



History & Geography

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Scandinavia most commonly refers to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. For this study, we will focus only on these lands. However, sometimes it is used as a synonym for the Nordic Countries (which include Finland, Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands). If you wish to include the other countries in your geography study, then you can include the optional chapters as well.

We have included a biography of Hans Christian Andersen, the beloved Danish author who wrote many of the world's most famous fairy tales, below.

We recommend reading [CM Geography: Book 4 - The Countries of Europe: Their Scenery and Peoples](#), by Charlotte Mason.

- Chapter on Denmark (pp. 249-254)
- Scandinavia pp. 261-276
- *Optional*: Russia (section on Finland and the Finns) pp. 224-227
- *Optional*: Iceland pp. 255-260

“The past is the mirror that reflects the future.”

~ Snorri Sturluson, The Prose Edda



Hans Christian Andersen

April 2, 1805 – August 4, 1875

Hans Christian Andersen was a Danish writer born in 1805, known for his enchanting fairy tales that have captivated readers for generations. His stories, like "The Little Mermaid," "The Ugly Duckling," and "The Emperor's New Clothes," have become timeless classics loved by people all around the world.

Andersen's life wasn't always a fairy tale. He was born into a poor family in Denmark and faced many hardships growing up. His father had no education beyond elementary school, and his mother was illiterate, but despite these humble beginnings, Andersen had big dreams. His father began to read him stories as a child, and they sparked his sense of creativity.

After receiving a basic education at a local school for poor families, Andersen began to work as an apprentice at various jobs. Yet he was not satisfied with this life, and at fourteen, Andersen left his small hometown and traveled to Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, to pursue his dreams as an actor. This move would change Andersen's life, but not in the way he was expecting. He was accepted into the Royal Danish Theater; however, his singing voice began to change soon after. It wasn't until another member of the theater remarked that they could see him as a poet that things began to change. Andersen took this comment deeply to heart and began to focus on his writing from that moment onward.

The director of the Royal Danish Theater advocated for Andersen, convincing King Frederick VI to send him to a grammar school and give him a partial scholarship. Despite the amazing opportunity, this was a dark time for Andersen because the teachers were very unkind and discouraging to him. However, these years ultimately led to him getting into the University of Copenhagen in 1828, which helped him further his education. Andersen continued to write despite the hardship and discouragement he had endured, refusing to give up on his dreams.

Eventually, Andersen's hard work paid off. He published a short story that brought attention to his writing, followed by a play and a collection of short poems. These works brought him enough success to begin traveling throughout Europe, which became a great source of inspiration for his work.

In 1835, he published a biographical novel called *The Improvisatore*, which was a smashing success and propelled his career to even greater heights. That same year, he published his first collection of fairy tales, which included stories like "The Tinderbox" and "Thumbelina." These stories quickly became popular, and Andersen's fame began to grow. He went on to write many more fairy tales, each one filled with magic, adventure, and important life lessons.

What makes Andersen's fairy tales so special is their universal appeal. His stories often feature characters who face challenges and overcome adversity, teaching readers valuable lessons about kindness, bravery, and the power of believing in oneself. Andersen had a unique gift for storytelling, weaving together vivid imagery and memorable characters that continue to resonate with readers of all ages.

Throughout his life, Andersen never forgot his roots or the struggles he faced on his journey to becoming a celebrated author. He often expressed these hardships in his stories, identifying with the lonely and the outcast and demonstrating how one could overcome these struggles. This relatable, human element in his stories is what made them so beloved and enduring. He continued writing until 1872, just a few years before his death in 1875. He left behind a legacy of imagination, inspiration, and timeless tales, reminding us that sometimes the greatest magic can be found in the simplest of stories.