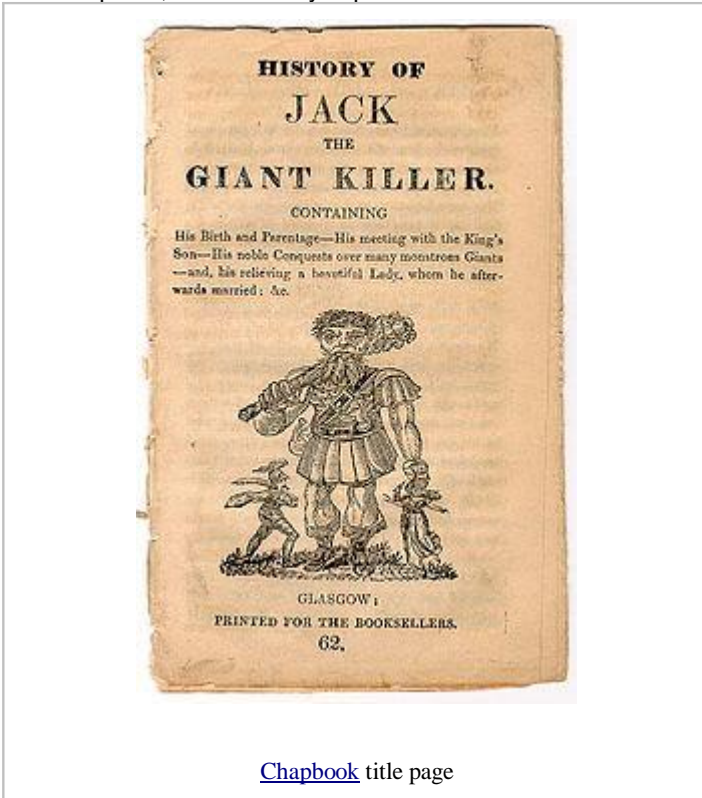


Jack the Giant Killer

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



[Chapbook](#) title page

"**Jack the Giant Killer**" is a British [fairy tale](#) and [legend](#) about a [plucky](#) (presumably) young adult who slays a number of [giants](#) during [King Arthur's](#) reign. The tale is characterised by violence, gore and blood-letting. Giants are prominent in [Cornish folklore](#), [Breton mythology](#) and [Welsh Bardic lore](#). Some parallels to elements and incidents in [Norse mythology](#) have been detected in the tale, and the trappings of Jack's last adventure with the [Giant](#) Galigantus suggest parallels with [French](#) and [Breton](#) fairy tales such as [Bluebeard](#). Jack's belt is similar to the belt in "[The Valiant Little Tailor](#)", and his magical sword, shoes, cap, and cloak are similar to those owned by [Tom Thumb](#) or those found in [Welsh](#) and [Norse](#) mythology.

Neither [Jack](#) nor his tale are referenced in [English literature](#) prior to the eighteenth century, and his story did not appear in print until 1711. It is probable an enterprising publisher assembled a number of anecdotes about giants to form the 1711 tale. One scholar speculates the public had grown weary of [King Arthur](#) – the greatest of all giant killers – and Jack was created to fill his shoes. [Henry Fielding](#), [John Newbery](#), [Samuel Johnson](#), [Boswell](#), and [William Cowper](#) were familiar with the tale.

In 1962, a [feature-length film](#) based on the tale was released starring [Kerwin Mathews](#). The film made extensive use of [stop motion](#) in the manner of [Ray Harryhausen](#).

Plot



[Jack](#) kills [Cormoran](#) with a pick-axe

This plot summary is based on a text published ca. 1760 by John Cotton and Joshua Eddowes, which in its turn was based on a chapbook ca. 1711, and reprinted in 'The Classic Fairy Tales' by Iona and Peter Opie in 1974.

The tale is set during the reign of [King Arthur](#) and tells of a young [Cornish](#) farmer's son named [Jack](#) who is not only strong but so clever he easily confounds the learned with his penetrating wit. Jack encounters a cattle-eating giant called [Cormoran](#) ([Cornish](#): 'The Giant of the Sea' SWF:Kowr-Mor-An) and lures him to his death in a [pit trap](#). Jack is dubbed 'Jack the Giant-Killer' for this feat and receives not only the giant's wealth, but a sword and belt to commemorate the event. Another giant named [Blunderbore](#) vows vengeance for Cormoran's death and carries Jack off to an enchanted castle. Jack manages to slay [Blunderbore](#) and his brother [Rebecks](#) by hanging and stabbing them. He frees three ladies held captive in the giant's castle.

On a trip into Wales, Jack tricks a two-headed Welsh giant into slashing his own belly open. King Arthur's son now enters the story and Jack becomes his servant. They spend the night with a three-headed giant and rob him in the morning. In gratitude for having spared his castle, the three-headed giant gives Jack a magic sword, a cap of knowledge, a cloak of invisibility, and shoes of swiftness. On the road, Jack and the Prince meet an enchanted Lady serving [Lucifer](#). Jack breaks the spell with his magic accessories, beheads Lucifer, and the Lady marries the Prince. Jack is rewarded with membership in the [Round Table](#).



[St Michael's Mount](#) home of the Giant

Jack ventures forth alone with his magic shoes, sword, cloak, and cap to rid the realm of troublesome giants. He encounters a giant terrorizing a knight and his lady. He cuts off the giant's legs then puts him to death. He discovers the giant's companion in a cave. Invisible in his cloak, Jack cuts off the giant's nose then slays him by plunging his sword into the monster's back. He frees the giant's captives and returns to the house of the knight and lady he earlier had rescued. A banquet is

prepared, but it is interrupted by the two-headed giant [Thunderdel](#) chanting "Fee, fau, fum". Jack defeats and beheads the giant with a trick involving the house's moat and drawbridge.

Growing weary of the festivities, Jack sallies forth for more adventures and meets an elderly man who directs him to an enchanted castle belonging to the giant [Galigantus](#) (Galligantua, in the [Joseph Jacobs](#) version). The giant holds captive many knights and ladies and a Duke's daughter who has been transformed into a white doe through the power of a sorcerer. Jack beheads the giant, the sorcerer flees, the Duke's daughter is restored to her true shape, and the captives are freed.

At the court of King Arthur, Jack marries the Duke's daughter and the two are given an estate where they live happily ever after.

Background



[Thor](#) and [Skrymir](#)

Tales of monsters and heroes are abundant around the world, making the source of "Jack the Giant Killer" difficult to pin down, however the ascription of Jack relation to [Cornwall](#) suggests a [Brythonic](#) (Celtic) origin. The early [Welsh](#) tale [How Culhwch won Olwen](#) (tentatively dated to c. 1100), set in [Arthurian](#) Britain places Arthur as chief among the kings of Britain.^[1] The young hero [Culhwch ap Cilydd](#) makes his way to his cousin Arthur's court at [Celliwig](#) in Cornwall where he demands Olwen as his bride; the beautiful daughter of the giant [Ysbaddaden Ben Cawr](#) ('Chief of Giants'). The Giant sets a series of impossible tasks which Arthur's champions [Bedwyr](#) and [Cai](#) are honour-bound to fulfill before Olwen is released to the lad; and the Giant King must die. Folklorists [Iona and Peter Opie](#) have observed in *The Classic Fairy Tales* (1974) that "the tenor of Jack's tale, and some of the details of more than one of his tricks with which he outwits the giants, have similarities with [Norse mythology](#)." An incident between [Thor](#) and the giant [Skrymir](#) in the [Prose Edda](#) of ca. 1220, they note, resembles the incident between Jack and the stomach-slashing Welsh giant. The Opies further note that the Swedish tale of "The Herd-boy and the Giant" shows similarities to the same incident, and "shares an ancestor" with the [Grimms's "The Valiant Little Tailor"](#), a tale with wide distribution. According to the Opies, Jack's magical accessories – the cap of knowledge, the cloak of invisibility, the magic sword, and the shoes of swiftness – could have been borrowed from the tale of [Tom](#)

[Thumb](#) or from Norse mythology, however older analogues in British [Celtic](#) lore such as [Y Mabinogi](#) and the tales of [Gwyn ap Nudd](#), cognate with the Irish [Fionn mac Cumhaill](#), suggest that these represent attributes of the earlier Celtic gods such as the shoes associated with triple-headed [Lugus](#); Welsh [Llew Llaw Gyffes](#) of the [Fourth Branch](#), Arthur's invincible sword [Caledfwlch](#) and his [Mantle of Invisibility](#) [Gwenn](#) one of the [Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain](#) mentioned in two of the branches; or the similar cloak of [Caswallawn](#) in the [Second Branch](#).^{[2][3]} Another parallel is the Greek demigod [Perseus](#), who was given a magic sword, the winged sandals of [Hermes](#) and the 'cap of darkness' (borrowed from [Hades](#)) to slay the [gorgon Medusa](#). Ruth B. Bottigheimer observes in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* that Jack's final adventure with Galigantus was influenced by the "magical devices" of French fairy tales.^[4] The Opies conclude that analogues from around the world "offer no surety of Jack's antiquity."^[3]

The Opies note that tales of giants were long known in Britain. [King Arthur](#)'s encounter with the giant of [St Michael's Mount](#) – or [Mont Saint-Michel](#) in Brittany^[5] – was related by [Geoffrey of Monmouth](#) in *Historia Regum Britanniae* in 1136, and published by [Sir Thomas Malory](#) in 1485 in the fifth chapter of the fifth book of *Le Morte d'Arthur*.^[3]

Then came to [King Arthur] an husbandman ... and told him how there was ... a great giant which had slain, murdered and devoured much people of the country ... [Arthur journeyed to the Mount, discovered the giant roasting dead children,] ... and hailed him, saying ... [A]rise and dress thee, thou glutton, for this day shalt thou die of my hand. Then the glutton anon started up, and took a great club in his hand, and smote at the king that his coronal fell to the earth. And the king hit him again that he carved his belly and cut off his genitours, that his guts and his entrails fell down to the ground. Then the giant threw away his club, and caught the king in his arms that he crushed his ribs ... And then Arthur weltered and wrung, that he was other while under and another time above. And so weltering and wallowing they rolled down the hill till they came to the sea mark, and ever as they so weltered Arthur smote him with his dagger.

[Anthropophagic](#) giants are mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland* in 1549, the Opies note, and, in *King Lear* of 1605, they indicate, [Shakespeare](#) alludes to the [Fee-fi-fo-fum](#) chant (" ... fie, foh, and fumme, / I smell the blood of a British man"), making it certain he knew a tale of "blood-sniffing giants". [Thomas Nashe](#) also alluded to the chant in *Have with You to Saffron-Walden*, written nine years before *King Lear*.^[3] the earliest version can be found in *The Red Ettin* of 1528.^[6]

Bluebeard

The Opies observe that "no telling of the tale has been recorded in English oral tradition", and that no mention of the tale is made in sixteenth or seventeenth century literature, lending weight to the probability of the tale originating from the oral traditions of the Cornish (and/or Breton) 'droll teller'.

^[7] The 17th century Franco-Breton tale of [Bluebeard](#), however, contains parallels and cognates with the contemporary insular British tale of Jack & The Giant Killer, in particular the violently misogynistic character of Bluebeard (*La Barbe bleue*, published 1697) is now believed to ultimately derive in part from [King Mark Conomor](#), the 6th century continental (and probable insular) British King of [Domnonée / Dumnonia](#), associated in later folklore with both [Cormoran](#) of [St Michael's Mount](#) and [Mont Saint Michel](#) – the bluebeard (a 'Celtic' marker of masculinity) is indicative of his otherworldly nature.

The History of Jack and the Giants

"The History of Jack and the Giants" (the earliest known edition) was published in two parts by J. White of [Newcastle](#) in 1711, the Opies indicate, but was not listed in catalogues or inventories of the period nor was Jack one of the folk heroes in the repertoire of Robert Powel (i.e., [Martin Powell](#)), a puppeteer established in [Covent Garden](#). "Jack and the Giants" however is referenced in *The Weekly Comedy* of 22 January 1708, according to the Opies, and in the tenth number *Terra-Filius* in 1721.^[3]



The title page from [A Little Pretty Pocket-Book](#) (1744)

promises the reader two letters from Jack the Giant Killer.

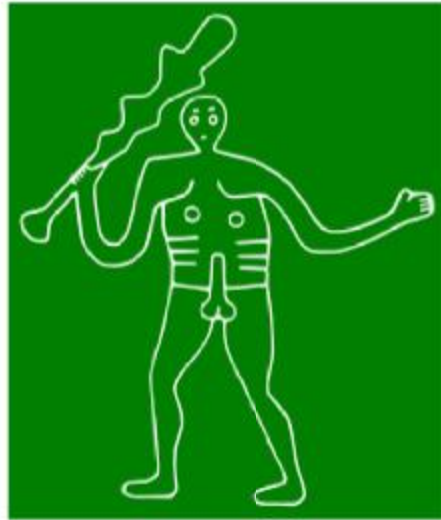
As the eighteenth century wore on, Jack became a familiar figure. Research by the Opies indicate that the farce *Jack the Giant-Killer* was performed at the [Haymarket](#) in 1730; that [John Newbery](#) printed fictional letters about Jack in [A Little Pretty Pocket-Book](#) in 1744; and that a political satire, *The last Speech of John Good, vulgarly called Jack the Giant-Queller*, was printed ca. 1745.^[3] The Opies and Bottigheimer both note that [Henry Fielding](#) alluded to Jack in [Joseph Andrews](#) (1742); [Dr. Johnson](#) admitted to reading the tale; [Boswell](#) read the tale in his boyhood; and [William Cowper](#) was another who mentioned the tale.^{[3][4]}

In "Jack and Arthur: An Introduction to Jack the Giant Killer", Thomas Green writes that Jack has no place in Cornish folklore, but was created at the beginning of the eighteenth century simply as a framing device for a series of gory, giant-killing adventures. The tales of Arthur precede and inform "Jack the Giant Killer", he notes, but points out that *Le Morte d'Arthur* had been out of print since 1634 and concludes from this fact that the public had grown weary of Arthur. Jack, he posits, was created to fill Arthur's shoes.^[6]

Bottigheimer notes that in the southern [Appalachians](#) of America Jack became a generic hero of tales usually adapted from the [Brothers Grimm](#). She points out however that "Jack the Giant Killer" is rendered directly from the [chapbooks](#) except the English [hasty pudding](#) in the incident of the belly-slashing Welsh giant becomes [mush](#).^[4]

Child psychologist [Bruno Bettelheim](#) observes in [The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales](#) (1976) that children may experience "grown-ups" as frightening giants, but stories such as "Jack" teach them that they can outsmart the giants and can "get the better of them." Bettelheim observes that a parent may be reluctant to read a story to a child about adults being outsmarted by children, but notes that the child understands intuitively that, in reading him the tale, the parent has given his approval for "playing with the idea of getting the better of giants", and of retaliating "in fantasy for the threat which adult dominance entails".^[9]

British giants



Cerne Abbas Giant in Dorset was probably carved about 400 years ago.

Further information: [Giants \(Welsh folklore\)](#)

John Matthews writes in *Taliessin, Shamanism and the Bardic Mysteries of Britain & Ireland* (1992) that giants are very common throughout British folklore, and often represent the "original" inhabitants, ancestors, or gods of the island before the coming of "civilised man", their gigantic stature reflecting their "[otherworldly](#)" nature.^[1] Giants figure prominently in Cornish, Breton and Welsh folklore, and in common with many [animist](#) belief systems, they represent the force of nature. The modern [Standard Written Form](#) in Cornish is *Kowr*: "singular ([mutating](#) to *Gowr*), *Kewri* plural, transcribed into Late Cornish as *Gour*, "Goë", "Cor" or similar. They are often responsible for the creation of the natural landscape, and are often [petrified](#) in death, a particularly recurrent theme in [Celtic myth](#) and folklore.^[2] An obscure Count of [Brittany](#) was named [Gourmaëlon](#) ruling from 908 to 913 and may be an alternative source of the Giant's name [Cormoran](#), or *Gourmailon*, translated by [Joseph Loth](#) as "he of the brown eyebrows". The foundation myth of Cornwall originates with the early [Brythonic](#) chronicler [Nennius](#) in the *Historia Brittonum* and made its way, via Geoffrey of Monmouth into Early Modern English cannon where it was absorbed by the [Elizabethans](#) as the tale of [King Leir](#) alongside that of [Cymbeline](#) and [King Arthur](#), other mythical British kings. Carol Rose reports in *Giants, Monsters, and Dragons* that the tale of *Jack the Giant Killer* may be a development of the Corineus and Gogmagog legend.^[3] The motifs are echoed in the [Hunting of Twrch Trwyth](#).

In 1136, [Geoffrey of Monmouth](#) reported in the first book of his imaginative *The History of the Kings of Britain* that the indigenous giants of Cornwall were slaughtered by Brutus, the (eponymous founder of Great Britain), Corineus (eponymous founder of [Cornwall](#)) and his brothers who had settled in Britain after the [Trojan War](#). Following the defeat of the giants, their leader [Gogmagog](#) wrestled with the warrior [Corineus](#), and was killed when Corineus threw him from a cliff into the sea:

For it was a diversion to him [Corineus] to encounter the said giants, which were in greater numbers there than in all the other provinces that fell to the share of his companions. Among the rest was one detestable monster, named Goëmagot [Gogmagog], in stature twelve [cubits](#) [6.5 m], and of such prodigious strength that at one shake he pulled up an oak as if it had been a hazel wand. On a certain day, when Brutus (founder of Britain and Corineus' overlord) was holding a solemn festival to the gods, in the port where they at first landed, this giant with twenty more of his companions came in upon the Britons, among whom he made a dreadful slaughter. But the Britons at last assembling together in a body, put them to the rout, and killed them every one but Goëmagot. Brutus had given orders to have him preserved alive, out of a desire to see a combat between him and Corineus, who

took a great pleasure in such encounters. Corineus, overjoyed at this, prepared himself, and throwing aside his arms, challenged him to wrestle with him. At the beginning of the encounter, Corineus and the giant, standing, front to front, held each other strongly in their arms, and panted aloud for breath, but Goëmagot presently grasping Corineus with all his might, broke three of his ribs, two on his right side and one on his left. At which Corineus, highly enraged, roused up his whole strength, and snatching him upon his shoulders, ran with him, as fast as the weight would allow him, to the next shore, and there getting upon the top of a high rock, hurled down the savage monster into the sea; where falling on the sides of craggy rocks, he was torn to pieces, and coloured the waves with his blood. The place where he fell, taking its name from the giant's fall, is called Lam Goëmagot, that is, Goëmagot's Leap, to this day.

The match is traditionally presumed to have occurred at [Plymouth Hoe](#) on the Cornish-[Devon](#) border, although [Rame Head](#) is a nearby alternative location. In the early seventeenth century, [Richard Carew](#) reported a carved chalk figure of a giant at the site in the first book of [The Survey of Cornwall](#):

Againe, the activitie of Devon and Cornishmen, in this facultie of wrastling, beyond those of other Shires, dooth seeme to derive them a speciall pedigree, from that graund wrastler Corineus. Moreover, upon the Hawe at Plymmouth, there is cut out in the ground, the pourtrayture of two men, the one bigger, the other lesser, with Clubbes in their hands, (whom they terme Gog-Magog) and (as I have learned) it is renewed by order of the Townesmen, when cause requireth, which should inferre the same to bee a monument of some moment. And lastly the place, having a steepe cliffe adjoyning, affordeth an oportunitie to the fact.



In an illustration by [Arthur Rackham](#),

[Galligantus](#) and the sorcerer transform the Duke's daughter into a white doe

[Cormoran](#) (sometimes Cormilan, Cormelian, Gormillan, or Gourmaillon) is the first giant slain by Jack. [Cormoran](#) and his wife, the giantess [Cormelian](#), are particularly associated with [St Michael's Mount](#), apparently an ancient pre-Christian site of worship. According to Cornish legend, the couple were responsible for its construction by carrying [granite](#) from the West Penwith Moors to the current location of the Mount. When Cormoran fell asleep from exhaustion, his wife tried to sneak a [greenschist](#) slab from a shorter distance away. Cormoran awoke and kicked the stone out of her apron, where it fell to form the island of [Chapel Rock](#). [Trecobben](#), the giant of [Trencrom Hill](#) (near [St Ives](#)), accidentally killed Cormelian when he threw a hammer over to the Mount for Cormoran's use. The giantess was buried beneath Chapel Rock.^[13]

[Blunderbore](#) (sometimes Blunderboar, Thunderbore, Blunderbus, or Blunderbuss) is usually associated with the area of [Penwith](#), and was living in Ludgvan Lese (a [manor](#) in [Ludgvan](#)), where he

terrorised travellers heading north to St Ives. The Anglo-Germanic name 'Blunderbore' is sometimes appropriated by other giants, as in "[Tom the Tinkard](#)" and in some versions of "[Jack and the Beanstalk](#)" and "[Molly Whuppie](#)".



[Jack](#) hangs Blunderbore and another giant

In the version of "Jack the Giant Killer" recorded by [Joseph Jacobs](#), Blunderbore lives in [Penwith](#), where he kidnaps three lords and ladies, planning to eat the men and make the women his wives. When the women refuse to consume their husbands in company with the giant, he hangs them by their hair in his dungeon and leaves them to starve. Shortly, Jack stops along the highway from Penwith to Wales. He drinks from a fountain and takes a nap (a device common in Brythonic Celtic stories, such as the [Mabinogion](#)). Blunderbore discovers the sleeping Jack, and recognising him by his labelled belt, carries him to his castle and locks him in a cell. While Blunderbore is off inviting a fellow giant to come help him eat Jack, Jack creates nooses from some rope. When the giants arrive, he drops the nooses around their necks, ties the rope to a beam, slides down the rope, and slits their throats.

A giant named Blunderbore appears in the similar Cornish fairy tale "[Tom the Tinkard](#)" (or "Tom the Tinkard"), a local variant of "[Tom Hickathrift](#)". Here, Blunderbore has built a hedge over the King's Highway between St Ives and [Marazion](#), claiming the land as his own. The motif of the abduction of women appears in this version, as Blunderbore has kidnapped at least twenty women to be his wives. The hero Tom rouses the giant from a nap while taking a wagon and oxen back from St Ives to Marazion. Blunderbore tears up an elm to swat Tom off his property, but Tom slides one of the axles from the wagon and uses it to fight and eventually fatally wound the giant. The dying giant confers all his wealth to Tom and requests a proper burial.

Adaptations

1962 film

Main article: [Jack the Giant Killer \(1962 film\)](#)

In 1962, [United Artists](#) released a middle-budget film produced by [Edward Small](#) and directed by [Nathan H. Juran](#) called [Jack the Giant Killer](#). [Kerwin Mathews](#) stars as Jack and [Torin Thatcher](#) as the sorcerer Pendragon. Jim Stafford of [TCM](#) notes that the four men made [The 7th Voyage of Sinbad](#) an artistic and commercial triumph in 1958, and hoped [Jack](#) would be just as successful. The film performed moderately well at the box office, despite a review in [The New York Times](#) that slammed the acting, the dialogue, and the "rubber" monsters.^[14] Many would say that the movie was a Ray Harryhausen film, but in truth, it was not. The special effects were handled by, among others, animators [Wah Chang](#), [Gene Warren](#) and [Jim Danforth](#). In their defence, they didn't build the models

themselves and, therefore, they were not as mobile as they would have liked, limiting the model's movements somewhat and reducing the smoothness of the animation.

Stafford points out that the screenplay is based on Cornish folklore, but the plot resembles the [damsel in distress](#) theme of *7th Voyage*: a hero battles giants and monsters to rescue a princess held captive by a sorcerer. Some elements appear to be borrowed from other films Stafford notes. The disembodied torch-carrying arms, for example, recall those in [Cocteau's *La Belle et La Bête*](#), the dragon suggests that in [Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*](#), and Pendragon's witches and demons were probably inspired by the [banshees](#) in Disney's *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*. At a later date, producer Small added songs and the film was rereleased as a [musical](#).^[14] According to [imdb.com](#), the film went unreleased in the UK until 1967 and even then received cuts for an A (now PG) certificate to edit the witch attack on the ship, Princess Elaine being attacked by the giant, and Jack's fight with the dragon. Versions that were shown on UK television in the early 1990s had further cuts in the scene where Jack kills Cormoran with a scythe, rendering the scene almost unintelligible. It has since been shown uncut on [Channel 4](#) and [The Sci-Fi Channel](#).

Jack the Giant Slayer

Main article: [Jack the Giant Slayer](#)

The film *Jack the Giant Slayer*, directed by [Bryan Singer](#) and starring [Nicholas Hoult](#) was produced by [Legendary Pictures](#) and was released on 1 March 2013. It is a very loose adaption of both "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Jack the Giant Killer".^[15]

Notes

1. [Davies 2007](#), p. ?
2. [Gantz 1987](#), p. 80.
3. [Opie & Opie 1992](#), pp. 47–50.
4. [Zipes 2000](#), pp. 266–268.
5. [Armitage 2012](#), p. ?
6. [Opie & Opie 1992](#), p. 78.
7. [O'Connor 2010](#), p. ?
8. [Green 2009](#), pp. 1–4.
9. [Bettelheim 1977](#), pp. 27–28.
10. [Matthews 1992](#), p. 27.
11. [CLP staff](#), kowr
12. [Monaghan 2004](#), pp. 211–212.
13. [Rose 2001](#), p. 87.
14. [Stafford 2010](#).
15. [Flemming 2010](#).

References

- Armitage, Simon (2012). *The Death of King Arthur*. Faber & Faber. [ISBN 9780571249473](#).
- [Bettelheim, Bruno](#) (1977) [1976]. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Vintage Books. [ISBN 0-394-72265-5](#).
- CLP staff. "kowr". *cornish dictionary, gerlyver kernewek*. Cornish Language Partnership. Retrieved 1 February 2015.
- Davies, Sioned (2007). *The Mabinogion* trans.
- Gantz, Jeffrey (translator) (1987). *The Mabinogion*. New York: Penguin. [ISBN 0-14-044322-3](#).
- Flemming, Kit (11 February 2010). "Nicholas Hoult To Star In 'Jack The Giant Killer'". *Deadline.com*. Retrieved 2 March 2011.
- Green, Thomas (2009) [2007]. "[Jack and Arthur: An Introduction to Jack the Giant Killer](#)" (PDF). Thomas Green.
- Matthews, John (1992). *Taliessin, Shamanism and the Bardic Mysteries of Britain & Ireland*. The Aquarian Press.
- Monaghan, Patricia (2004). *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*. Facts on File.
- O'Connor, Mike (2010). *Cornish Folk Tales*. History Press Limited. [ISBN 9780752450667](#).
- [Opie, Iona](#); [Opie, Peter](#) (1992) [1974]. *The Classic Fairy Tales*. Oxford University Press. [ISBN 0-19-211559-6](#).
- Rose, Carol (2001). *Giants, Monsters, and Dragons*. W.W. Norton & Company. [ISBN 0-393-32211-4](#).
- Stafford, Jim (2010). "[Jack the Giant Killer](#)". Turner Classic Movies. Retrieved 1 December 2010.
- [Zipes, Jack](#), ed. (2000). *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*. Oxford University Press. [ISBN 0-9653635-7-0](#).

External links

- [The History of the Kings of Britain by Geoffrey of Monmouth](#)
- [Jack the Giant Killer by Flora Annie Steel](#)
- [Jack the Giant Killer by Joseph Jacobs](#)
- [Jack the Giant Killer from the Hockliffe Collection](#)
- [Le Morte D'Arthur by Thomas Malory](#)
- [The Story of Jack and the Giants by Edward Dalziel](#)
- [The Survey of Cornwall by Richard Carew](#)
- [Tom the Tinkard](#)
- [Days of Yore: Jack the Giant-Killer by Arin Lee Kambitsis](#)

- This page was last modified on 10 August 2016, at 05:03.

Jack the Giant Killer

(sacredtexts.com)



WHEN good King Arthur reigned, there lived near the Land's End of England, in the county of Cornwall, a farmer who had one only son called Jack. He was brisk and of ready, lively wit, so that nobody or nothing could worst him.

In those days the Mount of Cornwall was kept by a huge giant named Cormoran. He was eighteen feet in height and about three yards round the waist, of a fierce and grim countenance, the terror of all the neighbouring towns and villages. He lived in a cave in the midst of the Mount, and whenever he wanted food he would wade over to the mainland, where he would furnish himself with whatever came in his way. Everybody at his approach ran out of their houses, while he seized on their cattle, making nothing of carrying half a dozen oxen on his back at a time; and as for their sheep and hogs, he would tie them round his waist like a bunch of tallow-dips. He had done this for many years, so that all Cornwall was in despair.

One day Jack happened to be at the town-hall when the magistrates were sitting in council about the giant. He asked:

'What reward will be given to the man who kills Cormoran?'

'The giant's treasure,' they said, 'will be the reward.'

Quoth Jack: 'Then let me undertake it.'

So he got a horn, shovel, and pickaxe, and went over to the Mount in the beginning of a dark winter's evening, when he fell to work, and before morning had dug a pit twenty-two feet deep, and nearly as broad, covering it over with long sticks and straw. Then he strewed a little mould over it, so that it appeared like plain ground. Jack then placed himself on the opposite side of the pit, farthest from the giant's lodging, and, just at the break of day, he put the horn to his mouth, and blew, Tantivy, Tantivy. This noise roused the giant, who rushed from his cave, crying: 'You incorrigible villain, are you come here to disturb my rest? You shall pay dearly for this. Satisfaction I will have, and this it shall be, I will take you whole and broil you for breakfast.' He had no sooner uttered this, than he tumbled into the pit, and made the very foundations of the Mount to shake. 'Oh, Giant,' quoth Jack, 'where are you now? Oh, faith, you are gotten now into Lob's Pound, where I will surely plague you for your threatening words; what do you think now of broiling me for your breakfast? Will no other diet serve you

but poor Jack?' Then having tantalised the giant for a while, he gave him a most weighty knock with his pickaxe on the very crown of his head, and killed him on the spot.

Jack then filled up the pit with earth, and went to search the cave, which he found contained much treasure. When the magistrates heard of this they made a declaration he should henceforth be termed

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

and presented him with a sword and a belt, on which were written these words embroidered in letters of gold:

'Here's the right valiant Cornish man,
Who slew the giant Cormoran.'

The news of Jack's victory soon spread over all the West of England, so that another giant, named Blunderbore, hearing of it, vowed to be revenged on Jack, if ever he should light on him. This giant was the lord of an enchanted castle situated in the midst of a lonesome wood. Now Jack, about four months afterwards, walking near this wood in his journey to Wales, being weary, seated himself near a pleasant fountain and fell fast asleep. While he was sleeping the giant, coming there for water, discovered him, and knew him to be the far-famed Jack the Giant-Killer by the lines written on the belt. Without ado, he took Jack on his shoulders and carried him towards his castle. Now, as they passed through a thicket, the rustling of the boughs awakened Jack, who was strangely surprised to find himself in the clutches of the giant. His terror was only begun, for, on entering the castle, he saw the ground strewn with human bones, and the giant told him his own would ere long be among them. After this the giant locked poor Jack in an immense chamber, leaving him there while he went to fetch another giant, his brother, living in the same wood, who might share in the meal on Jack.

After waiting some time Jack, on going to the window, beheld afar off the two giants coming towards the castle. 'Now,' quoth Jack to himself, 'my death or my deliverance is at hand.' Now, there were strong cords in a corner of the room in which Jack was, and two of these he took, and made a strong noose at the end; and while the giants were unlocking the iron gate of the castle he threw the ropes over each of their heads. Then he drew the other ends across a beam, and pulled with all his might, so that he throttled them. Then, when he saw they were black in the face, he slid down the rope, and drawing his sword, slew them both. Then, taking the giant's keys, and unlocking the rooms, he found three fair ladies tied by the hair of their heads, almost starved to death. 'Sweet ladies,' quoth Jack, 'I have destroyed this monster and his brutish brother,

and obtained your liberties.' This said he presented them with the keys, and so proceeded on his journey to Wales.

Jack made the best of his way by travelling as fast as he could, but lost his road, and was benighted, and could find no habitation until, coming into a narrow valley, he found a large house, and in order to get shelter took courage to knock at the gate. But what was his surprise when there came forth a monstrous giant with two heads; yet he did not appear so fiery as the others were, for he was a Welsh giant, and what he did was by private and secret malice under the false show of friendship. Jack, having told his condition to the giant, was shown into a bedroom, where, in the dead of night, he heard his host in another apartment muttering these words:

'Though here you lodge with me this night,
You shall not see the morning light:
My club shall dash your brains outright!'

'Say'st thou so,' quoth Jack; 'that is like one of your Welsh tricks, yet I hope to be cunning enough for you.' Then, getting out of bed, he laid a billet in the bed in his stead, and hid himself in a corner of the room. At the dead time of the night in came the Welsh giant, who struck several heavy blows on the bed with his club, thinking he had broken every bone in Jack's skin. The next morning Jack, laughing in his sleeve, gave him hearty thanks for his night's lodging. 'How have you rested?' quoth the giant; 'did you not feel anything in the night?' 'No,' quoth Jack, 'nothing but a rat, which gave me two or three slaps with her tail.' With that, greatly wondering, the giant led Jack to breakfast, bringing him a bowl containing four gallons of hasty pudding. Being loth to let the giant think it too much for him, Jack put a large leather bag under his loose coat, in such a way that he could convey the pudding into it without its being perceived. Then, telling the giant he would show him a trick, taking a knife, Jack ripped open the bag, and out came all the hasty pudding. Whereupon, saying, 'Odds splutters her nails, hur can do that trick hursel', the monster took the knife, and ripping open his belly, fell down dead.

Now, it happened in these days that King Arthur's only son asked his father to give him a large sum of money, in order that he might go and seek his fortune in the principality of Wales, where lived a beautiful lady possessed with seven evil spirits. The king did his best to persuade his son from it, but in vain; so at last gave way and the prince set out with two horses, one loaded with money, the other for himself to ride upon. Now, after several days' travel, he came to a market-town in Wales, where he beheld a vast crowd of people gathered together. The prince asked the reason of it, and was told that they had arrested a corpse for several large sums of money which the deceased owed when he died. The prince replied that it was a pity creditors should be so cruel, and said: 'Go bury the dead, and let his creditors come to my lodging, and

there their debts shall be paid.' They came, in such great numbers that before night he had only twopence left for himself.

Now Jack the Giant-Killer, coming that way, was so taken with the generosity of the prince that he desired to be his servant. This being agreed upon, the next morning they set forward on their journey together, when, as they were riding out of the town, an old woman called after the prince, saying, 'He has owed me twopence these seven years; pray pay me as well as the rest.' Putting his hand into his pocket, the prince gave the woman all he had left, so that after their day's food, which cost what small store Jack had by him, they were without a penny between them.

When the sun got low, the king's son said: 'Jack, since we have no money, where can we lodge this night?'

But Jack replied: 'Master, we'll do well enough, for I have an uncle lives within two miles of this place; he is a huge and monstrous giant with three heads; he'll fight five hundred men in armour, and make them to fly before him.'

'Alas!' quoth the prince, 'what shall we do there? He'll certainly chop us up at a mouthful. Nay, we are scarce enough to fill one of his hollow teeth!'

'It is no matter for that,' quoth Jack; 'I myself will go before and prepare the way for you; therefore stop here and wait till I return.' Jack then rode away at full speed, and coming to the gate of the castle, he knocked so loud that he made the neighbouring hills resound. The giant roared out at this like thunder: 'Who's there?'

Jack answered: 'None but your poor cousin Jack.'

Quoth he: 'What news with my poor cousin Jack?'

He replied: 'Dear uncle, heavy news, God wot!'

'Prithee,' quoth the giant, 'what heavy news can come to me? I am a giant with three heads, and besides thou knowest I can fight five hundred men in armour, and make them fly like chaff before the wind.'

'Oh, but,' quoth Jack, 'here's the king's son a-coming with a thousand men in armour to kill you and destroy all that you have!'

'Oh, cousin Jack,' said the giant, 'this is heavy news indeed! I will immediately run and hide myself, and thou shalt lock, bolt, and bar me in, and keep the keys until the prince is gone.' Having secured the giant, Jack fetched his master, when they made themselves heartily merry whilst the poor giant lay trembling in a vault under the ground.

Early in the morning Jack furnished his master with a fresh supply of gold and silver, and then sent him three miles forward on his journey, at which time the prince was pretty well out of the smell of the giant. Jack then returned, and let the giant out of the vault, who asked what he should give him for keeping the castle from destruction. 'Why,' quoth Jack, 'I want nothing but the old coat and cap, together with the old rusty sword and slippers which are at your bed's head.' Quoth the giant: 'You know not what you ask; they are the most precious things I have. The coat will keep you invisible, the cap will tell you all you want to know, the sword cuts asunder whatever you strike, and the shoes are of extraordinary swiftness. But you have been very serviceable to me, therefore take them with all my heart.' Jack thanked his uncle, and then went off with them. He soon overtook his master and they quickly arrived at the house of the lady the prince sought, who, finding the prince to be a suitor, prepared a splendid banquet for him. After the repast was concluded, she told him she had a task for him. She wiped his mouth with a handkerchief, saying: 'You must show me that handkerchief tomorrow morning, or else you will lose your head.' With that she put it in her bosom. The prince went to bed in great sorrow, but Jack's cap of knowledge informed him how it was to be obtained. In the middle of the night she called upon her familiar spirit to carry her to Lucifer. But Jack put on his coat of darkness and his shoes of swiftness, and was there as soon as she was. When she entered the place of the demon, she gave the handkerchief to him, and he laid it upon a shelf, whence Jack took it and brought it to his master, who showed it to the lady next day, and so saved his life. On that day, she gave the prince a kiss and told him he must show her the lips tomorrow morning that she kissed last night, or lose his head.

'Ah!' he replied, 'if you kiss none but mine, I will.'

'That is neither here nor there,' said she; 'if you do not, death's your portion!'

At midnight she went as before, and was angry with the demon for letting the handkerchief go. 'But now,' quoth she, 'I will be too hard for the king's son, for I will kiss thee, and he is to show me thy lips.' Which she did, and Jack, when she was not standing by, cut off Lucifer's head and brought it under his invisible coat to his master, who the next morning pulled it out by the horns before the lady. This broke the enchantment and the evil spirit left her, and she appeared in all her beauty. They were married the next morning, and soon after went to the Court of King Arthur, where Jack for his many exploits, was made one of the Knights of the Round Table.

Jack soon went searching for giants again, but he had not ridden far, when he saw a cave, near the entrance of which he beheld a giant sitting upon a block of timber, with a knotted iron club by his side. His goggle eyes were like flames of fire, his countenance grim and ugly, and his cheeks like a couple of large flitches of bacon, while the bristles of his beard resembled rods of iron wire, and the locks that hung down upon his brawny shoulders were like curled snakes or hissing adders. Jack

alighted from his horse, and, putting on the coat of darkness, went up close to the giant, and said softly: 'Oh! are you there? It will not be long before I take you fast by the beard.' The giant all this while could not see him, on account of his invisible coat, so that Jack, coming up close to the monster, struck a blow with his sword at his head, but, missing his aim, he cut off the nose instead. At this, the giant roared like claps of thunder, and began to lay about him with his iron club like one stark mad. But Jack, running behind, drove his sword up to the hilt in the giant's head so that it fell down dead. This done, Jack cut off the giant's head, and sent it, with his brother's also, to King Arthur, by a waggoner he hired for that purpose.

Jack now resolved to enter the giant's cave in search of his treasure, and, passing along through a great many windings and turnings, he came at length to a large room paved with freestone, at the upper end of which was a boiling caldron, and on the right hand a large table, at which the giant used to dine. Then he came to a window, barred with iron, through which he looked and beheld a vast number of miserable captives, who, seeing him, cried out: 'Alas! Young man, art thou come to be one amongst us: in this miserable den?'

'Ay,' quoth Jack, 'but pray tell me what is the meaning of your captivity?'

'We are kept here,' said one, 'till such time as the giants have a wish to feast, and then the fattest among us is slaughtered! And many are the times they have dined upon murdered men!'

'Say you so,' quoth Jack, and straightway unlocked the gate and let them free, who all rejoiced like condemned men at sight of a pardon. Then searching the giant's coffer, he shared the gold and silver equally amongst them and took them to a neighbouring castle, where they all feasted and made merry over their deliverance.

But in the midst of all this mirth a messenger brought news that one Thunderdell, a giant with two heads, having heard of the death of his kinsmen, had come from the northern dales to be revenged on Jack, and was within a mile of the castle, the country people flying before him like chaff. But Jack was not a bit daunted, and said: 'Let him come! I have a tool to pick his teeth; and you, ladies and gentlemen, walk out into the garden, and you shall witness this giant Thunderdell's death and destruction.'

The castle was situated in the midst of a small island surrounded by a moat thirty feet deep and twenty feet wide, over which lay a drawbridge. So Jack employed men to cut through this bridge on both sides, nearly to the middle; and then, dressing himself in his invisible coat, he marched against the giant with his sword of sharpness. Although the giant could not see Jack, he smelt his approach, and cried out in these words:

'Fee, fi, fo, fum!

I smell the blood of an Englishman!

Be he alive or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones to make me bread!

'Say'st thou so,' said Jack; 'then thou art a monstrous miller indeed.'

The giant cried out again: 'Art thou that villain who killed my kinsmen? Then I will tear thee with my teeth, suck thy blood, and grind thy bones to powder.'

'You'll have to catch me first,' quoth Jack, and throwing off his invisible coat, so that the giant might see him, and putting on his shoes of swiftness, he ran from the giant, who followed like a walking castle, so that the very foundations of the earth seemed to shake at every step. Jack led him a long dance, in order that the gentlemen and ladies might see; and at last to end the matter, ran lightly over the drawbridge, the giant, in full speed, pursuing him with his club. Then, coming to the middle of the bridge, the giant's great weight broke it down, and he tumbled headlong into the water, where he rolled and wallowed like a whale. Jack, standing by the moat, laughed at him all the while; but though the giant foamed to hear him scoff, and plunged from place to place in the moat, yet he could not get out to be revenged. Jack at length got a cart rope and cast it over the two heads of the giant and drew him ashore by a team of horses, and then cut off both his heads with his sword of sharpness, and sent them to King Arthur.

After some time spent in mirth and pastime, Jack, taking leave of the knights and ladies, set out for new adventures. Through many woods he passed and came at length to the foot of a high mountain. Here, late at night, he found a lonesome house, and knocked at the door, which was opened by an aged man with a head as white as snow. 'Father,' said Jack, 'can you lodge a benighted traveller that has lost his way?' 'Yes,' said the old man; 'you are right welcome to my poor cottage.' Whereupon Jack entered, and down they sat together, and the old man began to speak as follows: 'Son, I see by your belt you are the great conqueror of giants, and behold, my son, on the top of the mountain is an enchanted castle; this is kept by a giant named Galligantua, and he, by the help of an old conjurer, betrays many knight and ladies into his castle, where by magic art they are transformed into sundry shapes and forms. But above all, I grieve for a duke's daughter, whom they fetched from her father's garden, carrying her through the air in a burning chariot drawn by fiery dragons, when they secured her within the castle, and transformed her into a white hind. And though many knights have tried to break the enchantment, and work her deliverance, yet no one could accomplish it, on account of two dreadful griffins which are placed at the castle gate and which destroy everyone who comes near. But you, my son, may pass by them undiscovered, where on the gates of the castle you will find engraven in large letters how the spell may be broken.' Jack gave the old man his hand, and promised that in the morning he would venture his life to free the lady.

In the morning Jack arose and put on his invisible coat and magic cap and shoes, and prepared himself for the fray. Now, when he had reached the top of the mountain he soon discover the two fiery griffins, but passed them without fear, because of his invisible coat. When he had got beyond them, he found upon the gates of the castle a golden trumpet hung by a silver chain, under which these lines were engraved:

'Whoever shall this trumpet blow,
Shall soon the giant overthrow,
And break the black enchantment straight;
So all shall be in happy state.'

Jack had no sooner read this but he blew the trumpet, at which the castle trembled to its vast foundations, and the giant and conjurer were in horrid confusion, biting their thumbs and tearing their hair, knowing their wicked reign was at an end. Then the giant stooping to take up his club, Jack at one blow cut off his head; whereupon the conjurer, mounting up into the air, was carried away in a whirlwind. Then the enchantment was broken, and all the lords and ladies who 'had so long been transformed into birds and beasts returned to their proper shapes, and the castle vanished away in a cloud of smoke. This being done, the head of Galligantua was likewise, in the usual manner, conveyed to the Court of King Arthur, where, the very next day, Jack followed, with the knights and ladies who had been delivered.



Whereupon, as a reward for his good services, the king prevailed upon the duke to bestow his daughter in marriage on honest Jack. So married they were, and the whole kingdom was filled with joy at the wedding. Furthermore, the king bestowed on Jack a noble castle, with a very beautiful estate thereto belonging, where he and his lady lived in great joy and happiness all the rest of their days.

Jack the Giant Slayer: Some Folklore Background

03/06/2013 02:49 pm ET | **Updated** May 06, 2013

Stephen D. Winick Folklorist, Music Critic, Editor

With Bryan Singer's blockbuster *Jack the Giant Slayer* in theaters, it might be useful to ask ourselves: who is this Jack? In English-language fairy tales, Jack is the central figure in a wide variety of adventures. He's known for slaying giants, so Singer's film doesn't stray too far from folklore. But Jack does a lot more, too.



The beggar gives Jack the bow, from a chapbook version of "Jack and His Stepdame."

Jack's tradition goes back surprisingly far; the earliest known Jack Tale was written down in the 15th century. In this story, "Jack and His Stepdame," Jack is a farmer's son whose stepmother wants to send him into indentured servitude. Jack's father compromises by sending him to a far pasture to watch the cattle. There Jack meets a beggar, with whom he shares his meager lunch. In return, the beggar offers him gifts. Jack asks for a bow and arrows; the beggar gives him a magical bow which never misses its mark. Jack asks for a pipe, to make music and be merry. The beggar gives him a magical pipe, which compels all who hear it to dance. When the beggar insists on giving a third gift, Jack remembers his stepmother's look of hatred

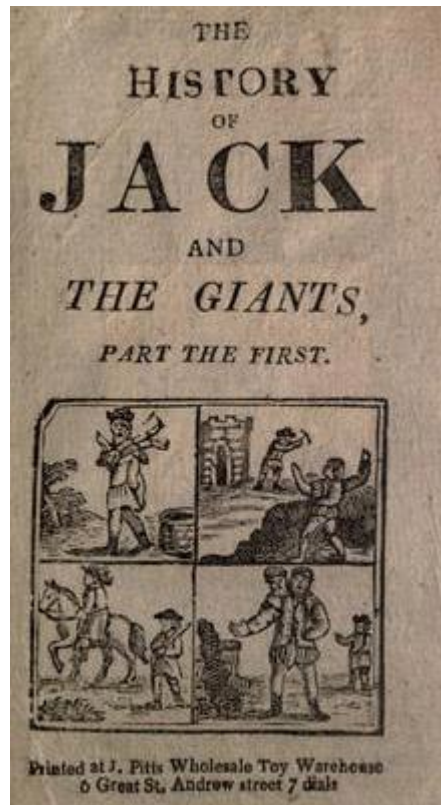
whenever she sees him eat; he wishes that, when she looks at him that way, she'll fart thunderously.

Using the pipe, which causes the cattle to dance along behind him, Jack easily herds them back to their pens, and heads home for supper. Jack's father invites him to eat, whereupon his stepmother glares at him, and farts so loudly that everyone laughs at her. She retires for the night, humiliated.



Jack makes the cattle dance to their pens, from a chapbook version of "Jack and His Stepdame."

The next day, Jack's stepmother sends a mendicant friar to beat Jack. To avoid a beating, Jack promises to shoot a bird for the friar's dinner. Using his magic bow, he shoots a bird and causes it to fall in a briar thicket. When the friar enters the thicket, Jack plays the pipe, forcing the friar to dance, so that he is horribly scratched by the thorns. When Jack lets him go, the friar reports to Jack's parents, and Jack's father demands to hear the pipe. The friar, fearing the music, begs to be tied to a post. Jack begins playing and carefully leads the household outside. Everyone has a good time dancing in the moonlight, except the friar, who injures himself by banging his head against the post, and the stepmother, who cannot help glaring and farting. Jack lives happily ever after.



You may be surprised to encounter fart jokes in Jack tales, but there's a long tradition of bawdy Jack tales. "Jack and His Stepdame" is as much fairy tale as dirty joke, however, and its fairy-tale elements reveal deeper meanings. Jack's act of kindness results in three gifts from a magical donor—a typical fairy-tale beginning. The magical bow is a limitless source of food, and the magical pipe a limitless source of art. Jack thus returns home with both physical and spiritual nourishment for his community.

The next stage in Jack's development brings him closer to today's film. "Jack the Giant-Killer," or to give it its early literary name, *The History of Jack and the Giants*, was first printed in chapbook form before 1708. It's an episodic tale in which Jack travels around Britain, especially Cornwall and Wales, killing giants. Some he dispatches with mere violence. Others, he defeats with clever trickery, as when he fools a hapless giant by apparently cutting open his stomach; Jack's really faking it, but the giant attempts to compete and rips open his own belly.

At around the same time as *The History of Jack and the Giants*, another tale was making the rounds in the English oral tradition. In 1734 a brief summary of "Jack Spriggins and the Enchanted Bean" was published, which from its plot is clearly a version of "Jack and the Beanstalk." "Jack and the Beanstalk" is a classic tale: Jack, a silly and impractical boy, trades his

family's cow for some magic beans. His mother angrily throws the beans out the window, and during the night, a giant beanstalk grows up to the sky. Jack climbs the beanstalk three times, each time raiding a giant's castle; he steals a bag of gold, a goose or hen that lays golden eggs, and a harp that plays by itself. On Jack's first two raids, the giant's wife saves him, but on the third, he is pursued by the giant. He chops down the beanstalk, the giant is killed, and Jack and his mother live happily ever after. Singer's film combines this tale with "Jack the Giant Killer."



Various psychoanalytical interpretations of "Jack and the Beanstalk" (e.g. [Bruno Bettelheim's](#)) suggest that the beanstalk is a phallic image and the tale is essentially about sexual differentiation from one's parents. This may reveal some of Jack's meanings, but there are others; Jack's mythical nature is that of the explorer of other realms, and the slayer of ogres, not

just for his own sake but for his community's. Like Prometheus stealing fire from Zeus, Jack finds a magical giant in the sky and brings back his treasures. These include limitless resources: a goose that lays golden eggs and a harp that sings beautiful music. Like the bow and the pipe of "Jack and His Stepdame," they represent limitless physical and spiritual nourishment for his community. When he has them, in Flora Annie Steel's telling, "every one was quite happy," and Jack "became quite a useful person."



Bags of gold and silver Jack took
home, but still his mind did lean
Towards another prize, and journey
up the lucky stalk of bean.
Hidden in his usual corner in the
giant's house, he spied,
Bought for that great man's amuse-
ment, playing sweetly by his side
While he slept, a golden harp, which
Jack at once caught up, and ran.
But the harp with human voice cried,
"Master, master, stop this man!"
But so tipsy was the giant, though
he tried to run and bawl,
That, with all his pains, he could not
stop the flight of Jack at all.

In these three early Jack tales, then, we have the germ of Jack's persona. He's a trickster figure who brings back life-giving gifts for his community, while destroying the monsters of the encroaching otherworld. It's a pretty tall order for a young hero. Jack's battles with giants have entered pop culture in many novels and fantasy films, including an earlier Jack the Giant Killer. How does Bryan Singer's version measure up? See it and decide for yourself!

For much more on Jack, including references and a list of adaptations, see my article "Do You Know Jack?" originally published in Realms of Fantasy.

Based On A True Story: Jack the Giant Slayer

Based On A True Story: Jack the Giant Slayer



Update: I saw the film **Jack the Giant Slayer** at an IMAX/3D matinee performance on Saturday, March 2, 2013. I was pleasantly surprised.



First off, the opening titles were a surprise. Furthermore, the film's tribute to how folk traditions are passed along from one generation to the next was familiar and warm. The movie actually demonstrates how tales and folklore such as "Jack the Giant Killer" and the ancient knowledge of "giants among us" are shared with young people today – through movies, games, and the Internet. The motion picture, while fictional, of course, had several youngsters in the audience, and I saw before me the education of yet another wave of humans who may have little or no experiences with giants. I highly recommend it if you are interested in cultural cryptozoology.

Jack the Giant Slayer (previously titled Jack the Giant Killer) is a new film based on the "Jack the Giant Killer" and "Jack and the Beanstalk" folktales, which will be released on March 1, 2013. The film is directed by Bryan Singer. Singer is well-known for his work on *The Usual Suspects*, the *X-Men* films and *Superman Returns*.



Native peoples in many lands have traditions of giants.



It may sound strange, but consider this. It appears that Jack the Giant Slayer is based on true stories from our distant past, as Mark A. Hall and I document in our recent book, ***True Giants***.



What occurred was that the True Giants were seen as our ancient enemies. And killed by the technologically supreme humans. Over and over again. Until all the Giants were gone. The supposed “fairy tales” of *Jack and the Bean Stalk*, *Jack the Giant Killer*, and *Jack the Giant Slayer* are merely recorded versions of these encounters. From Chapter Three of *True Giants*, Hall and I wrote this: “Giants had a colorful past in the days before history was put down on paper. They have survived in much of Europe as colorful characters in the folklore of past ages. Dietrich of

Bern was one legendary hero who fought a giant in his life. The fabled Dietrich was based upon the historical person of Theodoric the Great (circa 454-526). He was a king of the Eastern Goths. We can see that Theodoric might have actually had to fight a giant from the mountains of Europe to gain his fame.

“Many old stories merit a second look when we realize that True Giants were around to play a part in the lives of our distant ancestors....

“The United Kingdom has never lacked stories of giants. In *The Minor Traditions of British Mythology*, Lewis Spence devotes one chapter to giants and ogres in England and a second to giants in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. According to this collection there was extensive interaction in the not-too-distant past between human beings and True Giants. The relationship reached a point, however, where the storied Knights of the Round Table were determined to kill every giant remaining in Britain.”



Vadim Makarov holds a remarkable cast of a [True Giant](#) track found over 30 years ago in the Pamirs, Russia.



This unique four-toed print is compared here to a typical large-sized, five-toed Almasly cast.



Famed Russian hominologists, from left to right, Dmitri Bayanov (the creator of the word “hominology”), Igor Burtsev (holding the common Almas-like print found in the Pamirs, this example from 1979), and Vadim Makarov (with the long four-toed footcast of a True Giant from the Pamirs, 1981). Photograph by Igor Burtsev, November 19, 2010. See more historical and current information in [True Giants](#).

by [Loren Coleman](#) on February 26, 2013

4 Responses



1.

Red Pill Junkie February 26, 2013 at 7:42 pm | [Permalink](#)

>"What occurred was that the True Giants were seen as our ancient enemies. And killed by the technologically supreme humans."

Could it be the other way around, though? What's your take on all the stories & legends re. slanted-eyed, red-haired, six-fingered giants that built megalithic structures in Europe & the Americas?

i.

alanborky February 27, 2013 at 3:20 pm | [Permalink](#)

That's something I've also wondered about RPG because even in the David and Goliath account we're presented with the image of this huge figure clad from head to toe in every conceivable kind of bronze armour and weaponry associating him therefore with the cutting edge hi tech of the day whereas Super Dave's effectively portrayed as a baby Fred Flintstone figure straight out the Stone Age forced to confront his adversary with nothing more than stones and a sling.



i.

Red Pill Junkie February 27, 2013 at 6:33 pm | [Permalink](#)

Yeah, I think the idea that more advanced civilizations will *always* have the upper hand against more primitive societies needs to be revised.

Take the Roman empire for example, conquered by 'barbarians' at the end of its influence.

2.

Tria MacLeod February 28, 2013 at 1:17 am | [Permalink](#)

There seems to be a great deal of variation between tales of ancient giants. In some traditions they were fairly intelligent, while in other tales they tended towards being dullards. If these tales of giants were based on actual encounters, what would the possibility be that giants in some areas were killed off, shrinking the gene pool to the point that chromosome defects occurred causing different populations to regress? Is there a trend that older origin giant tales showed more intelligent/ sympathetic beings than more recent origin tales?

The Blue Fairy Book

by Andrew Lang

THE HISTORY OF JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

by Andrew Lang

In the reign of the famous King Arthur there lived in Cornwall a lad named Jack, who was a boy of a bold temper, and took delight in hearing or reading of conjurers, giants, and fairies; and used to listen eagerly to the deeds of the knights of King Arthur's Round Table.

In those days there lived on St. Michael's Mount, off Cornwall, a huge giant, eighteen feet high and nine feet round; his fierce and savage looks were the terror of all who beheld him.

He dwelt in a gloomy cavern on the top of the mountain, and used to wade over to the mainland in search of prey; when he would throw half a dozen oxen upon his back, and tie three times as many sheep and hogs round his waist, and march back to his own abode.

The giant had done this for many years when Jack resolved to destroy him.

Jack took a horn, a shovel, a pickaxe, his armor, and a dark lantern, and one winter's evening he went to the mount. There he dug a pit twenty-two feet deep and twenty broad. He covered the top over so as to make it look like solid ground. He then blew his horn so loudly that the giant awoke and came out of his den crying out: "You saucy villain! you shall pay for this I'll broil you for my breakfast!"

He had just finished, when, taking one step further, he tumbled headlong into the pit, and Jack struck him a blow on the head with his pickaxe which killed him. Jack then returned home to cheer his friends with the news.

Another giant, called Blunderbore, vowed to be revenged on Jack if ever he should have him in his power. This giant kept an enchanted castle in the midst of a lonely wood; and some time after the death of Cormoran Jack was passing through a wood, and being weary, sat down and went to sleep.

The giant, passing by and seeing Jack, carried him to his castle, where he locked him up in a large room, the floor of which was covered with the bodies, skulls and bones of men and women.

Soon after the giant went to fetch his brother who was likewise a giant, to take a meal off his flesh; and Jack saw with terror through the bars of his prison the two giants approaching.

Jack, perceiving in one corner of the room a strong cord, took courage, and making a slip-knot at each end, he threw them over their heads, and tied it to the window-bars; he then pulled till he had choked them. When they were black in the face he slid down the rope and stabbed them to the heart.

Jack next took a great bunch of keys from the pocket of Blunderbore, and went into the castle again. He made a strict search through all the rooms, and in one of them found three ladies tied up by the hair of their heads, and almost starved to death. They told him that their husbands had been killed by the giants, who had then condemned them to be starved to death because they would not eat the flesh of their own dead husbands.

“Ladies,” said Jack, “I have put an end to the monster and his wicked brother; and I give you this castle and all the riches it contains, to make some amends for the dreadful pains you have felt.” He then very politely gave them the keys of the castle, and went further on his journey to Wales.

As Jack had but little money, he went on as fast as possible. At length he came to a handsome house. Jack knocked at the door, when there came forth a Welsh giant. Jack said he was a traveler who had lost his way, on which the giant made him welcome, and let him into a room where there was a good bed to sleep in.

Jack took off his clothes quickly, but though he was weary he could not go to sleep. Soon after this he heard the giant walking backward and forward in the next room, and saying to himself:

“Though here you lodge with me this night,
You shall not see the morning light;
My club shall dash your brains out quite.”

“Say you so?” thought Jack. “Are these your tricks upon travelers? But I hope to prove as cunning as you are.” Then, getting out of bed, he groped about the room, and at last found a large thick billet of wood. He laid it in his own place in the bed, and then hid himself in a dark corner of the room.

The giant, about midnight, entered the apartment, and with his bludgeon struck many blows on the bed, in the very place where Jack had laid the log; and then he went back to his own room, thinking he had broken all Jack’s bones.

Early in the morning Jack put a bold face upon the matter, and walked into the giant’s room to thank him for his lodging. The giant started when he saw him, and began to stammer out: “Oh! dear me; is it you? Pray how did you sleep last night? Did you hear or see anything in the dead of the night?”

“Nothing to speak of,” said Jack, carelessly; “a rat, I believe, gave me three or four slaps with its tail, and disturbed me a little; but I soon went to sleep again.”

The giant wondered more and more at this; yet he did not answer a word, but went to bring two great bowls of hasty-pudding for their breakfast. Jack wanted to make the giant believe that he could eat as much as himself, so he contrived to button a leathern bag inside his coat, and slip the hasty-pudding into this bag, while he seemed to put it into his mouth.

When breakfast was over he said to the giant: "Now I will show you a fine trick. I can cure all wounds with a touch; I could cut off my head in one minute, and the next put it sound again on my shoulders. You shall see an example." He then took hold of the knife, ripped up the leathern bag, and all the hasty-pudding tumbled out upon the floor.

"Ods splutter hur nails!" cried the Welsh giant, who was ashamed to be outdone by such a little fellow as Jack, "hur can do that hursel"; so he snatched up the knife, plunged it into his own stomach, and in a moment dropped down dead.

Jack, having hitherto been successful in all his undertakings, resolved not to be idle in future; he therefore furnished himself with a horse, a cap of knowledge, a sword of sharpness, shoes of swiftness, and an invisible coat, the better to perform the wonderful enterprises that lay before him.

He traveled over high hills, and on the third day he came to a large and spacious forest through which his road lay. Scarcely had he entered the forest when he beheld a monstrous giant dragging along by the hair of their heads a handsome knight and his lady. Jack alighted from his horse, and tying him to an oak tree, put on his invisible coat, under which he carried his sword of sharpness.

When he came up to the giant he made several strokes at him, but could not reach his body, but wounded his thighs in several places; and at length, putting both hands to his sword and aiming with all his might, he cut off both his legs. Then Jack, setting his foot upon his neck, plunged his sword into the giant's body, when the monster gave a groan and expired.

The knight and his lady thanked Jack for their deliverance, and invited him to their house, to receive a proper reward for his services. "No," said Jack, "I cannot be easy till I find out this monster's habitation." So, taking the knight's directions, he mounted his horse and soon after came in sight of another giant, who was sitting on a block of timber waiting for his brother's return.

Jack alighted from his horse, and, putting on his invisible coat, approached and aimed a blow at the giant's head, but, missing his aim, he only cut off his nose. On this the giant seized his club and laid about him most unmercifully.

"Nay," said Jack, "if this be the case I'd better dispatch you!" so, jumping upon the block, he stabbed him in the back, when he dropped down dead.

Jack then proceeded on his journey, and traveled over hills and dales, till arriving at the foot of a high mountain he knocked at the door of a lonely house, when an old man let him in.

When Jack was seated the hermit thus addressed him: "My son, on the top of this mountain is an enchanted castle, kept by the giant Golligantus and a vile magician. I lament the fate of a duke's daughter, whom they seized as she was walking in her father's garden, and brought hither transformed into a deer."

Jack promised that in the morning, at the risk of his life, he would break the enchantment; and after a sound sleep he rose early, put on his invisible coat, and got ready for the attempt.

When he had climbed to the top of the mountain he saw two fiery griffins, but he passed between them without the least fear of danger, for they could not see him because of his invisible coat. On the castle gate he found a golden trumpet, under which were written these lines:

“Whoever can this trumpet blow
Shall cause the giant’s overthrow.”

As soon as Jack had read this he seized the trumpet and blew a shrill blast, which made the gates fly open and the very castle itself tremble.

The giant and the conjurer now knew that their wicked course was at an end, and they stood biting their thumbs and shaking with fear. Jack, with his sword of sharpness, soon killed the giant, and the magician was then carried away by a whirlwind; and every knight and beautiful lady who had been changed into birds and beasts returned to their proper shapes. The castle vanished away like smoke, and the head of the giant Galligantus was then sent to King Arthur.

The knights and ladies rested that night at the old man’s hermitage, and next day they set out for the Court. Jack then went up to the King, and gave his Majesty an account of all his fierce battles.

Jack’s fame had now spread through the whole country, and at the King’s desire the duke gave him his daughter in marriage, to the joy of all his kingdom. After this the King gave him a large estate, on which he and his lady lived the rest of their days in joy and contentment.