significance of de Beaumont's

"A lot of people think fairy tales a University of Regina English children," says Nicholas Ruddick, are just for the amusement of small found role to play in our culture. professor who teaches a class on fairy rales. "But they have a pro-

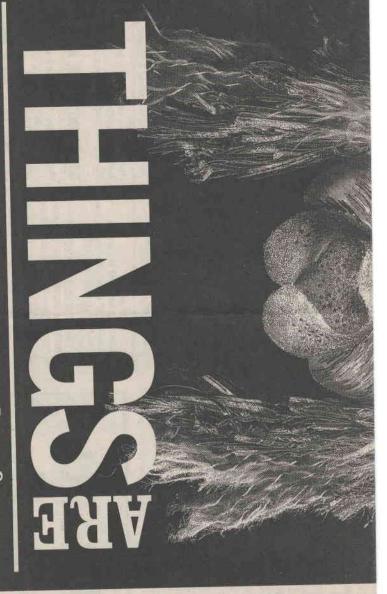
says Ruddick. "They were told group of people a bit of advice entertain small children, but from generation to generation. peasantry, who were illiterate," tales which circulated among the about dangers they faced in life." instead to give a very unprivileged The messages weren't intended to "Fairy tales were originally folk

ably. "If you're telling Little Red ent meaning changed considerprocess, says Ruddick, their inherto the realm of children. In the sources, fairy tales were relegated books and other information and the emergence of newspapers, not what it's about at all. men in the woods-[but] that's them to watch out for dangerous change the tale to a warning for essential purpose so you have to they're not going to understand its Riding Hood to a four year-old, With the rise of adult literacy

struction, which begins when a girl The red cloak is symbolic of men-Hood about? Well, it's about sex. So what is Little Red Riding

hits puberry, and signals her impending transformation into a sexually mature female. The tale the danger posed by predatory male sexuality—as represented by the wolf. would've been told by a mother or grandmother to a pubescent girl as a means of warning her about

been criticized in some quarters for sanitizing the tales to make them palarable to mainstream audimodified form, from culture to culture. Disney, the dominant purveyor of fairy tales today, has Because most tales address common human experiences and predicaments they recur, in slightly



Folk tales offered rules for living in a savage past

BY GREGORY BEATTY PHOTO BY DARROL HOFMEISTER

nance in our culture, helping shape impressionable young minds, while at the same time providing that's at fault, but the more genreel fables that arose later among the middle class. Those tales, along girl's happiness depends on winning a man's love. Again, says Ruddick, it's not the original folk tale adults with a convenient refuge from reality. with modern incarnations (like Hilary Duff's recent hit, A Cinderella Story), still carry great reso-Snow White and Cinderella, that a

peasants, however, the tales weren't cunning to get out of difficult situaexample, "teaches girls to rely on can'." Little Red Riding Hood, for Learn how to survive as best you said was 'Okay, life is really hard Ruddick. "What they essentially moral in the same way, says with the wolf and suddenly realizes When the girl finds herself in bed tions-not to behave morally. runs for her life." take a pee?. The wolf lets her and she minute, I have to go outside and she's in danger she says 'Wait a

guidance to peasants, they also roles," says Ruddick. "In Jack and tocrats are cast in very dangerous functioned as a form of social good living from him. satire. "Very often in folk tales ariscrat. You can tell from the descripbeanstalk and manages to steal a peasant boy who goes up the tion of his stately home. Jack is the the Beanstalk, the giant is an aristo-Not only did fairy tales offer

outmoded values they propagate. true worth depends on more than and the Beast, it's that a person's valuable moral lesson-in Beauty Feminists, in particular, object to rural critics take umbrage at the just their appearance— some culthe proposition, as suggested in While most fairy tales contain a