

# a multilateral school project about ourselves



# *Fairytales*

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Learning and understanding the cultural heritage  
of one's own world and partners', and developing  
respect for it by means of presenting the social and  
school life of students

# Österreichische Sagen

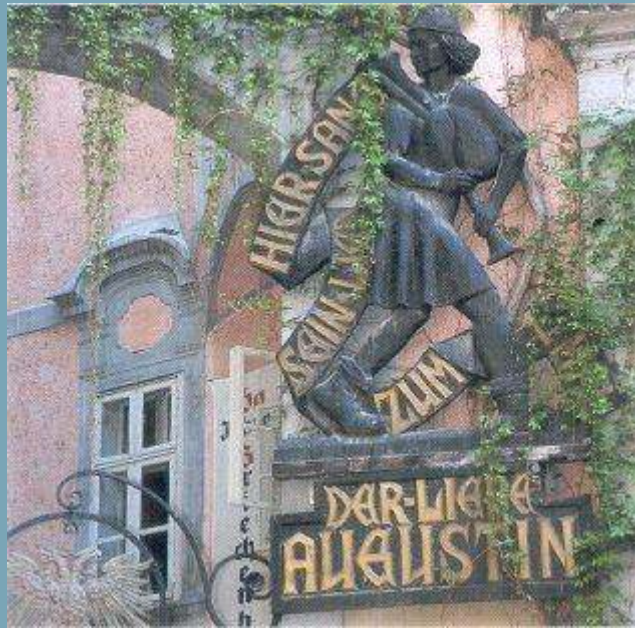


# Austrian Legends

## Dear Augustin

Augustin was a happy ballad singer who toured Vienna's inns entertaining people with jokes, songs and funny stories. He played his bagpipes to help people forget their fear of that strange illness that killed so many of them every day.

The Viennese loved him dearly because of his humour and happiness, they called him Lieber Augustin (Dear Augustin), but even he became sad when fewer and fewer people came to the inns to listen to him. One night he drowned his sorrow in wine and in his drunken state he was unable to walk home properly; he fell in the gutter and went to sleep. It should be remembered that undertakers used to go round the city in those times to pick up the dead from the streets to take them to the mass graves outside the city walls. The drunken Augustin was mistaken for a dead man, picked up and dumped in the nearest mass grave. But Augustin wasn't dead, so he was very shocked when he woke up and found himself among all the corpses. As the grave was very deep and the walls too high for him to climb out himself, he started to play his bag pipes as loud as he could to attract the attention of the undertakers when they came round to dump another load of corpses. Luckily, the next undertaker heard him playing and was very surprised to find someone still alive and shouting for help. He was immediately rescued from this dreadful place and was very lucky to remain healthy despite his terrible close contact with the deadly disease. He then told people in his songs about his dreadful experience and they loved him all the more for that. We still all know how to sing his song: "Oh, du lieber Augustin, alles is hin, Geld is hin, Mensch is hin, oh du lieber Augustin, alles is hin". (Which means: "Oh, dear Augustin, all is gone, money is gone, man is gone, oh, dear Augustin, all is gone").



# Lieber Augustin / Dear Augustin

Refrain:

Ach, du lieber Augustin,  
Augustin, Augustin,  
Ach, du lieber Augustin,  
Alles ist hin!

1. Geld ist hin, Müdl ist hin,  
Alles ist hin, Augustin!  
Ach, du lieber Augustin,  
Alles ist hin!

Refrain:

2. Rock ist weg, Stock ist weg,  
Augustin liegt im Dreck.  
Ach, du lieber Augustin,  
Alles ist hin!

Refrain:

3. Und selbst das reiche Wien,  
Hin ist's wie Augustin;  
Weint mit mir im gleichen Sinn,  
Alles ist hin!

Refrain:

4. Jeder Tag war ein Fest,  
Jetzt haben wir die Pest!  
Nur ein großes Leichenfest,  
Das ist der Rest.

Refrain:

5. Augustin, Augustin,  
Leg' nur ins Grab dich hin!  
Ach, du lieber Augustin,  
Alles ist hin!

Refrain:

O, my dear friend Augustin  
Augustin, Augustin,  
O, my dear friend Augustin,  
I just can't win!

1. Money's gone, girlfriend's gone,  
I just can't win, Augustin!  
O, my dear friend Augustin,  
I just can't win!

Refrain:

2. Coat is gone, staff is gone,  
Augustin's on his bum.  
O, my dear friend Augustin,  
I just can't win!

Refrain:

3. Even that rich town Wien,  
Broke is like Augustin;  
Shed tears with thoughts akin,  
I just can't win!

Refrain:

4. Every day was a fest,  
Now we just have the pest!  
Now all the corpses rest,  
That is the rest.

Refrain:

5. Augustin, Augustin,  
Lay down in your coffin!  
O, my dear friend Augustin,  
I just can't win!

This song originated in Vienna during the Plague period of 1678-1679. Legend has it that one evening, Augustin hoisted one too many and decided on a nap half way home. The morning corpse patrol threw his body on the cart with the other corpses and took him away. Fortunately Augustin awoke in the nick of time, to the horror of the mortician. In no time at all, the rumour spread far and wide that wine was not only a cure but also a great prophylactic for the plague.

## The Basilisk at the Bakery

The bakery in Schönlaterngasse was well known for its good bread. The master and his helpers started baking in the early morning hours every day so as to have fresh bread and rolls ready for their customers at breakfast time. Even the young housemaid had to start early and fetch water from the well for the bakery, before she started any other housework. One day the maid noticed a terrible smell coming from the well. The smell was so bad that she became too sick to pull the bucket up from the well, she was only able to shout for help before falling unconscious. The baker and his helpers went to see what was going on, but couldn't see the reason for the smell as it was too repulsive to go any near. Only one of them was brave enough to go near the well and climb down into it, but after a few minutes he had to come out again.

The shouting and crying in the bakery had attracted the attention of many people who wanted to know what was going on. The poor baker could only tell them that there was a strange looking creature in the well, which had the head of a cock with a golden crown on it, the body of a toad and the tail of a snake and a terrible stare in his eyes. Nobody knew what to do, except the emperor's doctor who was a well-educated man and had read of similar creatures in Greek mythology.

He proposed that somebody must go down into the well with a mirror to scare the creature so much with its own nasty appearance that it would die of shock due to its own ugliness. But he warned them still to be very careful, because from his knowledge anybody who had seen such a beast before had always died. George, one of the baker's helpers, who was secretly in love with the maid, volunteered to undertake this risky task to win the master's approval of their marriage plans.

With the master's agreement the doctor prepared George well; he blindfolded him so that he couldn't see the creature, sealed his ears with wax so that he couldn't hear the monster, covered his nose with the maid's scarf; gave him a mirror and led him to the well, where he fixed a rope round his body to be able to pull him up again. George climbed down into the well, holding the mirror in front of himself to protect him in his fight with the beast. Down in the well the basilisk looked into the mirror and saw for the first time just how ugly he really was. This experience frightened him so much that he burst with an enormous bang releasing an even more evil smell.

The doctor and his helpers pulled George quickly up. Even though he was ill for some time he survived the dangerous adventure because of the doctor's wise precautions and care. After that the well was filled with stones to prevent people from using its contaminated waters.

Only a painting on the house wall reminds us of the brave young man who killed the monster with a mirror.

## Hans Puchsbaum's Fate

Hans Puchsbaum was a stonemason at St. Stephan's Cathedral, making pillars and altars with finely carved figures and decorations on them. Master Prachatitz, the Master stonemason, was very satisfied with his work and even entrusted him with the construction of the huge nave. However, Hans was not only working hard, he was also in love with the Master's daughter Mary and wanted to marry her. Mary loved him too and so he asked the Master, if he would allow them to become man and wife.

Master Prachatitz, whose wife had recently died, loved his only daughter very much and did not want to give her away so easily. He therefore challenged Hans with an enormous task, such that he would only be allowed to marry Mary, if he managed to build the North Tower as big as the South Tower within one year.

At first poor Hans was shocked by this demand, but since he loved her so much, agreed to take on the challenge and started the new task immediately.

At first the building of the new tower developed quite well, but Hans soon realised that they were not fast enough to finish within one year. He grew more and more anxious and checked the building work himself every night. Once, while he was working desperately to complete the work on the tower, an ugly old man in a black coat and red hat joined him. After watching him for a while and asking him all sorts of questions, the old man offered to finish the tower for him within the requested time. Although Hans didn't really believe that the man could do this, he asked him what he would want in exchange for it. The old man just asked him to promise never again to mention the name of God or any other holy names in his life, otherwise the old man would take his soul. Hans thought that this couldn't be so difficult and accepted the offer. From that time on, the construction work progressed much more quickly.

The Viennese, walking past the cathedral almost every day, suddenly noticed that the work was being completed extremely fast and whispered that only the Devil could work at such speed.

Was the old man in fact the Devil?

During the months of intensive work on the tower, Hans had not been able to see his beloved Mary. All the greater was his joy, when he suddenly noticed her crossing the square. He leaned over the scaffolding and tried to attract her attention by shouting her name: "Mary, Mary!" Unfortunately this was not only her name but also the name of the "Virgin Mary", a holy name which he had promised not to use. Immediately the plank under his feet gave way and Hans plunged to the ground, the whole scaffolding collapsing on top of him, fulfilling the devil's curse.

The terrible event shocked the people of Vienna so much that the North Tower was never finished to the height of the South Tower.

## The Jolabüchel

The site of a strange hill, the Jolabüchel, in the village Bezau was once occupied by a rich farmhouse surrounded by fertile fields and pleasant meadows. One day a stranger appeared begging for alms. When the hart-hearted farmer drove him away, the stranger turned around and warned: "Just wait, what I will bring you in return."

Then suddenly the beggar disappeared, and one moment later the sky turned black as night. Water roared and a nearby creek turned into an impetuous torrent. Down the valley came trees and boulders devastating the once so lovely place. And in the midst of the debris flow there was the stranger leading a fierce dragon by a red cord.

With his tail the dragon drove all trunks and rocks towards the farmhouse. He heaped up the debris above the house burying both men and cattle. Then the stranger took the red cord and, leading the dragon through the centre of Bezau, he turned towards the neighbouring village. Both beggar and dragon were seen never again.



# The Dragon Slayer

A fierce dragon once haunted the pastures, forests and ravines near Brand, a small and remote village well within a steep and narrow mountain valley. He often came down to the village to devour the cattle and harmed the peasants in every way he could. All attempts to get rid of the foe were in vain. Then one day a travelling scholar happened to visit the village. He promised relieve – but at the same time he warned the peasants of his own powers. Nevertheless the people of Brand were more afraid of the dragon but of the unknown magic of the scholar. The wayfarer proposed two methods to defeat the dragon: water or fire. Although knowing the forces of torrents and debris flows the peasant considered the fire more dangerous.

Early that evening the sky turned black as night. But just one moment later a thunderstorm aroused as it was never experienced before in this country. Flashes so rapidly followed each other that the whole valley was brightly enlightened – with no sun or moon shining. The thunder rolled and echoed from one mountain ridge to the other, the rain poured down and it hailed cats and toads. The tempest was worst in that area, where the dragon was supposed to dwell. Then at midnight, when its force still increased, the whole hillside collapsed. Meadows and woods, water and soil, trees and stones intermingled and rushed down the slope. And in the midst of this there was the dragon. Suddenly he was struck and killed by one last great flash. Then the thunderstorm ceased, and the debris flow soon stopped the bottom of the valley. The rest of the night was covered by absolute darkness. Late came dawn. At full light the peasants could examine the devastations of the night. The whole hillside had turned into a steep torrent, and masses of debris covered the valley's floor. "This is the dragon's grave" whispered the men to their wives and children. The wandering scholar, however, had disappeared.

Shurely these mountain pastures were hazardous both for peasants and cattle. Cows quite often lost their ways and fell into torrents. People were threatened and sometimes even killed by thunderstorms. Debris flows still are a common hazard in these areas and millions of shillings are spent each year for the obstruction of torrents. Folk lore attributed all these threats to supernatural powers, e.g. in this case to a dragon. According to the old rule similar similibus curantur (an evil can be cured by something similar) only a magical tempest could relieve the valley of this creature. At the same time the legend explained the formation of a new torrent. The geologist, however, has another explanation: Huge masses of unstable gravel had been deposited on the mountain flanks during the last ice age. They were soon covered and stabilized by trees. But in areas without vegetational cover these gravels very often feed debris flows during thunderstorms.

The Schesatobel near Brand is one of these areas. About 200 years ago the woods had been cut down. The people needed money for the construction of a new church. They should not have done so. During the following years a small creek, not wider than two or three feet, developed into deep torrent. Today backward erosion exceeds three meters each year! About one hundred years ago the tooth of a mammoth was found in Schesatobel. Shurely the legend is much older and does not report the formation of that torrent. But just imagine: The sudden collapse of a hillside, which had been stable for hundreds of years during an extremely strong thunderstorm, the appearance of a strange person at the same time, and perhaps the finding of mammoth bones – all these features could be the source of this myth which was born during the long winter nights.

## The robbers and their treasure in the mountain of Skule!

Once upon a time, there was a man from Nola who had got married in to the village of Berg. Unfortunately the new farmer didn't feel welcome in the small hamlet. To feel more respected and welcome by the villagers, he decided to try to become friends with the robbers at the top of the Skule Mountain.

The new farmer started to walk the long path through the mysterious forest along the bedrock, up to the plunders. He wanted to tell them that he had knowledge about the farmers and their wool sheep's that was placed on Mjalton over the summer to feed.

He offered himself to help the plunders to steal the sheep's on the island, which should be an easy pray. The robbers liked the plan and accepted the offer.

When they shortly after the agreement arrived at Mjalton, it didn't take long before the greedy robbers were occupied with chasing wool sheep's. The attentive farmer did then push the small boat out of land and as fast as he could, he rowed back to fast land. The plunders soon realised that they had been tricked, but then it was already to late.

Soon a great band of farmers were on their way out to the island to destroy the plunders. A dramatic hunt started on the desert island. The robbers that weren't shot or beaten to death, were forced out to Aspudden, at the north east corner of Mjalton. Here they jumped in panic right down in the cold ocean and drowned.

The farmers in Berg then went to the cave in the mountain, to take care of the riches. But they returned with nothing! Their outlawed house holder had realised that something was wrong when the men didn't come back, and had therefore taken the goblets with treasures and hidden them in another cave in the mountain.

But just as the stolen gods was hidden in the wall, the great treasure ended up in the violence of the fairy in the mountain. Even today, she is the one who is guarding it. Sometimes it happens that she shows the treasure. People have once in a while observed it after a strong rain weather when the blanket of cloud suddenly blossomed and the sun braked through. No one has never the less achieved to seizure the treasure.

The fairytale says that just when the treasure is right in front of you, the fairy in the mountain has revealed and turned away the glance of the treasure hunter, and at the next moment, everything has disappeared. The fairy has concealed her riches in to the mountain once more.

## A Greek fairy tale

### The dog and the cat

A very long time ago all the animals decided that they would gather and converse with one another. When all the animals had finally come together at the meeting place, they all looked at each other and noticed that the only animal that had not come to their meeting was the camel. It was then decided by all the animals that one of them had to go and find the missing animal.

None of the animals wanted to go and find the missing camel, as they did not want to leave the conversation they were currently having. Not even one animal volunteered to go and find the camel. Then the animals decided that the only way to solve the problem with the missing camel was through a toss: they would throw a stick up in the air and whoever the stick landed in front of would have to fetch the camel. The fox threw up the stick and it landed in front of the dog.

The dog was very unhappy with what had resulted and asked the other animals:

“How can I find the camel when I do not know what it even looks like?” The dog thought that it was very smart and hoped to get itself out of its predicament by this excuse. The fox being much wiser than the dog quickly answered the dog’s question and said: “You will know who the camel is by the hump that appears on its back.” The dog became very happy as it felt its task would be very easy and replied: “Very well if that is the case, then I shall surely find the camel quite easily.” The fox giggled at the dog’s reply.



As the dog went on its way, it met a cat. The cat became frightened at seeing the dog appearing out of nowhere and arched its back in fear. The dog saw the arch and believed it was a hump, it could not believe its eyes it had found the camel so easily. It asked the cat to follow it and the cat did as the dog politely asked. The cat followed behind the dog with its back still arched, as it was cautious.

The dog then approached the meeting place where all the other animals were gathered and proclaimed: “I have found the camel!” The animals began to laugh and tears ran from their eyes. How stupid the dog could be, not being able to notice the difference between a camel and a cat! The dog became enraged as he saw the cat lower the arch in its back. The dog then began chasing the cat as it is doing till this day!!!

## The “Santa Compañía”

The Santa Compañía, ("Holy Company") is one of the most deep-rooted mythical beliefs in rural Galicia. It is a procession when the dead or souls in torment wander the paths of the countryside at midnight. The Santa Compañía is an announcer of death, its mission is to visit the homes where death is due.

One of the ways the spirits announce their presence is throwing pebbles on the roofs of houses indicating that they are outside waiting, and if someone opens the windows or the door they must follow them.

The Santa Compañía mostly appears at night but it has also been heard of appearing during the day.

A living person carrying a cross and a cauldron of holy water leads the procession followed by all the souls with lit candles. Although they are not always seen, the smell of wax and the breeze which appears when they pass warn of their presence. They walk praying, singing funeral hymns and ringing a small bell. When they appear the forest turns silent, cats run from houses and dogs yell nervously.

The living person who leads the procession doesn't remember at morning what they were doing at night, and as they can't rest any of the nights, their health deteriorates day after day. However nobody can know the source of this illness.

This person must never turn around or renounce their duty in leading the Santa Compañía. They can only be freed from this duty if they manage to find another person to carry the cross and the cauldron, or when is die.

To avoid this obligation people who see the Santa Compañía pass by must draw a circle on the ground and enter it. They can also lie face-down on the ground, or they can go to a "Cruceiro", stone crosses which stands at the "encruzilladas" (cross roads), and stand on the stone steps that surround it.

This myth may be related to Odin's Wild Hunt, or the Celtic westward processions of the dead to the End of the World. It is somewhat equivalent to the Irish Banshee and British Ankou.