



## Great Danes: Hans Christian Andersen

A Blog About Influential People from Denmark



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Hans Christian Andersen wrote many famous fairy tales. Some people think of fairy tales as stories passed down from generation to generation. These types of fairy tales became popular through the Brothers Grimm. The Brothers Grimm didn't make up their fairy tales. Most of them were centuries old. The Grimm Brothers traveled around Germany looking for people who could tell them local fairy tales. They recorded these stories. Then they published them in several volumes of books in the 1800s.

Hans Christian Andersen was a very unique author. He wrote some already-known fairy tales in his books. But he made up most of his fairy tales. Some of his fairy tales have become popular through animated movies. These include *The Little Mermaid* and *Frozen*. Andersen didn't

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actually write a story called “Frozen.” The movie *Frozen* was based on his story called “The Snow Queen.” You might be interested to learn that the movie *The Little Mermaid* ended quite differently than Andersen’s original story “The Little Mermaid.” I highly recommend that you check out Andersen’s version. I think its ending is much more powerful than the movie’s. Spoiler alert: Ariel never gets her voice back, never wins Prince Eric, and dies in the end by turning into sea foam.

Andersen also wrote many well-known fairy tales. These include “The Ugly Duckling,” “The Princess and the Pea,” and “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” Stories like “The Wild Swans” and “The Nightingale” are not quite as well known. After reading “The Wild Swans,” I wondered if there was a connection between it and the story of “The Ugly Duckling.” Both stories are about swan transformations. In “The Ugly Duckling,” the Ugly Duckling (which is actually a cygnet—a baby swan) turns into a beautiful swan. In “The Wild Swans,” Princess Elisa’s brothers turn into swans at daylight. They turn back into princes when the sun goes down.

Andersen made his own swan-like transformation from poverty to fame. Andersen was born in a one-room house in the poor area of Odense, Denmark on April 2, 1805. He later became one of the world’s most beloved writers.



**Hans Christian Andersen’s childhood home in Odense, Denmark**

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Andersen moved to the city of Copenhagen in 1819. He began to work as an actor. He also began writing around this time. His teachers didn't think his work was very good. They recommended that he quit writing. Luckily Andersen didn't listen. He began to publish stories in 1829. He published his first book of fairy tales in 1845 in Denmark. But it was not well liked. Andersen became famous for his work in other European countries before he became famous in Denmark. Andersen's star began to rise when his fairy tales were translated into other languages and sold in countries like England and Germany.



**Danish postage stamp  
from 1935**

Eventually, the Danes realized that Andersen was a national treasure—and we've celebrated him ever since. There are statues that show different scenes or characters from his stories all over Denmark. Examples include Ariel from "The Little Mermaid" and the swans from "The Wild Swans." Over the years Denmark has printed lots of

different postage stamps that feature either Andersen's picture or an image from one of his fairy tales. If you're ever in Odense you can visit Andersen's birth home. You can also visit the Hans Christian Andersen Museum.

On April 2, 2005, Denmark celebrated the 200th anniversary of Andersen's birth. The country went wild with remembering and honoring its favorite author. You could buy coins, dinnerware, and even baby clothes with Andersen's picture on them. There were TV shows about him that were created just for this celebration. A live show in his honor was broadcast to 15 different

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countries from Denmark's national soccer stadium. World-renown musicians performed at the show, including stars like Tina Turner.

So why is H.C. Andersen Denmark's favorite son? This is likely because Andersen's stories appeal equally to children as well as adults and are popular all over the world. Andersen has captured the imagination of every generation since his fairy tales were first published. His works have been translated into more than a hundred different languages and are popular all over the world. We Danes weren't alone in celebrating the 200th anniversary of Andersen's birthday. People in cities around the world also held celebrations and other events. Over the years, Andersen's fairy tales have been turned into movies and plays. There is even an amusement park based on his work that opened in Shanghai in 2017.



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**Statue of Hans Christian Andersen  
in Copenhagen, Denmark**