

Middle of the story

Illustration

End of story

Title

Beginning of the story

### The princess and the pea

Once there was a prince who was looking for a princess. But she must be a real princess. The prince went right round the world, and although he found several once upon a time the beautiful princesses, there was always something not quite right about them. In the end he came home, very disappointed.

One night, there was the most terrible storm. It thundered, it lightnined and the rain poured down in sheets. The king and queen and prince sat round the fire toasting crumpets. Suddenly there was a ringing of the bell at the palace gates. Putting on his mackintosh, the king went to see who could be outside on such a dreadful night. When he opened the gates a princess was standing there. But what a sight she was! Water streamed off the ends of her long hair, ran down her clothes and into her shoes.

"You'd better come in," said the king, leading the princess into the palace where she stood, dripping, and not looking at all like a princess.

- "Yes, I am a princess," she assured them. The old queen was doubtful. "We'll soon see about that," she said to herself. And she went to prepare the spare bed for their young visitor. First she took off all the bedding and then she laid a pea at the very bottom. On top of the pea she put twenty mattresses and on top of the mattresses she put twenty feather beds.

The next morning the princess was asked how she had slept.

"I hardly slept a wink all night," she said. "The bed was desperately uncomfortable. There was something hard at the bottom of it and I'm sure I am bruised all over."

Now they knew she was a real princess. For no one but a princess would be able to feel a pea through twenty mattresses and twenty feather beds! The prince was thrilled to bits for he had already fallen in love with her. And they decided to be married.

