

# personal english



## Book #31

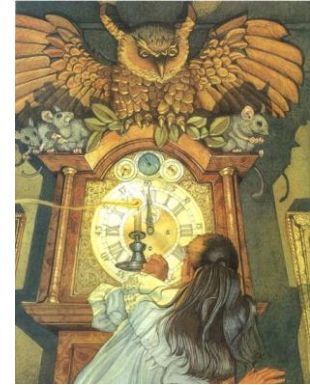
### *Nutcracker and Mouse King*

by T.A. Hoffmann

Best known as a classic **Christmas ballet**, *The Nutcracker* originally was a **short story** written in **1816** by German author **T. A. Hoffmann**, and then set to music in 1892 by Russian composer **Tchaikovsky**.

Albeit maybe little-known outside of literary circles, T.A. Hoffmann has proved one of the most influential authors on the international literary scene since the late 1700s, when he pioneered the **fantasy genre** (tinged with macabre and horror) as well as the **detective story**, blazing a trail for later writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolaj Gogol and Franz Kafka.

The **surreal atmosphere** evoked in *Nutcracker and Mouse King* exemplifies Hoffmann's most distinctive stylistic traits as well as his favorite characters. Among them is the **clockmaker**, who – as with the character of Coppelius in *The Sandman* (1816) – is capable of fostering the illusion of life in his **high-tech dolls**. In *Nutcracker*, the clockmaker **Drosselmeier**'s dolls are not just life-like, but literally come to life to fight a war against the seven-headed Mouse King on the night of Christmas Eve. At the end of the war, the doll-owner, **Marie**, breaks the spell imprisoning the Nutcracker, thus restoring him to his human form.



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