and arranged by a master story teller.

Folk tales are 33% plot, 33% conflict, and 33% theme. Little attention goes to setting (once upon a time in a land far away) or character, (there was a barber who had three sons). Vaguely described settings and stereotyped characters help make these stories understandable to anyone at any time or place. Where plot is preeminent, who better to hold the tiller than Calvino, a master of plot.

Consider his *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, a novel in which the narrator engages the reader regarding the plot several times and still succeeds in drawing attention back to what happens next in the story with the intensity of a spy thriller. His sure hand of story-telling was precisely the hand needed to arrange these folk stories.

The collection begins with 'Whoever Loses His Temper Loses the Bet' and ends with 'The Lame Devil,' and delivers in total 53 nuggets of narrative, involving giants and fairies, monkeys and ducks, kings and hunchbacks. Enjoy.

## **Golden Lama**

It is a great collection of traditional folktales, many of which exist in other traditions in different versions. I read the Italian version as a kid and I still have fond memories of it. This translation may not be perfect in capturing the tones and colors of the original but it works. What is really poor is the overall quality of the paper, print and small font, which makes it hard to read, and the editorial work, which left here and there typos and other avoidable mistakes.

## **Ballazan**

When I was a bride my husband gave this to me in Italian. Now that I'm ancient myself I wanted to consider each story within my native language. Each tale is remarkable, because of its honing over centuries to the traditions of a specific city-state within the now unified Italy. The themes are decidedly different from those of Germanic origins. Perhaps these will set your heart wisdom aflame.

## **Cerar**

I think the most fascinating part of the book is the appendix where the author deescribees how he piece together these stories from vastly different sources. My only objection is that some of the stories are just variations of earlier told stories.

## **Katius**

Want your kids to be smarter? Read them this! Science says reading folk tales to kids expands their mind.

## **Kemath**

So many tales! Fascinating to compare them with other famous collections, both old and new.

Calvino includes extensive notes; not academic references, more like memoirs of his own journey through the literature.

Such a great book to read before bed.

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