



## Synopsis

What's your favorite fairy tale? Whether it's Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Hansel and Gretel, or another story, your answer reveals something significant about you, your experiences, and your soul. In this penetrating book, Joan Gould brings to the surface the hidden meanings in fairy tales and myths, and illuminates what they can tell you about the stages in your own life. As Gould explores the transformations that women go through from youth to old age—leaving home and mother, the first experience of sexuality, the surprising ambivalence of marriage, the spiritual work required by menopause and aging—her keen observations will enrich your awareness of your inner life. Full of archetypal figures known to us all, *Spinning Straw into Gold* also includes stories from the lives of ordinary women that clarify the insights to be gained from the beloved tales that have been handed down from one generation to the next.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For the record, my answer to Joan Gould's first question--"What's your favorite fairy tale?"--is "Beauty and the Beast". This question begins a beautiful, lyrical exploration of many fairy tales, both famous and obscure, and how they relate to the different stages of women's lives. In the Sleeping Beauty chapter, for example, she delves into the psyche of a young woman just awakening into sexuality; for Beauty and the Beast she explores a woman's experience with courtship and the beginning of marriage, and for the tale of Demeter she talks about being an older woman, watching one's child choose her own path. These are just a few examples. For every tale Gould draws

parallels to other, more modern novels and movies that contain fairy-tale archetypes, like Jane Eyre, Pretty Woman, The Story of O, Harry Potter, and Wuthering Heights. I saw myself reflected over and over in these pages, both in the chapter that best fit my current circumstances and in all those that preceded it. I concur with the reviewer who says she wished she'd had this book when she was 18. It just "clicks" so well with things I'd experienced but not known how to name, and ties them in with the stories I've always loved, revealing to me just why those stories never lose their resonance with me. My only quibble is that Gould focuses more on the biological aspects of womanhood--menstruation, sex, childbirth, menopause--than on other sorts of choices women make, like career and creativity. She does mention these things, but they are not given as much emphasis.

I found the authors writing to be poetic and the content verbally well formed. From this perspective it was a good book. What I found disconcerting was that this writer seems fixated on the female biology rather than the MANY things that make a woman a whole person. These fairy tales were written long ago when society viewed women as little more than objects. I feel that the author is very good at continuing this line of thought. If one were not to know any intelligent women you might think, after reading this book, that the only pursuit that a woman had in life was to get a mate and procreate, and that the best moments in a woman's life are experienced on her back and that she pines for this day and night. This book's off-balance approach to the MANY aspects of being human degrades the person to less than human. The book's constant ability to make almost ALL things sexual or to sexualize them became cheap and overly easy. In the end I walked away feeling little more than an unthinking chimp in the zoo because of the lack of its ability to validate that a woman's content is far more than just her sexuality. If you are confused or unsure about your physiology or biology and why you behave in certain ways, and would like it explained through fairy tales then this is the book for you. If you want to be validated as a whole person that is more than just a biological hormonal sex object then this book could prove to be upsetting. I personally was not ready to have womanhood degraded to only such narrow aspects but, maybe others might find it entertaining to explore their body chemistry through fairy tales.

We have always known that fairy tales speak to our souls. If you want to know why, you will find this book fascinating. Think of a combination of Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung and you have *Spinning Straw into Gold*. It is amazing how these stories speak to us across centuries. And it is also fascinating to see how differently - and richly -- they are interpreted in this book. Most of what I knew

was in the Disney versions, and I have seen here there is a lot more to explore! So reach over the oceans, back over time, into our collective unconscious to see what messages there are for you. I highly recommend the journey!

I am on page 316 and don't want it to end. I have written reference notes to be able to get back to those pages I want to read over and over. Born in 1940 in midwest farm country, most of my teen age years was spent wishing I would have been born a boy; I saw a man's world out there. Now as mother, and grandmother I am loving myself as crone, savoring every word Joan Gould has written on her pages in Part Three, my life is as she writes. Learning about the sexual meaning of the shoe from the Cinderella pages and The Old Woman Who Lives in a Shoe nursery rhyme was so evident when I was watching the film Spanglish by James L. Brooks. The young wife is getting ready to leave the house to have an affair, and the camera is focused on her changing to a new pair of shoes as her mother (obviously a crone) focuses on her feet. What an aha moment for me. Gould adds very personal thoughts from her life between her interpretations of the stories. From the fear of falling down the stairs as we live alone, wondering who would find us, to handling every item we have accumulated over our lifetime and visualizing where we got it and what memory goes with it and to knowing our adult children don't need us anymore. Our lives are records that were passed to us from our mothers and grandmothers and we pass these records on to our children. Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell gave us the understanding of the collective consciousness and Joan Gould interpreted in depth what spinning straw into gold really means for us females. What a great read. Thank You Joan Gould

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