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Our assignment was simple. Choose a book we read this semester and write about it. I had previously read, fell in love with, and written a research paper on *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer. So when I saw his latest book, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, on the syllabus for my Contemporary American Literature class, I knew I would love it. And sure enough, it did not disappoint. At the end, I was still left with an uneasy feeling. I felt no closure. I was sad, and I thought the novel ended on an extremely pessimistic note. I saw Oskar's story as an imaginative attempt at understanding the incomprehensible: death. Yet, it was a naïve one, almost fairy-tale like in its determination to find an answer behind his father's death. And that's when my argument began to come together.

For this assignment, I did not seek assistance from a librarian. Rather, I met with my professor on numerous occasions to throw around some ideas and look over drafts. He helped me narrow down my topic and pushed me to answer not only the "how?" but the "why?" behind my argument. Additionally, during a peer review session, one of my classmates suggested I look into J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays*, in particular, an essay called "On Fairy Stories." Nevertheless, I conducted most of the research for this paper on my own.

I discovered my sources through the library's online catalog and Research Port, namely the MLA International Bibliography. In the database, I typed in the title of the work and I simply went through each source. If the source was available online (either through PDF format, Google Books, JSTOR, etc.) I looked at it from there. However, if this were not the case, I would check its availability in the catalog. This was the first time I used a source from the periodical stacks. This became quickly apparent to the librarian when I frantically questioned her when I couldn't find the specific volume upstairs and she kindly directed me to the current periodicals area. Once I exhausted the database search, I was unsure of how to proceed. As soon as I began to question my research topic, the magic of bibliographies illuminated my way. I went through the works cited of my sources, and was able to uncover some new and useful ones from there. This is one of many things I picked up on during my research process.

Next, I went through the online catalog. Under the subject heading of "fairy tales," there are 449 entries – a few hundred more than I was willing to look through. I went through the subject tags and found one appropriate to what I was looking for: "fairy tales -- history and criticism." However, there were still 98 results to sort through. I continued to search through the subject headings, and I chose "fairy tales -- social aspects," one with only three books. One of the titles immediately caught my attention and just my luck - it was available! Through the research process for this paper, I've learned that subject tags are truly a gift. They can save you considerable time and help you sort through the more obscure and unimportant texts.

In order to evaluate my sources, I first had to check the credibility of each one. We were told that we could not use dissertations. This was easily avoided, as there is an option to exclude dissertations in the database search. Additionally, the majority of our sources had to come from scholarly sources and we were allowed to use a few reliable online references. Once I had selected my sources, I read the abstract if one was provided. However, most of my sources were relatively short (less than 30 pages), and so

I read through each at least once. I've noticed that abstracts can be misleading, and if possible (given length and time considerations), it is always best to read through an entire source. Even if the majority of the source is irrelevant, there are often small, but significant, details that the summaries can miss.

Unfortunately, I was unable to procure a recommendation letter for this application. My professor from ENGL437 (Contemporary American Literature) is currently writing on a book and has a strict writing deadline. Additionally, I asked two other professors, who felt uncomfortable writing a letter of recommendation for an assignment I did outside their class or would not be able to thoroughly evaluate my research process by the deadline. I sincerely hope that the lack of a supporting letter will not deter you from considering my application. Thank you for your time.