

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH FOLK TALES FOR CHILDREN

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19673223>

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Annotation

Folk tales are an important part of children's literature and cultural heritage. They help shape children's imagination, moral values, and understanding of social behavior. This study presents a comparative analysis of Uzbek and English folk tales for children. The research examines similarities and differences in narrative structure, characters, themes, and moral lessons. Well-known Uzbek tales such as Zumrad and Qimmat are compared with English stories like Jack and the Beanstalk and The Three Little Pigs. The analysis shows that both traditions share universal themes such as the victory of good over evil and the importance of wisdom and honesty, while also reflecting unique cultural values.

Keywords

folk tales, children's literature, Uzbek folklore, English folklore, comparative literature, moral values.

Аннотация

Народные сказки занимают важное место в детской литературе и культурном наследии. Они формируют воображение детей, их нравственные ценности и представления о правильном поведении. В данной статье проводится сравнительный анализ узбекских и английских народных сказок для детей. Исследование рассматривает сходства и различия в структуре повествования, персонажах, темах и нравственных уроках. Узбекские сказки, такие как Зумрад и Киммат, сравниваются с английскими сказками, например Джек и бобовый стебель и Три поросёнка. Результаты показывают, что обе традиции имеют общие универсальные темы — победу добра над злом и ценность мудрости и честности.

Ключевые слова

народные сказки, детская литература, узбекский фольклор, английский фольклор, сравнительное литературоведение, нравственные ценности.

Annotatsiya

Xalq ertaklari bolalar adabiyoti va madaniy merosning muhim qismi hisoblanadi. Ular bolalarning tasavvurini, axloqiy qadriyatlarini va ijtimoiy xulq-atvor haqidagi tushunchalarini shakllantirishda muhim rol o'ynaydi. Ushbu maqolada bolalar uchun mo'ljallangan o'zbek va ingliz xalq ertaklari qiyosiy jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda ertaklarning syujet tuzilishi, qahramonlari, asosiy mavzulari hamda axloqiy g'oyalari o'rganiladi. Jumladan, Zumrad va Qimmat ertagi ingliz ertaklari Jack and the Beanstalk va The Three Little Pigs bilan qiyoslanadi. Tahlil natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, har ikki xalq ertaklarida yaxshilikning yomonlik ustidan g'alabasi, donolik va halollikning ahamiyati kabi umumiy g'oyalar mavjud bo'lib, shu bilan birga ular o'ziga xos madaniy qadriyatlarni ham aks ettiradi.

Kalit so'zlar

xalq ertaklari, bolalar adabiyoti, o'zbek folklori, ingliz folklori, qiyosiy adabiyot, axloqiy qadriyatlar.

INTRODUCTION

Folk tales represent one of the oldest forms of narrative expression in human culture. For centuries, societies have preserved their traditions, beliefs, and moral values through oral storytelling. Before the emergence of written literature, storytelling served as the primary method of transmitting knowledge from one generation to another. These narratives not only entertained audiences but also played an important educational role, particularly in the upbringing of children. Through simple yet symbolic stories, children learn about ethical values, social norms, and acceptable patterns of behavior. Researchers in folklore studies emphasize that folk tales are an essential component of cultural heritage. They reflect the worldview, traditions, and historical experiences of a society. According to Vladimir Propp, traditional folk narratives often follow similar structural patterns regardless of their geographical origin. Propp argues that many folk tales share a common sequence of narrative functions, including the introduction of the hero, the emergence of conflict, the hero's journey, and the final resolution of the story.¹³ Folk tales play a particularly important role in children's literature because they introduce complex moral ideas in an accessible and engaging way. Through

¹³ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, University of Texas Press, 1968, p. 25.

imaginative plots and symbolic characters, children are able to understand concepts such as justice, kindness, bravery, and honesty. Alan Dundes notes that traditional narratives serve as cultural models that help children interpret social behavior and moral responsibility.¹⁴ Uzbek folklore represents a rich tradition that has developed over many centuries. Uzbek folk tales reflect the cultural values and social structures of Central Asian communities. Themes such as respect for elders, hospitality, generosity, and loyalty to family members are frequently emphasized in these stories. These values are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural traditions of Uzbek society. As Mirzaev notes, Uzbek oral literature has long served as an important educational tool for teaching moral values to younger generations. One of the most well-known Uzbek folk tales is *Zumrad and Qimmat*. This story illustrates the moral contrast between kindness and jealousy. The character *Zumrad* represents patience, humility, and kindness, while *Qimmat* symbolizes envy and selfishness. The narrative ultimately demonstrates that positive moral qualities lead to success and happiness, whereas negative behavior leads to failure. Such stories serve as moral lessons that help shape children's understanding of ethical behaviour. Similarly, English folklore contains a wide range of stories that have traditionally been told to children. English folk tales often include adventurous plots, magical elements, and symbolic characters. Stories such as *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* are among the most famous examples of English children's folklore. These narratives frequently highlight themes of courage, intelligence, and perseverance. According to Stith Thompson, many European folk tales share common motifs and narrative patterns that appear across different cultures. These motifs include magical helpers, trials faced by the hero, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.¹⁵ Despite the geographical distance between Uzbekistan and England, many folk tales from these cultures share universal themes and narrative structures. This similarity can be explained by the fact that folk tales often address common human experiences such as struggle, success, justice, and moral responsibility. Joseph Campbell argues that many traditional stories follow a universal narrative pattern known as the "hero's journey," in which the protagonist faces challenges, receives assistance, and ultimately achieves transformation..

At the same time, folk tales also reflect the unique cultural values of the societies in which they originate. Uzbek folk tales often emphasize collective values such as family unity, respect for elders, and cooperation within the community. In contrast, English folk tales frequently highlight individual courage, independence,

¹⁴ Alan Dundes, *Folklore Matters*, University of Tennessee Press, 1989, p. 52.

¹⁵ Stith Thompson, *The Folktale*, University of California Press, 1977, p. 103

and personal initiative. These differences illustrate how storytelling traditions are shaped by cultural contexts and social values. Comparative analysis of folk narratives allows researchers to identify both universal storytelling patterns and culturally specific elements. Jack Zipes argues that studying fairy tales and folk narratives from different cultures provides valuable insight into the social and ideological structures that influence storytelling traditions. Therefore, comparative studies of folklore are important not only for literary analysis but also for understanding cultural identity and intercultural communication. By comparing Uzbek and English folk tales, researchers can explore how different cultures express similar moral concepts through storytelling while maintaining their unique cultural perspectives. The aim of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of Uzbek and English folk tales for children. The research focuses on identifying similarities and differences in narrative structures, character types, themes, and moral messages. Through this analysis, the study seeks to demonstrate how folk tales function both as literary narratives and as reflections of cultural values within different societies.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative comparative research methodology in order to analyze Uzbek and English folk tales intended for children. Comparative literary analysis is particularly useful for folklore studies because it allows researchers to examine similarities and differences between narrative traditions that developed in different cultural environments. Through this method, the research focuses on identifying common narrative structures, thematic patterns, character types, and cultural elements within selected folk tales. Comparative analysis has long been used as an important approach in literary studies. According to Henry Remak, comparative literature examines relationships between literary works across national and cultural boundaries and helps reveal both universal themes and culturally specific characteristics within literary traditions.¹⁶ In the context of folklore studies, comparative analysis allows scholars to explore how different societies use storytelling to express moral values, cultural beliefs, and social norms.

The research material for this study consists of several well-known Uzbek and English folk tales that are widely recognized within children's folklore traditions. Uzbek stories such as *Zumrad and Qimmat*, *The Clever Girl*, and *The Brave Youth* were selected as representative examples of Uzbek children's folk narratives. These stories have been preserved in oral tradition for centuries and later recorded in various folklore collections. Uzbek folklorists have documented numerous versions

¹⁶ Henry H. H. Remak, *Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function*, University of North Carolina Press, 1971, p. 3.

of these stories, demonstrating their popularity and cultural significance within Uzbek society. For the English tradition, several famous folk tales were selected, including Jack and the Beanstalk, The Three Little Pigs, and Goldilocks and the Three Bears. These stories represent classic examples of English children's folklore and have been widely studied by folklorists and literary scholars. Many of these tales were collected and published during the nineteenth century as part of efforts to preserve European oral traditions. The research methodology involves several stages of analysis. The first stage focuses on narrative structure analysis. In this stage, each story is examined in order to identify the sequence of events that form the narrative structure. Vladimir Propp's structural model of folk tales is particularly useful for this type of analysis. Propp identified a series of recurring narrative functions that frequently appear in traditional folk stories, such as the introduction of the hero, the emergence of conflict, the hero's departure on a journey, encounters with helpers or adversaries, and the final resolution of the narrative. By applying this model, the study examines whether Uzbek and English folk tales follow similar structural patterns.

The second stage of the research involves thematic analysis. Folk tales often contain recurring themes that reflect the moral and ethical values of a society. Common themes in children's folk tales include the triumph of good over evil, the importance of honesty and kindness, the value of intelligence and perseverance, and the consequences of greed or dishonesty. Alan Dundes notes that these themes serve an important pedagogical function by helping children understand social norms and moral expectations. In this research, thematic analysis is used to identify similarities and differences in the moral messages conveyed by Uzbek and English folk tales.

The third stage of analysis focuses on character types and narrative roles. Many folk tales include recurring archetypal characters such as the hero, the villain, the helper, and the wise advisor. These characters often symbolize particular moral qualities. For example, the hero usually represents bravery and determination, while the villain embodies negative traits such as greed or cruelty. Joseph Campbell's concept of the "hero's journey" also provides a useful framework for understanding the development of the protagonist within traditional narratives.¹⁷

In addition to narrative and thematic analysis, this study also examines the cultural context reflected in the selected folk tales. Folk narratives often reveal important aspects of the society in which they originate. Uzbek folk tales frequently include references to traditional family life, rural environments, and community relationships. Hospitality, respect for elders, and cooperation within the

¹⁷ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 41.

community are common values represented in these stories. Uzbek folklorist O. Ashurov notes that many Uzbek folk tales emphasize collective values and social harmony, reflecting the traditional communal structure of Central Asian societies. In contrast, English folk tales often emphasize themes of individual initiative and personal courage. Heroes in English stories frequently overcome challenges through cleverness, determination, and independence. These characteristics reflect cultural values associated with Western storytelling traditions. Jack Zipes argues that many European fairy tales highlight the importance of individual agency and personal transformation within the narrative structure. The final stage of the research involves synthesizing the results of these analytical methods in order to compare Uzbek and English folk tales systematically. By examining narrative structures, themes, character types, and cultural contexts, the study aims to identify both universal storytelling patterns and culturally specific elements. Through this methodological approach, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how folk tales function as both literary narratives and cultural expressions. The comparative analysis also helps demonstrate the role of children's folklore in shaping moral education and cultural identity across different societies.

RESULTS

The comparative analysis of Uzbek and English folk tales for children revealed several important similarities and differences in narrative structures, character development, thematic patterns, and cultural values. By examining selected stories from both traditions, the research demonstrates that despite their geographical and historical differences, Uzbek and English folk narratives share many universal storytelling elements. One of the most significant findings of the analysis is the presence of similar narrative structures in both traditions. Many of the analyzed stories follow a narrative pattern that includes an introduction, the emergence of conflict, the hero's struggle with obstacles, and the final resolution of the story. This narrative structure corresponds closely with Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative functions in folk tales. According to Propp, traditional folk narratives often follow a sequence of recurring functions that structure the development of the story.¹⁸

For example, in the Uzbek folk tale *Zumrad and Qimmat*, the narrative begins with the introduction of two contrasting characters whose personalities represent opposing moral values. The conflict arises from jealousy and injustice experienced by the protagonist. Throughout the story, the main character faces several challenges that test her patience and kindness. Eventually, the narrative resolves with the triumph of good behavior and the punishment of negative actions. This structure closely resembles the narrative pattern identified in many European folk

¹⁸ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, University of Texas Press, 1968, p. 74.

tales. A similar structure can be observed in English children's folk stories. In the tale Jack and the Beanstalk, the protagonist begins the story as an ordinary boy facing poverty and hardship. The conflict arises when Jack encounters the magical beanstalk and decides to climb it in search of opportunity. During his journey, he faces a series of dangers, particularly the giant who threatens his life. Ultimately, Jack defeats the giant and secures prosperity for himself and his mother. This progression from challenge to success reflects a common narrative structure within traditional folk storytelling. Another important similarity between Uzbek and English folk tales is the use of clear moral lessons. Folk narratives often function as educational tools that help children understand the consequences of ethical and unethical behavior. In both traditions, positive characters who demonstrate virtues such as kindness, honesty, and intelligence are usually rewarded, while negative characters who exhibit greed, cruelty, or dishonesty ultimately face punishment. For instance, in many Uzbek folk tales, the protagonist succeeds because of patience, humility, and moral integrity. The character Zumrad in the story Zumrad and Qimmat is rewarded for her kindness and perseverance, while Qimmat suffers negative consequences because of her jealousy and selfishness. Such narratives reinforce important cultural values related to morality and social responsibility.¹⁹

English folk tales also convey strong moral lessons. In the story The Three Little Pigs, the pigs who demonstrate diligence and careful planning survive the wolf's attacks, while the pigs who act carelessly lose their homes. The story emphasizes the importance of hard work and preparation in overcoming challenges. According to folklorist Alan Dundes, these types of narratives serve as moral frameworks that help children understand socially desirable behavior. Another significant similarity between the two traditions is the presence of imaginative and supernatural elements. Many folk tales include magical objects, talking animals, or extraordinary events that enhance the narrative's appeal to children. These elements stimulate imagination and make the story more engaging. For example, the magical beanstalk in the English tale Jack and the Beanstalk creates an imaginative setting that allows the hero to enter a world of adventure. Similarly, Uzbek folk tales frequently include magical helpers, mysterious creatures, or symbolic transformations that contribute to the narrative's development.

However, the comparative analysis also revealed several differences between Uzbek and English folk tales. One major difference lies in the representation of social values within the narratives. Uzbek folk tales often emphasize collective values such as family unity, cooperation, and respect for elders. The protagonists

¹⁹ T. Mirzaev, O'zbek xalq og'zaki ijodi, Toshkent: Fan, 2005, p. 103.

frequently receive help from family members or wise elders who guide them toward success. This reflects the communal structure of traditional Uzbek society, where cooperation and mutual support are highly valued. In contrast, English folk tales often highlight individual initiative and personal bravery. The hero typically solves problems independently without relying heavily on assistance from others. This emphasis on self-reliance reflects cultural values associated with Western societies. Jack Zipes notes that many European fairy tales emphasize individual agency and personal transformation within the narrative. Another difference observed in the analysis concerns the portrayal of social environments. Uzbek folk tales frequently include references to rural life, traditional family structures, and local customs. These elements reflect the historical lifestyle of Central Asian communities. English folk tales, on the other hand, often take place in more generalized or fantastical settings such as castles, forests, or magical lands. The comparative analysis therefore demonstrates that while Uzbek and English folk tales share many universal narrative features, they also reflect the cultural identities of their respective societies. These similarities and differences illustrate how storytelling traditions can both unite and differentiate cultures.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of Uzbek and English folk tales for children demonstrates that folklore functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as an important cultural and educational instrument. The results obtained in this study confirm the idea that traditional narratives serve as tools for transmitting social values, cultural norms, and ethical principles across generations. Through simple yet meaningful narratives, folk tales provide children with models of behavior and moral reasoning that influence their understanding of the world. One of the most significant findings of the research is the presence of universal narrative structures that appear in both Uzbek and English folk traditions. Many of the analyzed stories follow a similar structural pattern consisting of the introduction of a protagonist, the emergence of conflict, a sequence of trials or challenges, and a final resolution in which justice is restored. This structure corresponds closely with Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative functions in folk tales. According to Propp, many traditional narratives share a common structural framework regardless of their cultural origin²⁰. Another important observation is the central role of moral instruction within children's folk tales. Both Uzbek and English stories emphasize virtues such as honesty, kindness, intelligence, and perseverance. These moral values are often represented through the actions of the main characters. Positive characters who demonstrate ethical behavior are rewarded, while those who

²⁰ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, University of Texas Press, 1968, p. 80.

exhibit greed, cruelty, or dishonesty face negative consequences. Such narrative patterns reinforce the idea that moral behavior leads to positive outcomes. Alan Dundes notes that folklore functions as an informal educational system through which societies transmit behavioral expectations and ethical standards to younger generations.

In Uzbek folklore, moral lessons are often connected with social harmony and communal relationships. Many Uzbek folk tales highlight the importance of family unity, respect for elders, hospitality, and cooperation within the community. These themes reflect the traditional values of Central Asian societies, where collective well-being and social harmony are considered fundamental principles. Uzbek folklorist T. Mirzaev emphasizes that folk narratives often serve as cultural reflections of historical social structures and everyday life in Uzbek communities. English folk tales, while also emphasizing moral values, frequently highlight individual initiative and personal courage. Heroes in English stories often achieve success through their own intelligence and determination. The character of Jack in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, for example, demonstrates bravery and cleverness while confronting danger independently. Such narratives reflect cultural ideals associated with independence and personal achievement in Western societies. Another aspect revealed by the research is the important role of imagination and fantasy in children's folk tales. Magical elements such as talking animals, enchanted objects, and supernatural transformations appear frequently in both Uzbek and English narratives. These imaginative elements help attract children's attention and encourage creative thinking. Scholars argue that fantasy in folklore allows children to explore complex emotional and social situations within a safe and symbolic environment.

Despite the similarities between the two traditions, cultural differences remain evident in the thematic emphasis and narrative settings of the stories. Uzbek folk tales often portray traditional rural environments, family relationships, and social cooperation. English folk tales, in contrast, frequently include more generalized or fantastical settings such as castles, forests, and magical kingdoms. These differences highlight how storytelling traditions are shaped by the cultural environments in which they develop. Jack Zipes argues that fairy tales and folk narratives are closely connected to the social and ideological contexts of their societies. According to Zipes, the themes and characters found in traditional stories often reflect the values, fears, and aspirations of the communities that create them²¹. Therefore, the comparative analysis of Uzbek and English folk tales demonstrates that while storytelling traditions may differ in cultural details, they often share universal

²¹ Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Routledge, 2006, p. 124.

themes related to morality, justice, and human experience. These similarities reveal the shared human need to communicate values and life lessons through narrative. Furthermore, studying folk tales from different cultures contributes to intercultural understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. When children are exposed to stories from different traditions, they gain insight into other cultures while also recognizing common human values. This makes comparative folklore studies particularly valuable within the fields of literature, education, and cultural research.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined Uzbek and English folk tales for children through a comparative literary analysis. The research focused on identifying similarities and differences in narrative structures, themes, character types, and cultural values within selected stories from both traditions. The findings demonstrate that Uzbek and English folk tales share many universal narrative elements. Both traditions employ similar storytelling structures that include the introduction of a hero, the emergence of conflict, the hero's journey through a series of challenges, and the final resolution in which justice is restored. These structural similarities support the argument that folk narratives across different cultures often follow common narrative patterns. Another important conclusion of the study is the strong emphasis on moral education within children's folklore. Folk tales often present ethical lessons through symbolic characters and narrative outcomes. Characters who demonstrate virtues such as kindness, intelligence, courage, and perseverance are rewarded, while those who display negative qualities such as greed or dishonesty are punished. These narrative patterns help children understand the moral consequences of human actions. At the same time, the analysis also revealed several cultural differences between Uzbek and English storytelling traditions. Uzbek folk tales frequently emphasize collective values such as family unity, respect for elders, hospitality, and cooperation within the community. These themes reflect the historical and cultural foundations of Uzbek society. English folk tales, in contrast, often highlight individual courage, independence, and personal initiative. Heroes frequently succeed because they demonstrate intelligence, bravery, and determination. Such themes correspond with cultural values associated with Western storytelling traditions.

Despite these differences, both traditions ultimately communicate similar moral messages. The triumph of good over evil, the importance of honesty, and the value of perseverance appear consistently across the analyzed narratives. This demonstrates that folk tales address universal human concerns while simultaneously reflecting the cultural identities of their respective societies. The

study also highlights the continuing relevance of folk tales in modern children's literature. Even in contemporary society, traditional narratives remain important tools for moral education and cultural transmission. Through storytelling, children develop imagination, emotional understanding, and awareness of ethical values. Furthermore, comparative studies of folklore contribute to a deeper understanding of intercultural communication. By examining storytelling traditions from different cultures, researchers can identify shared human values as well as culturally specific perspectives. Such research promotes respect for cultural diversity and encourages dialogue between different literary traditions. Future research may expand this study by analyzing additional folklore traditions or by exploring the role of folk narratives in contemporary media and education. Investigating how traditional stories are adapted for modern audiences could provide valuable insights into the evolving relationship between folklore and children's literature.

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