

*Comparative Study of
Tales and Legends
across Europe*

*Try to Tell a Timeless Tale
Erasmus+ KA229 Project*



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, an Erasmus+ KA229 project called “Try to Tell a Timeless Tale” was approved. This comparative study is a result of that project which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. KA229 is a key action for cooperation and innovation making possible for organisations from different participating countries to work together, to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth.

Participating schools in this project are all Secondary level with students aged 13 to 18, being all public except for Turkey. IES Miguel Fernández from Melilla, Spain, is the coordinator school and partners are Hof Skole from Holmestrand, Norway, The Emelwerda College in Emmeloord, Netherlands, Wirral Grammar School For Boys from Liverpool, United Kingdom and İEİEV Özel Anadolu Lisesi from Istanbul, Turkey.

The project topic was motivated to incentivise European Cultural Heritage and participants could deepen in their own roots as European citizens. Tales are transmitted from generation to generation across cultures and civilisations, spontaneously, from the necessity of creating explanations to natural phenomena, enhance moral values, civic behaviour and express aspects of cultures. Even though originally from specific places, they have no borders and become universal over time.

Through research, study and creation of tales and legends from every participant country, participants realise that they should value their cultural backgrounds as well as others’. Cultural heritage broadens opportunities for education and lifelong learning, including a better understanding of history and present.



METHODOLOGY

To begin with this project activity we created a data form with 14 different fields to be filled by students in their research:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <i>1- Name in original language</i> | <i>2- Source</i> |
| <i>3- Name in English</i> | <i>4- Country of Origin</i> |
| <i>5- Countries it has been spread to</i> | <i>6- Author</i> |
| <i>7- Date of creation</i> | <i>8- Date or time of plot</i> |
| <i>9- Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index number</i> | |
| <i>10- Classification: (Options) Includes animals, it is realistic, involves magic, involves gods, involves fantastic characters, it is an anecdote or joke</i> | |
| <i>11- Summary</i> | <i>12- Versions</i> |
| <i>13- Erasmus+ Researcher</i> | <i>14- School</i> |

Students started research of local and national tales in a variety of ways. They asked parents and grandparents, visited libraries or their own books from childhood, used the Internet and some participant schools organized a visit to elderly organizations where youth and elder could interact and share intergenerational experiences. After choosing or learning about a tale, students filled the data form as much as possible but needed deeper research to complete it. They reported special difficulties in fields 5 and 9, not being sure if the tale was spread to more regions that they could find or not, and also how to find the exact ATU number.

During exchanges of students they worked in cooperative mixed groups of students from different countries in order to complete data or add new tales to the database.

They completed a total of 157 data forms that were reviewed by teachers and compelled using the Airtable app. Link to the complete database:

<https://airtable.com/shrPron6vaoybsDSY>



DATA CHARTS AND ANALYSIS

For this study we chose the following fields as we consider them the most relevant to analyze and extract conclusions from.

2- Source

5- Countries it has been spread to

7- Date of creation

9- *Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index* number

12- Versions:

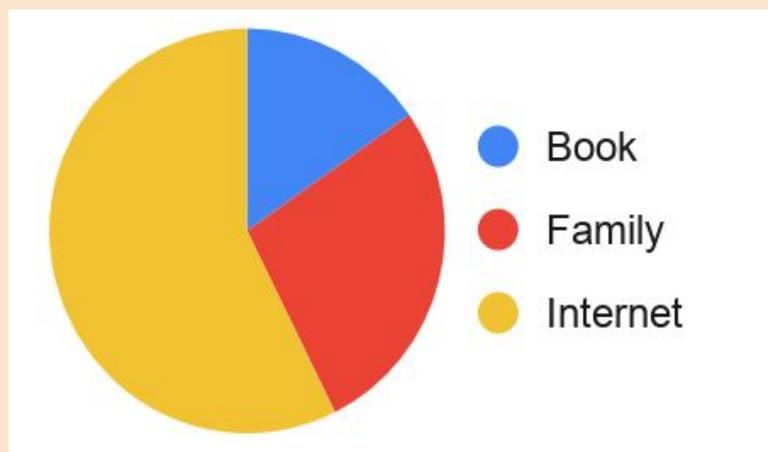
4- Country of Origin

6- Author (Known or unknown)

8- Date or time of plot

10- Classification

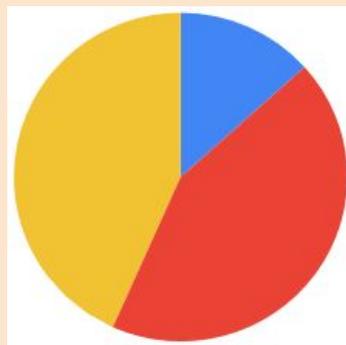
SOURCE



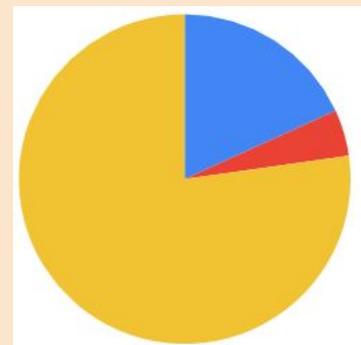
NETHERLANDS



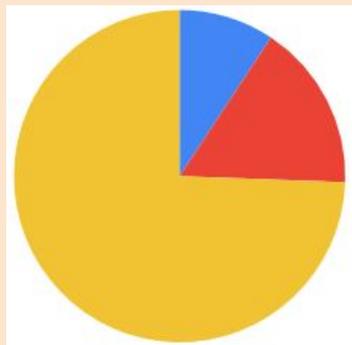
TURKEY



UNITED KINGDOM



SPAIN



NORWAY

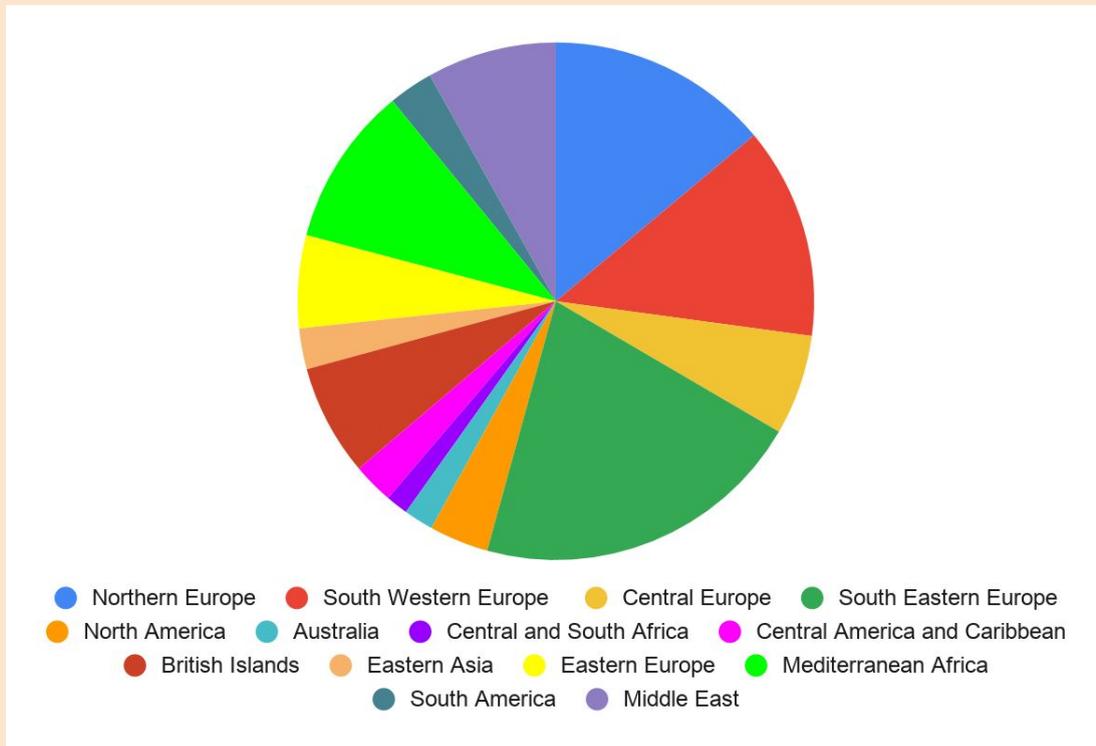


Even though teachers promoted oral communication with family members and elderly organizations, students still preferred searching on their own on the Internet (56.1%) or books (14.6%). On the other hand students who learned tales or legends talking to others, reported a most significant experience in their longlife learning training.

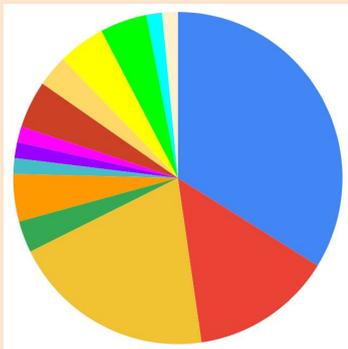
Comparing countries we can see Internet is the main search in every country except for Turkey where it ties with Family. In The Netherlands and Norway Books and Family make around 50% while in Spain and England Internet goes up to 75%. Turkey and Norway followed more teacher's suggestions and asked their families while The Netherlands and Spain used Books for research more than others.



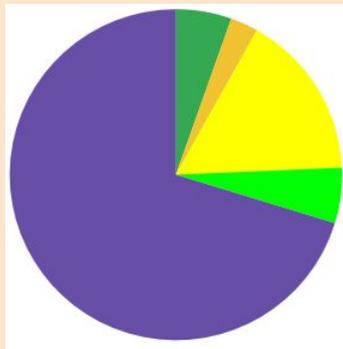
COUNTRIES IT HAS BEEN SPREAD TO



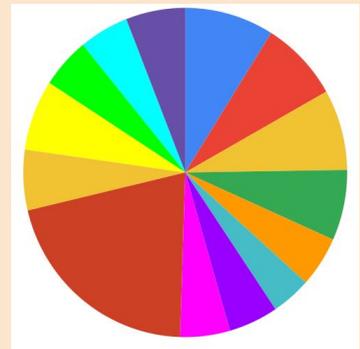
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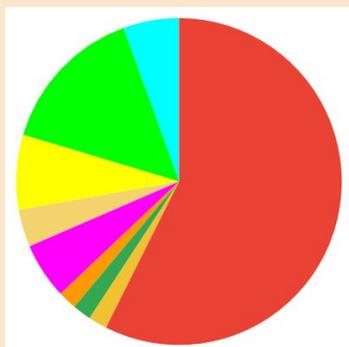
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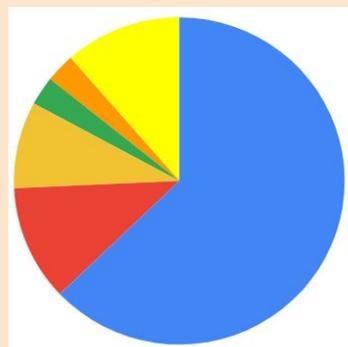
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For this field, the World was divided into wide regions as follows:

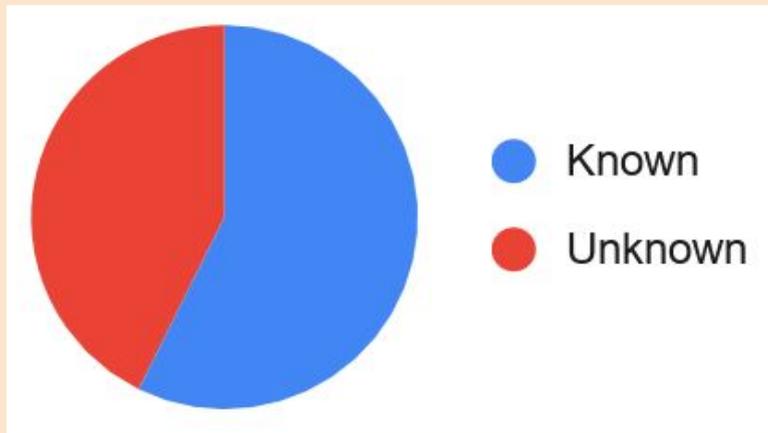
Central Europe, Australia, Central and South Africa, Central America and Caribbean, British Islands, Eastern Asia, Eastern Europe, Mediterranean Africa, North America, Northern Europe, South America, South Eastern Europe (Italy and East), South Western Europe (France and West) and Middle East.

Regions holding a participant country in the project have obviously the highest percentages being the most South Eastern Europe (Italy and East).

As stated before, this field was reported by students as one of the most difficult to research and it can make the least reliable conclusions of this study. A way to try to fix this issue came up during analysis sessions but could not be conducted before the end of the project. It would consist in making contact with schools from different countries of every region and send the list of tales and summaries. It would take a long time to contact them and get results back so it should be done as an after project activity.



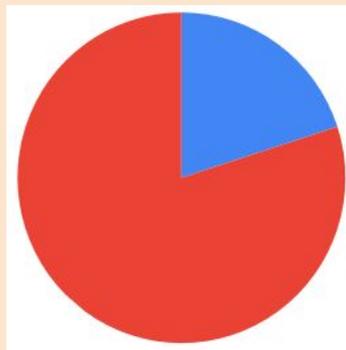
AUTHOR



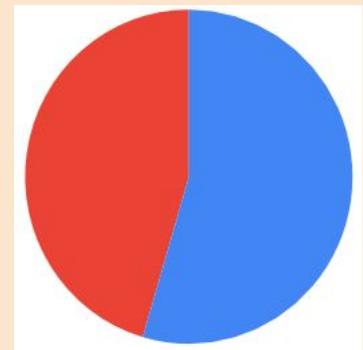
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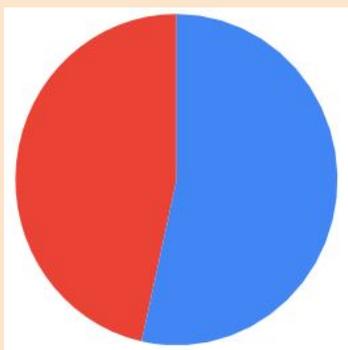
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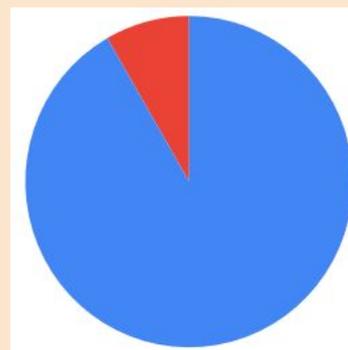
UNITED KINGDOM



SPAIN

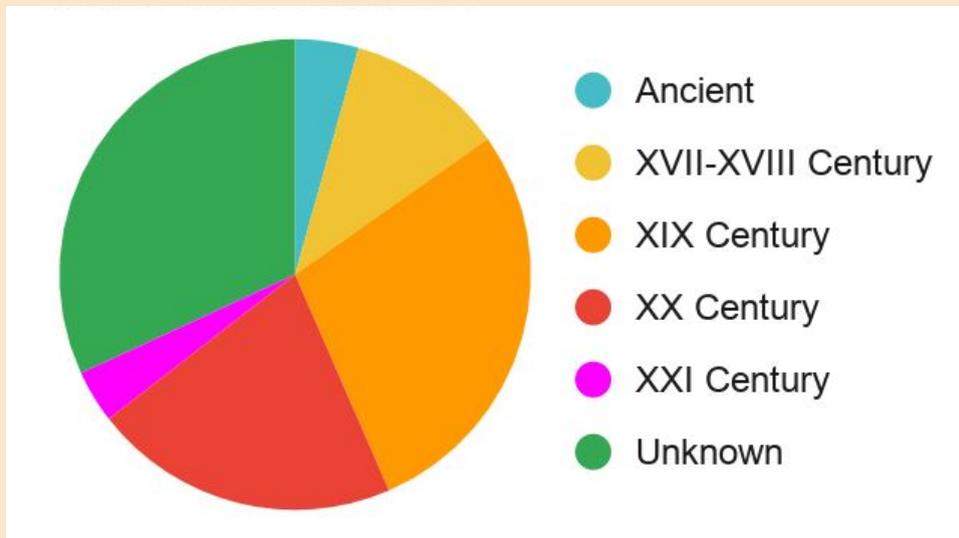


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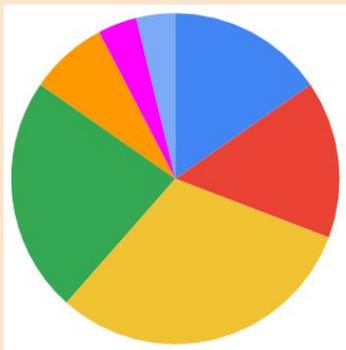


Database includes names of authors but for this comparative study we will analyze whether it is Known or Unknown. Overall results show some balance with 57.3% Known over 42.7% Unknown. Spain and UK give similar results but Turkey differs from average with 80% Unknown and Norway (91.7%) and The Netherlands (65.4%) significantly show more Known than Unknown authors.

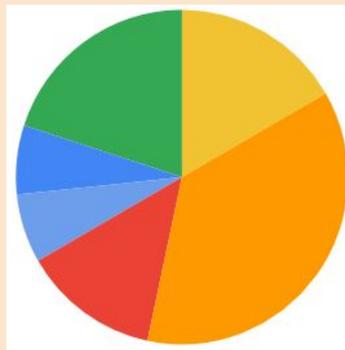
DATE OF CREATION



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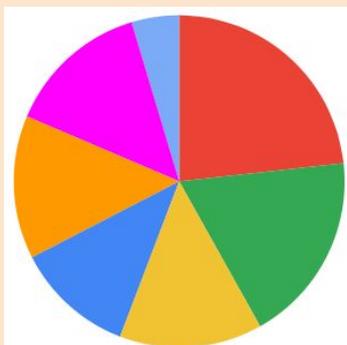
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Researchers concentrated less in Ancient (3.8%) and modern tales and legends and 21st Century (3.2%), found similar numbers of tales and legends from the Middle Ages (12.1%) and 17-18th centuries (9.6%). 18.5% were found from the 20th Century and the most known date of creation was the 19th Century with 24.8%. Unknown was higher than any age range with 28% of them.

Comparing countries, all show similar percentages for Unknown date of creation, Ancient tales are not present in the UK or Norway,

Middle Ages are found significantly less than average (12.1%) in Turkey (6.7%) while other countries have similar percentages.

Tales from the 17th-18th century are not found in Norway, with the Netherlands (7.7%) and the UK (4.5%) showing much less percentages than Spain (14%) or Turkey (16.7%).

The 19th century is the top date of creation for Turkey (36.7%), the Netherlands (30.8%) and the UK (31.8%) while it is third in Spain (14%) and Norway (16.7%).

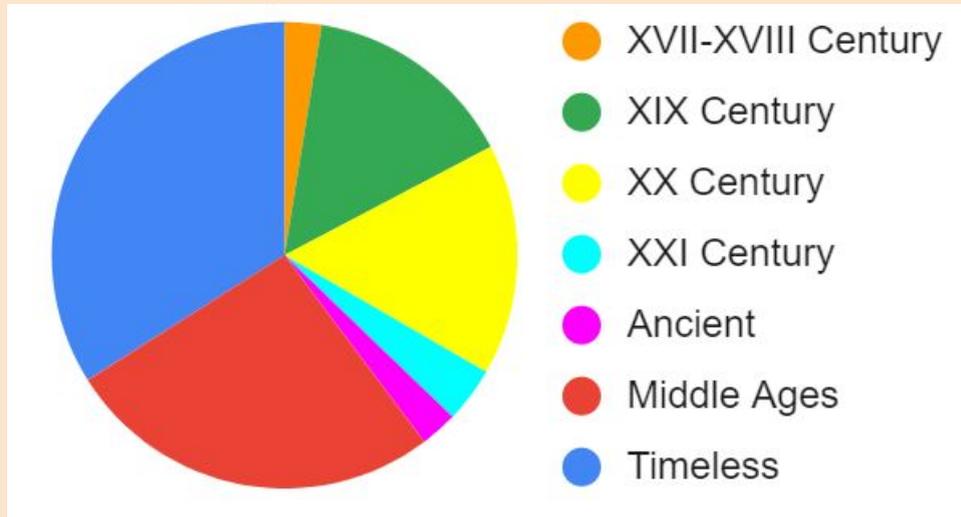
For the 20th century we find similar percentages in all countries, with only Turkey (13.3%) below average being Spain (23.3%) the one with most tales and legends in this age range.

The 21st century is the least age range of the study for date of creation and there is none from the Netherlands, Spain or Turkey.

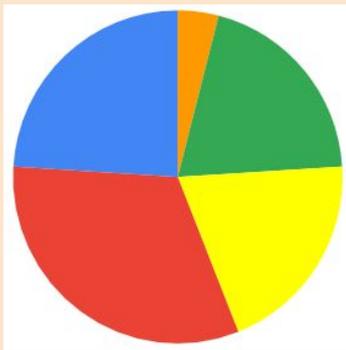
The UK has 4.5% and Norway tops this list with 12.5%.



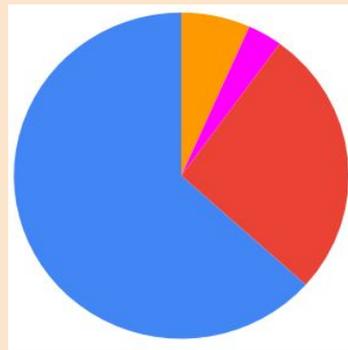
DATE OF PLOT



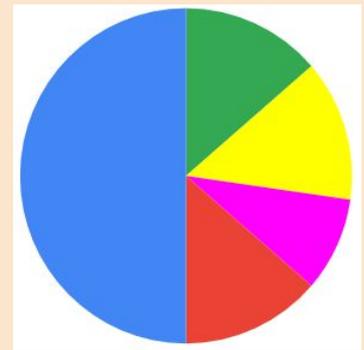
NETHERLANDS



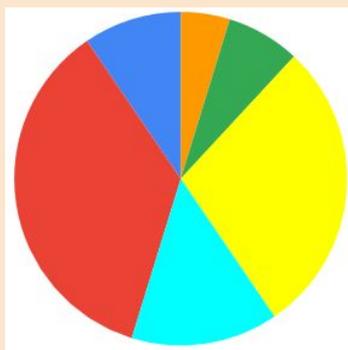
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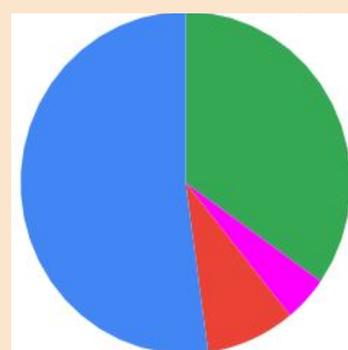
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Tales and legends added to the database set their plot mostly Timeless (34%) or in Middle Ages (26.3%) scenarios. On the opposite side we find Ancient (2.6%), 17th-18th century (2.6%) and 21st century (3.8%) and in the middle we find the 19th century (14.7%) and the 20th century (16%).

Timeless tale was defined as a tale that is not affected by changes in society or fashion, tales that show an emotional truth of life that can connect with another human being and which experience transcends any period of time.

Timeless tales are clearly dominating tales from Turkey (63.3%), the UK (50%) and Norway (52.2%) but it drops to second place in the Netherlands (24%) fourth place in Spain (9.5%) which is significantly low.

Ancient plots are shown only in Turkey (3.3%), the UK (4.5%) and Norway (4.3%).

Middle Ages plots are majority in Spain (35.7%) and the Netherlands (32%), in Turkey (26.7%) Middle Ages plots are still relevant while in the UK (13.6%) and Norway (8.7%) percentages are far from average and majority.

It occurs the same with 17th-18th century plots, they are found only in three countries: the Netherlands (4%), Turkey (6.7%) and Spain (4.8%).

The 19th century is not present in Turkey and low in Spain (7.1%) but on the other hand, Norway has 19th century plots in second place after Timeless tales (34.8%).

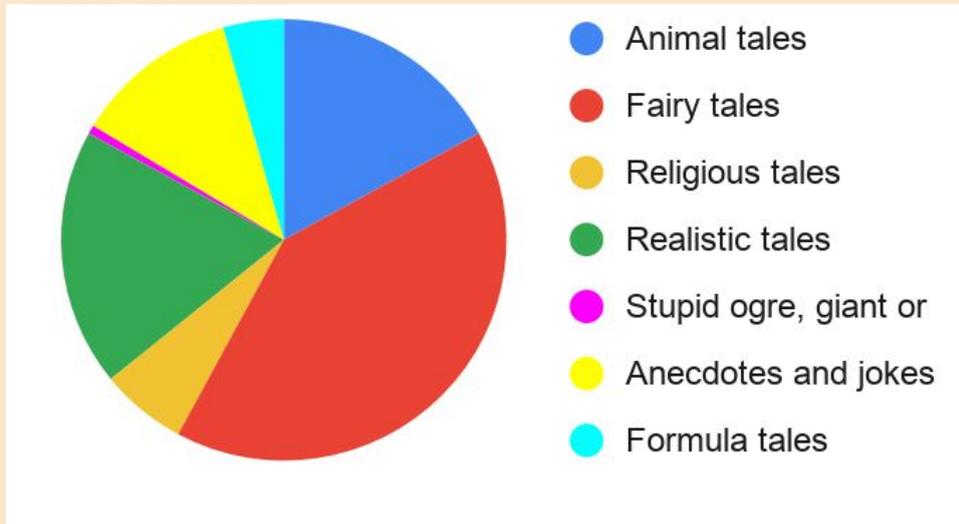
The Netherlands (20%) and the UK (13.6%) have similar percentages in this range age.

Plots set in the 20th century are not present in Turkey or Norway tales of the database but place second in Spain (28.6%), it is also significant in the Netherlands (20%) and the UK (13.6%).

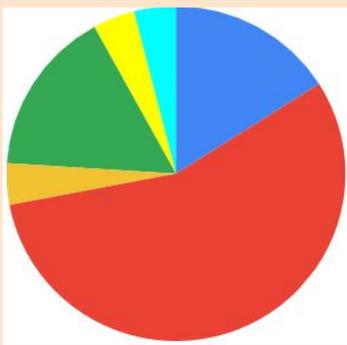
Only Spanish tales have plots in the 21st century with a 14.3%.



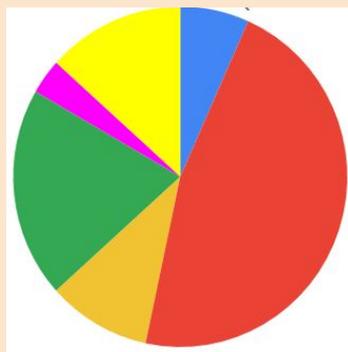
AERNE THOMPSON UThER (ATU) NUMBER



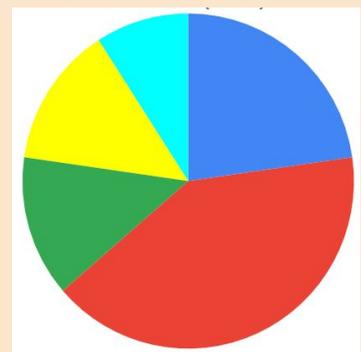
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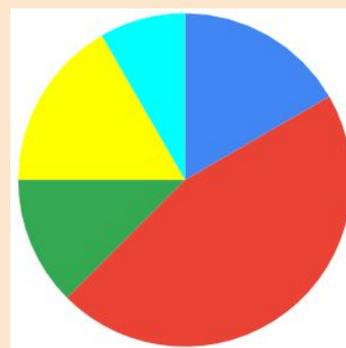
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ATU stands for Aarne-Thompson-Uther and it refers to the most standardized categorizations system for Tales and Legends. It was started in 1910 by Antti Aarne and revised twice: Stith Thompson in 1961 and Hans-Jörg Uther in 2004. The system catalogues fairy tales, folk tales and fables into six main categories as shown in the graphics. Subcategories group them according to the plot, assigning them to numbers of the main categories, and in some cases letters to distinguish different versions. This is the list of main categories and their assigned numbers:

Animal tales 1-299; Fairy tales 300-749; Religious tales 750-849; Realistic tales 850-999; Tales of the stupid ogre, giant or evil 1000-1999; Anecdotes and jokes 1200-1999; Formula tales 2000-2399.

This field was the most difficult to achieve by students, even though fitting tales and legends in one of the main categories was easy, finding the exact number was not in many cases.

Tales and Legends in this project's database have a majority of Fairy tales (40.9%), followed by Realistic tales (18.9%) and Animal tales (17%). Anecdotes and jokes was over 10% (11.9%) and below that were the other three Religious tales (6.3%), Formula tales (4.4%) and only one tale was found as Stupid ogre, giant or evil in Turkey.

Fairy tales were the majority in every single country as well but only in the Netherlands it was over 50% (56%), being Spain the one with the lowest percentage (34.9%).

Religious tales were found in Spain (11.6%), Turkey (10%) and the Netherlands (4%).

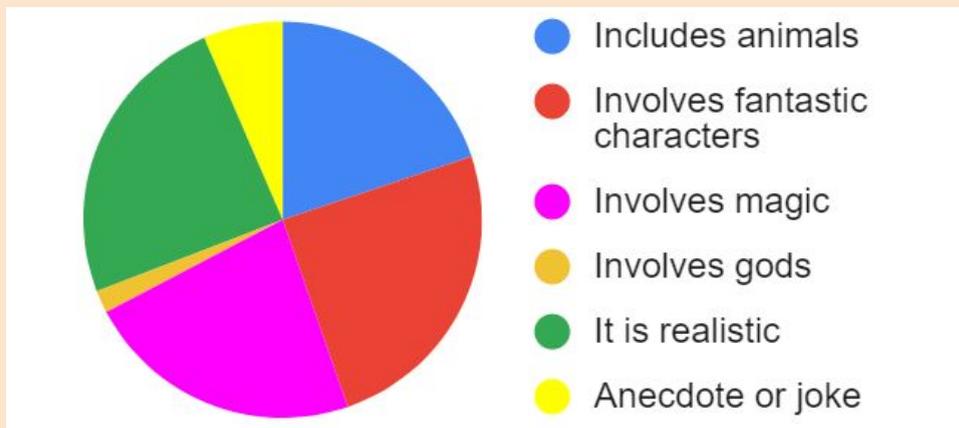
Realistic tales were represented in similar percentages as well, from Norway (12.5%) to Spain (23.3%) where they placed second after Fairy tales.

Anecdotes and jokes tales were also similar among countries but the Netherlands (4%), ranging from Spain (11.6%) to Norway (16.7%).

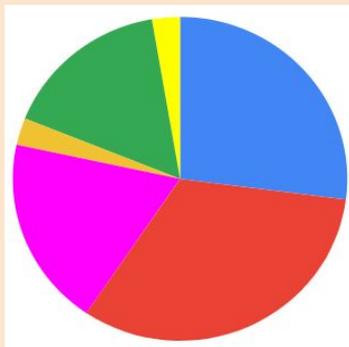
Formula tales show more differences since Turkey has none, while the Netherlands (4%) and Spain (4.7%) make around half of Norway (8.3%) and the UK (9.1%).



CLASSIFICATION



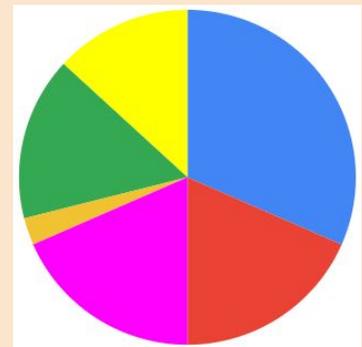
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TURKEY



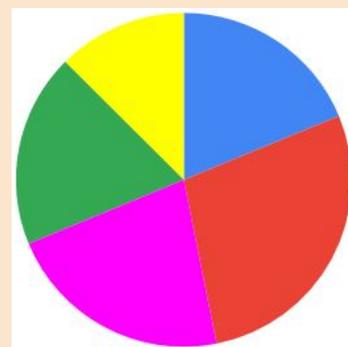
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This classification came up during project meetings as we found it can be useful providing this particular information about Tales and Legends. We were surprised to find tales that could be realistic but involving magic or fantastic characters at the same time.

Four categories have percentages around 20%: “Involves fantastic characters” (24.9%), “It is realistic” (24.4%), “Involves magic” (22.6%) and “Includes animals” (19.8%). The lowest percentages belong to “Anecdote or joke” (6.5%) and “Involves gods” (1.8%).

“Includes animals” was top in the UK (31.6%), second in the Netherlands (27%), lower in Norway (18.8%) and it appears significantly less in Spain (10.3%) and Turkey (8.9%).

The Netherlands has “Involves fantastic characters” at their top with 32.4%, as well as Norway with 28.1%.

The UK shows less percentages in this category (18.4%) but still second among other categories.

“Involves magic” is the top category for Turkey with 37.8% and it is second in Norway (21.9%), Spain (20.7%) and the UK (18.4%).

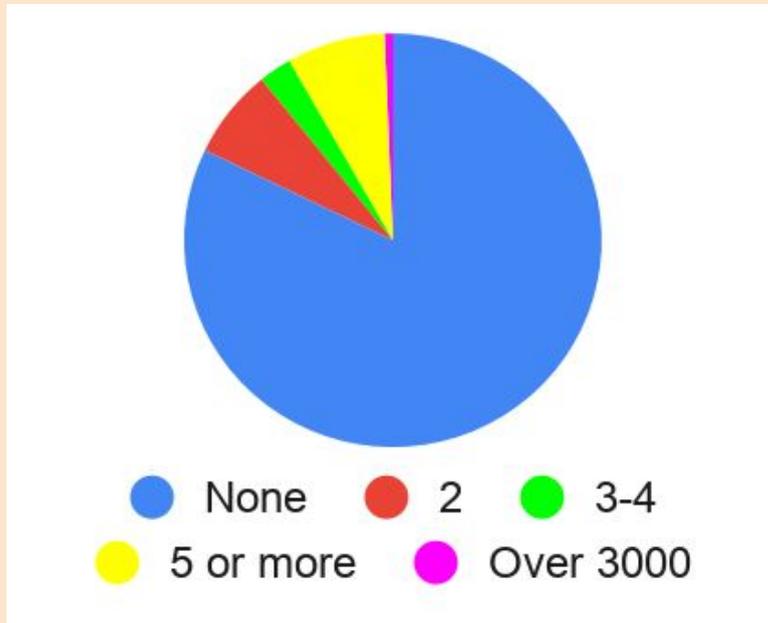
“Involves gods” is the category with the lowest percentage in every country from Spain (5.2%) to Norway (0%).

“Realistic tales” are top and significantly above average in Spain (36.2%) while in other countries this category places third or lower.

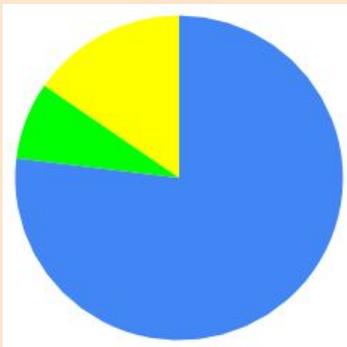
“Anecdote or joke” appears also little in every country but we find more in the UK (13.2%) and Norway (12.5%), while in the Netherlands it drops to 2.7%.



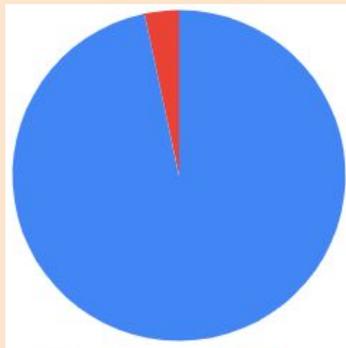
VERSIONS



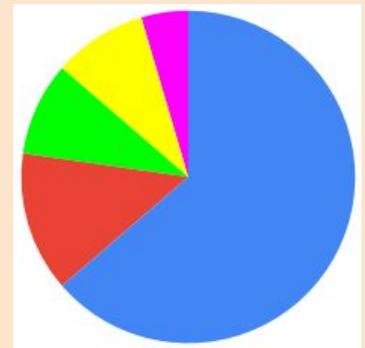
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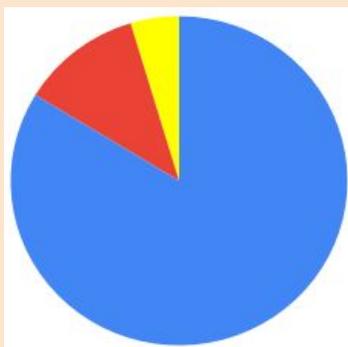
TURKEY



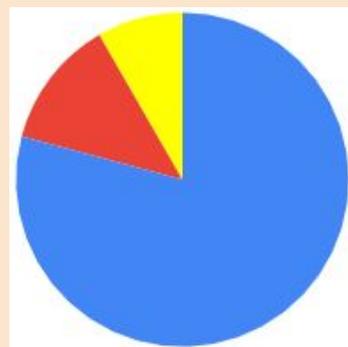
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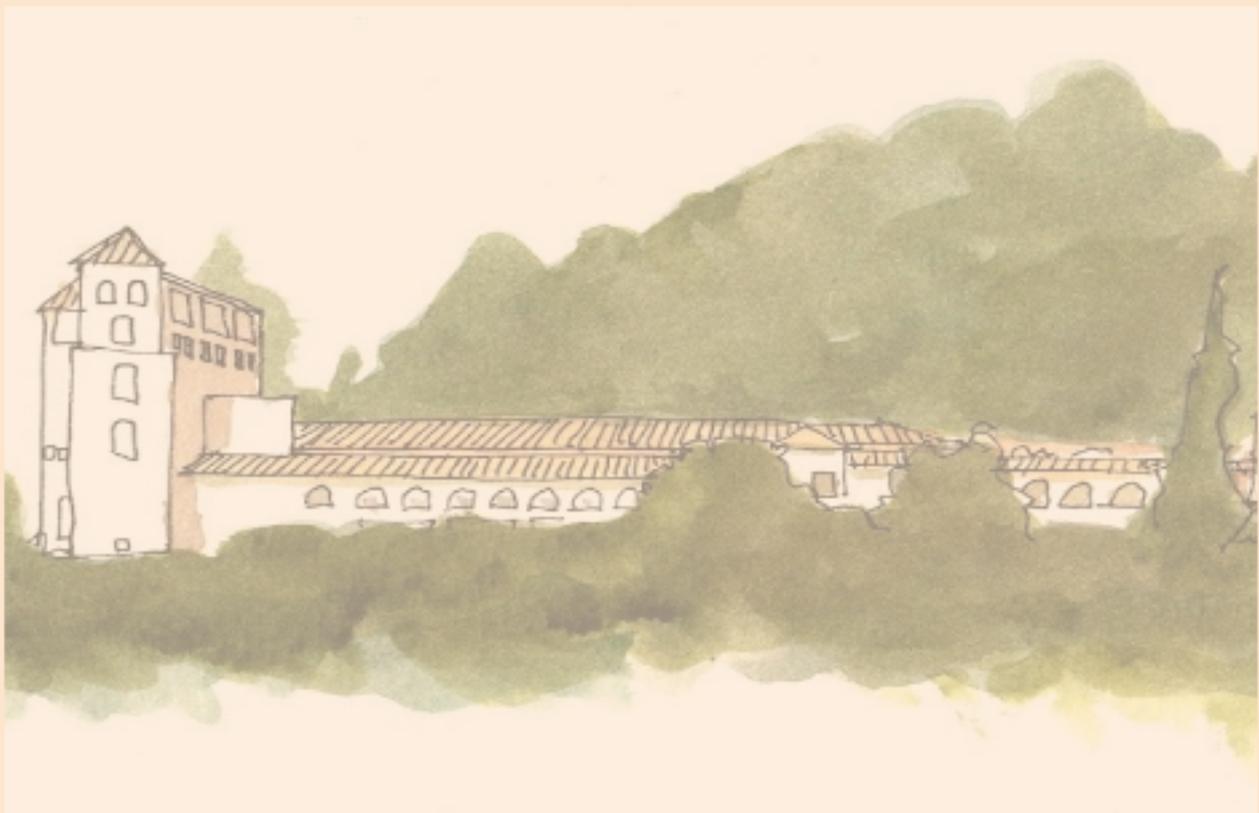
This field is also difficult to be sure of its accuracy since versions can be found in different countries and cultures around the world but with very different titles and they have not been compared yet. In any case within the country of origin we can find different versions of the same tale or versions among different countries are known and can be tracked. Most tales in our database have no other version (82.2%), followed far by 5 or more (7.6%) and 2 versions (7%). Only 2.5% of them have 3-4 versions and as a curiosity, Cinderella has over 3000 versions around the world.

Comparing countries we find Turkey with the most tales and legends without any other version (96.7) and the UK the least (63.6%).

None of the Netherlands tales have 2 versions and we find the most in the UK (13.6%).

We can not find tales with 3-4 versions in Turkey, Spain or Norway and also the UK has the highest percentage in this category (9.1%).

5 or more versions are present in every country but Turkey, with the Netherlands having the highest (15.4%).



FINAL CONCLUSIONS

First First of all we need to understand the process and context followed for the accomplishment of this database and study. Students and teachers made a big effort researching and trying to be accurate but we are not experts and our conclusions can be erroneous because of that. We also found a huge amount of Tales and Legends that could not be included due to lack of time and it would be for future activities of participant schools to expand our Airtable database and make charts more accurate. Anyone willing to cooperate can contact any participant school or use our [template for Airtable](#).

The experience for teachers and students has been very positive and met all our objectives, improving competencies and skills throughout the process: literacy, English, IT, teamwork, leadership as well as social and civic responsibilities.

They could see the advantages of cooperation and diversity, helping understanding of our common European Cultural Heritage in order to enhance our sense of European citizenship. It was inspirational and motivational for participating organizations as well, strengthening links among different parts of our communities.

As a team they built strong relationships and learning from their peers was more effective and permanent as they gained new perspectives. It also promoted creativity, enthusiasm, inclusion, decision making and communications skills.



Students acquired new knowledge and in spite of the differences they saw in legends, they learnt that deep down, people are the same. It also helped students develop critical reading skills of phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, study positive character traits and discover a love of stories. They are entertaining and pass along core values. Students could see the importance of making effective decisions under difficult circumstances. Students were engaged in discussions about the outcomes of “good” and “poor” decisions and it was a perfect way to raise awareness as goodness, honesty and unity since they are depicted as important virtues in tales.

It encouraged students to become active European citizens with lifelong learning training through the knowledge of their own cultural heritage as well as other European countries.

And they lived happily ever after





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