# The legend of fairies

**Read the text about the legend of fairies.**

Fairies today are the stuff of children's stories, little magical people with wings, often shining with light. Typically pretty and female, like Tinkerbell in *Peter Pan*, **they** usually use their magic to do small things and are mostly friendly to humans.

We owe many of our modern ideas about fairies to Shakespeare and stories from the 18th and 19th centuries. Although we can see the origins of fairies as far back as the Ancient Greeks, we can see similar creatures in many cultures. The earliest fairy-like creatures can be found in the Greek idea that trees and rivers had spirits called dryads and nymphs. Some people think **these creatures** were originally the gods of earlier, pagan religions that worshipped nature. **They** were replaced by the Greek and Roman gods, and then later by the Christian God, and became smaller, less powerful figures as they lost importance.

Another explanation suggests the origin of fairies is a memory of real people, not spirits. So, for example, when tribes with metal weapons invaded land where people only used stone weapons, some of the people escaped and hid in forests and caves. Further support for **this idea** is that fairies were thought to be afraid of iron and could not touch it. Living outside of society, the hiding people probably stole food and attacked villages. **This** might explain why fairies were often described as playing tricks on humans. Hundreds of years ago, people

actually believed that fairies stole new babies and replaced them with a 'changeling' – a fairy baby – or that they took new mothers and made them feed fairy babies with their milk.

While most people no longer believe in fairies, only a hundred years ago some people were very willing to think they might exist. In 1917, 16-year-old Elsie Wright took two photos of her cousin, nine-year-old Frances Griffiths, sitting with fairies. Some photography experts thought they were fake, while others weren't sure. But Arthur Conan Doyle, the writer of the Sherlock Holmes detective stories, believed they were real. He published the original pictures, and three **more** the girls took for him, in a magazine called *The Strand*, in 1920. The girls only admitted the photos were fake years later in 1983, created using pictures of dancers that Elsie copied from a book.

**1. Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).**

| **Vocabulary** | **Definitions** |
|---|---|
| 1. ..... a tribe | a. the explanation for how something started |
| 2. ..... fake | b. the part of a living thing which is not the body and you can't see or touch it |
| 3. ..... to support | c. to pray to |
| 4. ..... to worship | d. a group of people, usually connected to each other by place or culture |
| 5. ..... origin | e. something used to hit or hurt people |
| 6. ..... a spirit | f. to attack a place with an army |
| 7. ..... a weapon | g. to make something stronger |
| 8. ..... to invade | h. looks real but is not |

**2. Are the sentences true or false or is the information not given?**

1. **Fairies are not usually male.**

True False Not given

2. **Newer religions changed how people thought of fairies.**

True False Not given

3. **People used iron to protect themselves from fairies.**

True False Not given

4. **People thought very good babies were presents from the fairies.**

True False Not given

5. **Arthur Conan Doyle created some fake photos.**

True False Not given

6. **Elsie and Frances were surprised Arthur Conan Doyle believed them.**

True False Not given

3. **Circle the best answer.**

**1. In paragraph 1, the word they refers to ...**

a. fairies.

b. children.

c. stories.

**2. In paragraph 2, the words these creatures refer to ...**

a. tree and rivers.

b. the spirits of trees and rivers.

c. the Ancient Greek people.

**3. In paragraph 2, the word They refers to ...**

a. pagan gods.

b. pagan religions.

c. Greek and Roman gods.

**4. In paragraph 3, the words this idea refer to ...**

a. the idea that fairies were based on people.

b. the idea that fairies used metal weapons.

c. the idea that fairies used stone tools.

**5. In paragraph 3, the word This refers to ...**

a. the fact that fairies were thought to be afraid of iron.

b. stolen food.

c. the possibility that hiding people stole food and attacked villages.

**6. In paragraph 4, the word more refers to ...**

a. the girls.

b. the photos.

c. the fairies