

Looking at Fairy Tales

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Introduction/Rationale

“Fairy tales were originally told or written as much for adults as for children, but often they seem to have been used to teach a valuable lesson.”¹

This unit is intended for students in grades 2 through 5. They will use what they learn about fairy tales and write their own fairy tales during the ELA/Writing block.

A fairy tale is a story with many magical elements. Many characteristics are taken from fables and folklore and have been around for thousands of years, beginning with many oral traditions. Fairy Tales are part of folklore.² Fairy tales were once told orally, but eventually authors of the stories wrote them down, many of the stories by more than one author. A fairy tale as described in dictionary.com as “a story, usually for children, about elves, hobgoblins, dragons, fairies, or other magical creatures.”³ Students will work to identify the unique characteristics of a fairy tale: it is a make-believe story, it has magic or spells, animals act like humans, it begins with “Once Upon a Time” and ends with “Happily Ever After,” and it includes villains, good guys, princes and princesses, castles and forests, and a kind character who is mistreated.⁴ They will use those characteristics to create a checklist to help them with the writing they will do at the end of the unit.

Delaware has adopted the Common Core State Standards for ELA and Math and the Next Generation Science Standards. I will be addressing CCSS ELA and Writing standards for second grade within my unit. This unit will address the following:

- **Reading ELA Literacy CCSS: RL.2.2**-Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- **Reading ELA Literacy CCSS: RL 2.3**-Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
- **Reading ELA Literacy CCSS: RL 2.9**-Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (eg., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures.
- **Writing CCSS: 2.3**-Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts,

and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

- **Writing CCSS: 2.5**-With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

My students and I began our year studying narratives in the classroom. Now we are going to extend that learning by using the elements that we have learned (such as including characters, a setting, having a problem and solution, making sure the story has a beginning, a middle and an end) to create our own fractured fairy tales. I hope to develop lessons using a variety of fairy tales, in written and video form, to look for ways the author develops the characters and the story. We will be comparing the written stories with excerpts of videos/films that show how the authors develop the characters and stories. Lessons will be created for a thirty- to forty-five minute ELA block that will last 5 to 8 days, but could easily be broken down into smaller blocks. The activities will include whole-group discussion, small group mini-lessons, and opportunities for independent practice that can be used for both formative and summative assessments.

Demographics

My school, Wilmington Manor Elementary School, is located in New Castle, Delaware. It is part of the Colonial School District. This is a small school, with about 331 students in grades K-5. There is a very high population of English Language Learners (ELL). 37.7% of students at Wilmington Manor are classified as ELL. Many of our students are their family's only English speakers. Many parents cannot read my notes or any information or instructions that are sent home in English, and they are unable to help their students with work that is sent home in English. Within my own Second Grade classroom 38% of students are labeled Special Education. They are serviced within my classroom by me. 62% are Regular Education students who are also in my classroom, although many of these "regular" education students are reading one to two years below grade level. Given such a diverse group of students, my unit will include activities for higher and lower levels of learners. Those students that work above grade level, on grade level, and below grade level will all have equal opportunities to work toward proficiency in this unit.

Learning Objectives

- ❖ Students will know the difference between fiction and nonfiction stories.
- ❖ Students will read, evaluate, and discuss different fairy tales.
- ❖ Students will write about the fairy tales and videos that we will view.
- ❖ Students will describe the characters in the stories and explain how they develop and change within the stories.

- ❖ Students will evaluate and adopt appropriate elements from fairy tales to use within their own fairy tales.
- ❖ Students will think and talk critically about why authors write fairy tales and apply what they have learned to their own writing.

Essential Questions

- What are the differences between fiction and nonfiction stories? How do we know?
- What are fairy tales? What elements are included in almost all fairy tales?
- What is the author's purpose for including particular elements in the story?
- How are real life princes, princesses, and castles different from those shown in fairy tales?
- How do the authors of the stories develop the plot and characters?
- How do the different video adaptations of the stories help develop their stories?

Research

What Is a Fairy Tale?

Fairy tales have been around for many years. Interestingly enough, fairy tales do not have to be stories about fairies, although many of these stories do include them. Fairy tales are part of folklore, but folk tales are not necessarily fairy tales.⁵ Many say that the influence of the women writers in the French salons dubbed their stories *contes de fées*, which translated into English means “fairy tales.”⁶ The growing popularity of the French tales brought into wider use the term “fairy tales,” which began to be used to describe the same type of tales that were written by the Grimm brothers and Hans Christian Andersen. A fairy tale is set in the past, and the story itself is not tied to any specifics or authors. These stories are written, literary versions of fictional folk material produced for entertainment. Fairy tales are usually longer than folk stories set in that *far, far away and a long time ago* place. In fairy tales, strange things are caused by magic. No one thinks anything of it when a frog talks or a rug flies. Many discussions surround the concept of fairy tales. Many fairy tales have some sort of royalty involved in the story; the main characters go on a journey in which they are put through some type of test or challenge; they have some sort of magical help along the way; good triumphs over evil; and there is a transformation or reward at the end of the story.⁷ Many readers continue to be fascinated by what they are and how they have come about. It is interesting to read the many talks and blogs that discuss the definition of fairy tales.

Folklore

Folklore as we know it comes from an oral storytelling tradition, passed through the generations by word of mouth. Oral storytelling, through the ages, takes a story that has

been told many times but becomes slightly different every time it is retold, sometimes even by the same storyteller. The stories have been traced through history. Specific elements can occur within folklore such as the use of the phrases “once upon a time,” “they lived happily ever after,” and the use of magical elements. Folklorists first focused on traditional stories and songs. However, a more contemporary view looks at folklore as something that encompasses a variety of creative genres: folk art, folk songs, legends, ballads, quilting, folktales, fables, fairy tales, tall tales, myths, and legends. 8

True Stories Behind Classic Fairy Tales

Many fairy tales have been found to be watered-down versions of uncomfortable historical events. Some darker stories have horrific origins in incidents of rape, incest, torture, cannibalism and brutal experiences. In the early 1800’s Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected stories that depicted many of the unpredictable and unforgiving life experiences among central Europeans.⁹ The Grimm brothers wrote down stories based on actual gruesome events, but they made sure their stories were a lighter interpretation so that their books would sell. Charles Perrault’s original “Cinderella” contained violent elements, as when the wicked stepsisters butcher their own feet trying to fit them into the slipper the Prince has found. Most of these original stories were intended for adults. “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” was based on the life of a 16th century Bavarian noblewoman, Margarete von Waldeck. Her brother used small children to work in his copper mine. They became severely deformed from their physical labor and were then referred to as dwarfs. The poisoned apple was based on the true story of an old man who offered tainted fruits to those same workers and other children that he thought had stolen from him. Margarete’s stepmother hated her and sent her to the Brussels court. When she became the lover of Prince Philip II of Spain, his father, who disapproved of the romance, sent agents to murder Margarete by poisoning her. There are many other stories just like “Snow White,” many of them rooted as deeply as Margarete’s in historical truth.

The Fractured Fairy Tale

Fractured fairy tales retell familiar stories in a way that finds unexpected humor in the way the story portrays its characters, uses a different language or dialect, has plot deviations and twists, or uses amusing writing ploys.¹⁰ The story chosen to be fractured must be a recognizable folk or fairy tale; otherwise the humor will be lost completely. Authors say that the more serious the original fairy tales are, the easier they are to fracture, because the seriousness of the characters becomes a satirical target. The personality and humor of the storyteller fracturing the fairy tale comes out naturally in the new story. Fractured fairy tales can be made for children, teens, and even adults, although pre-school through second grade students may have trouble understanding the plays on words, puns, or references. They don’t know the original well enough or are too young to get the humor in the story. They will love it but laugh at different, unexpected places and

think it is the original story. Some experts say it is difficult to pinpoint when the fracturing of fairy tales came about, but James Thurber wrote “The Little Girl and the Wolf” in 1939. In the late 1950’s the television cartoon program *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show* included a segment on Fractured Fairy Tales that coined the phrase “fractured fairy tale.” Storyteller Ed Stivender creates fractured fairy tales in minutes by using the following formula: select a famous fairy tale character, select another famous fairy tale character, select a modern saying, select a famous place, and select a problem (silly or serious).¹¹ Now you can combine all those elements into a funny and fractured tale!

Strategies

To teach my unit I will rely on several teaching methods including direct instruction, collaborative pairs, collaborative groups and videos.

Whole group direct instruction will occur daily at the beginning of my lessons. There will be activating strategies, an introduction to the concept we are working on that day and the concept of I Do, We Do, and You Do so that my activities will be scaffolded throughout.

Collaborative pairs offer a great way to ensure that all students become engaged in an activity. Pairs usually help the students focus on what they need to do without too many people monopolizing the conversation. Students have an opportunity to discuss what they know and explain their opinions to others. Collaborative groups will stay to no longer than 4 students so that they can still have a rich discussion without one or two in the group monopolizing the whole class.

Unit

Activating Activities

Exploring Different Fairy Tale Books:

Collect an assortment of favorite fairy tales, old and new. You will want to have enough that students can each have three or four to look through with a buddy. In my classroom of 16, I would want 24 to 32 copies of different fairy tales. They can be actual books or copies of stories printed out by a computer. See Appendix A for a list of stories with links to materials for this unit. I have also included some short video clips of fairy tales that can be shown as well.

Noticing:

Give a small group of students a stack of books and some post-it notes. The students should write down what they notice about the fairy tales that they are looking through. They should specifically look for what makes fairy tales distinctive—what makes them fairy tales and not just works of fiction. After allowing time to write down what they have noticed, come together as a group and create a fairy tale anchor chart adding the information and observations your students have gathered. Make sure they understand the differences between fiction, fairy tales, and nonfiction. See Appendix B for a list of some common elements that should be included on your chart.

Activity 1:

These suggestions can be used in centers or one at a time in whole or small groups.

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Fairy Tale Search

Put 10 to 12 fairy tales that students can use to search for different fairy tale elements into a basket. Ask them to write down the fairy tale title and the author. These can then be used as a basis for discussing the fairy tale elements and identifying where they can be found in certain stories. See Appendix C for the sheet of text features students can look for and write down.

Sequencing a Fairy Tale

Choose one of the fairy tales to read aloud. Then divide your students into groups of 3 or 4. Give each group an event or scene to illustrate in 15-20 minutes. Gather the class back together and have them put the illustrations in order. See Appendix D for paper to write down the events and then cut apart and hand out.

Character Traits

Younger students have difficulty differentiating between character and physical traits. This activity will help them develop a better understanding of those differences. Using the character traits list provided in Appendix E, discuss the differences between character and physical traits. Then choose one of the fairy tales to read aloud, stopping and discussing traits they can identify for the character you choose. They can then use the same basket of fairy tales to practice finding the traits of a character of their choice with examples from the story (Appendix F).

Activity 2: Looking at Fractured Fairy Tales

Show the video clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xnYcKHl8E4> from the Rocky and Bullwinkle show. Then read the original Cinderella story and compare the two. How are they different? What were some of the things they changed in the story? You can also watch similar clips on YouTube. Do a search for Rocky and Bullwinkle Fractured Fairy Tales (a hyperlink is included on Appendix A). Complete the organizer that compares the fractured fairy tale to the original version. The organizer can be completed by individual students or a group of students. See Appendix G.

Activity 3: Writing a Fractured Fairy Tale

After watching and reading some examples of a fractured fairy tale, the students should be ready to write their own Fractured Fairy Tales. Use the Fractured Fairy Tale Plan (Appendix H) to have your students create their story. Be sure to create a checklist with the students so that they know what you expect from them when writing their own. Use Mentor Texts to read or watch and go through the checklist. A sample checklist has been included in Appendix I.

All of these activities will hopefully fulfill the objectives states at the beginning of this unit. By the end of the unit students should know the difference between fiction and nonfiction stories. Students should have read and viewed different fairy tales and evaluated and discussed them with teachers and peers. The third activity can be done individually or within collaborative pairs enabling students to use a fairy tale that is familiar to them and use it to create their own story.

Appendix A

Cinderella

Beauty and the Beast

Aladdin

The Elves and the Shoemaker

The Emperor's New Clothes

The Fisherman and his wife

The Frog Prince

The Gingerbread Man

The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Hansel and Gretel

Jack and the Beanstalk

The Little Mermaid

Little Red Riding Hood

Peter and the Wolf

The Princess and the Pea

Puss in Boots

Rapunzel

The Red Shoes

Rumpelstiltskin

Sleeping Beauty

Snow White

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Stone Soup

Strega Nona

Three Billy Goats Gruff

The Three Little Pigs

Thumbelina

The Twelve Dancing Princesses

The Ugly Duckling

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rocky+and+bullwinkle+fractured+fairy+tales

<http://www.fairytales.biz/>

Appendix B

Fairy Tale Elements to look for:

- ❖ Is a make-believe story
- ❖ Has magic or spells
- ❖ Is passed down by word of mouth over the years
- ❖ Includes animals that act like humans
- ❖ Begins with “Once Upon A Time” or “Long, Long Ago”
- ❖ Ends with “Happily Ever After”
- ❖ Has a villain/bad guy or trickster
- ❖ Has good guys/heroes
- ❖ Distinguishes between poor and rich characters
- ❖ May include royalty such as princes, princesses, kings, and queens
- ❖ Takes place in a castle or forest
- ❖ Includes repeated patterns of 3 or 7
- ❖ Shows a kind character mistreated
- ❖ Presents a journey
- ❖ Exists in many versions
- ❖ Includes a lesson at the end

Appendix C

Fairy Tale Search

Directions: Search the fairy tale books in the basket to find a fairy tale to fit each text feature.

1. Fairy Tales often feature magic.
Title: _____
Author: _____
2. Fairy Tales often have animals act like humans.
Title: _____
Author: _____
3. Fairy Tales often begin with "Once upon a time..."
Title: _____
Author: _____
4. Fairy Tales often end with "...happily ever after."
Title: _____
Author: _____
5. Fairy Tales often have villains or bad guys.
Title: _____
Author: _____
6. Fairy Tales often have heroes or good guys.
Title: _____
Author: _____
7. Fairy Tales can be many versions of the same story.
Title: _____
Author: _____

Appendix D

Fairy Tale Sequencing Activity

Fairy Tale: _____

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Event 1: |
| Event 2: |
| Event 3: |
| Event 4: |
| Event 5: |

Cut events apart. Hand out one event to each group and a plain sheet of paper for the group to illustrate. Collect after giving time to illustrate, mix up illustrations, and have whole group put the story in order.

Appendix E

Character Traits

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| afraid | angry | annoyed |
| babyish | bored | bossy |
| brave | brilliant | calm |
| careful | cheerful | clever |
| clumsy | concerned | confident |
| confused | curious | daring |
| dishonest | disrespectful | excited |
| fair | fearless | foolish |
| friendly | funny | gentle |
| giving | grateful | greedy |
| grouchy | happy | helpful |
| honest | hopeful | imaginative |
| impatient | independent | intelligent |
| jealous | lazy | lonely |
| lucky | mean | mysterious |
| noisy | smart | embarrassed |

Appendix F

Name _____

Fairy Tale _____

Characters Inside & Out

| Draw a picture to show the character | Write words to tell what the character looks like | Write words to tell about the inside of the character |
|---|--|--|
| | | |

Appendix G

Name _____

Comparing a Traditional Fairy Tale to a Fractured Fairy Tale

Fairy Tale _____

| Traditional Point of View: | Fractured Point of View: |
|--|--|
| | |
| Traditional Characters: | Fractured Characters: |
| Good: | Good: |
| Evil: | Evil: |
| Traditional Problem and Solution: | Fractured Problem and Solution: |
| | |

Beginning: _____

Middle: _____

End: _____

What was different in the fractured fairy tale?

Which version do you like better and why?

Appendix H

Name _____

Fractured Fairy Tale PLAN/ORGANIZER

Title: _____

Based On: _____

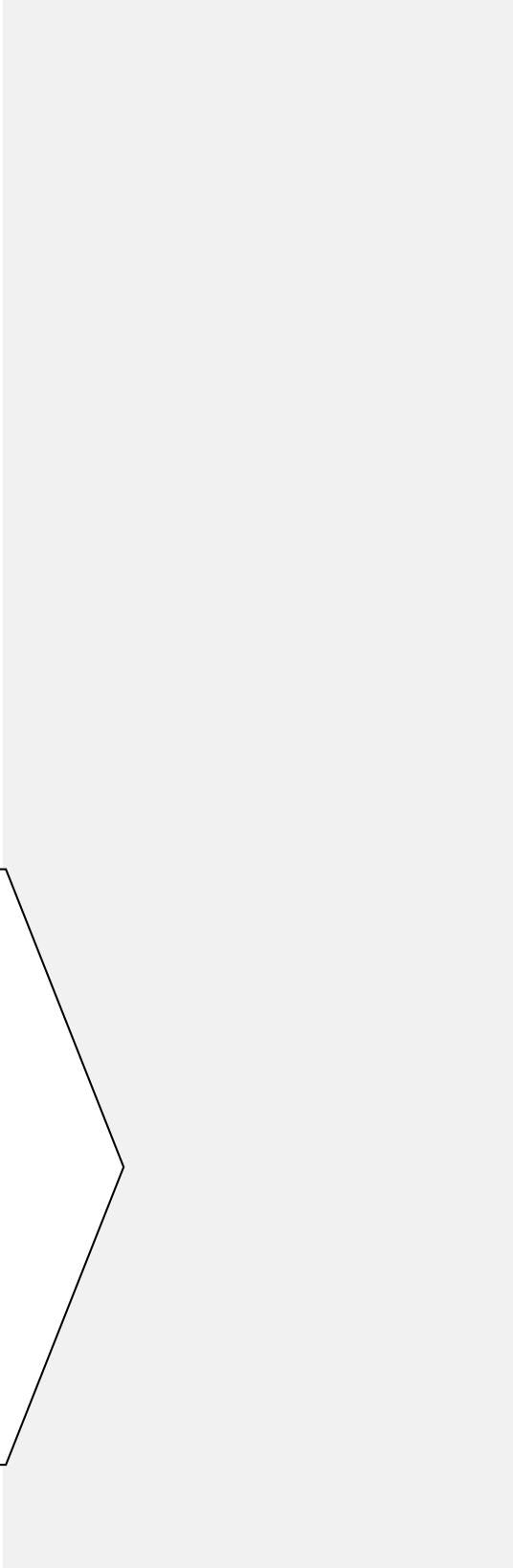
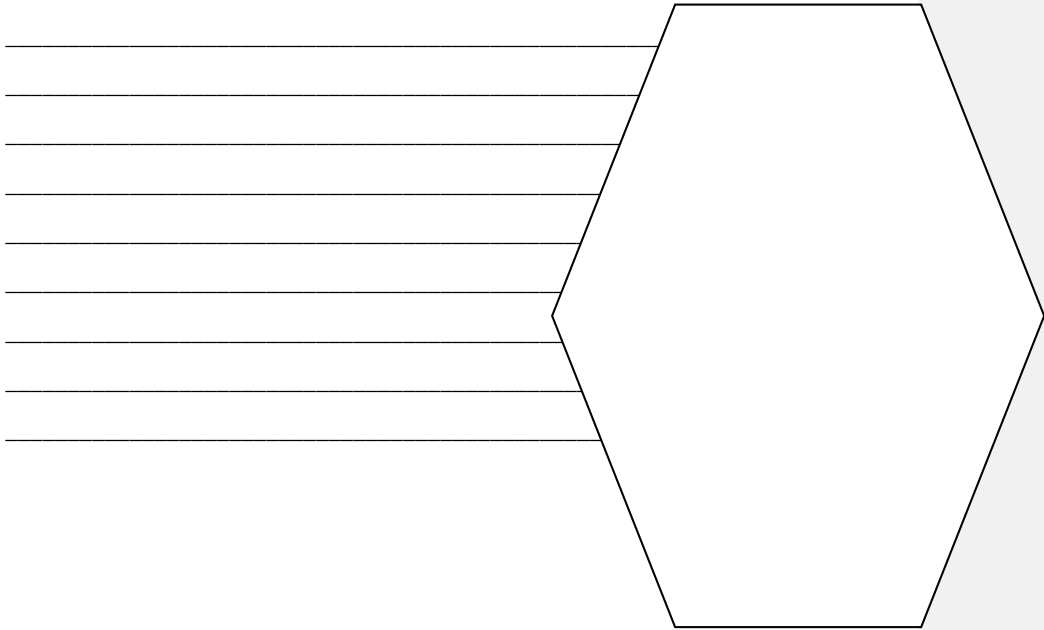
| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Setting: | Characters |
| | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. |
| Problem: | Solution: |
| | |
| Beginning: | |
| Middle: | |
| End: | |

My Fractured Fairy Tale

By: _____


Title: _____

Based On: _____



Appendix I

Fractured Fairy Tale Checklist

| | |
|--|--|
|  if the author: | A fractured fairy tale author: |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chooses an original/traditional fairy tale• Includes Good and evil characters• Includes 4 to 5 fairy tale elements |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes point of view of original fairy tale |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes a problem and solution• Includes a beginning, middle, and end |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elements of the original fairy tale have been changed into a fractured fairy tale |

Appendix J

Implementing District Standards

Reading ELA Literacy CCSS: RL.2.2-Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral. Students will meet this standard in Activity 1 where they are reading different fairy tales and looking for fairy tale elements. They will also use these fairy tales in sequencing activities and discuss the fairy tales with the class.

Reading ELA Literacy CCSS: RL 2.3-Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. Students will meet this standard in Activity 1 when they are differentiating between character and physical traits. They will then use what they learn about character traits to analyze different characters in a variety of fairy tales.

Reading ELA Literacy CCSS: RL 2.9-Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (eg., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures. Students will meet this standard within Activity 1 and Activity 2. By analyzing different fairy tales, they will compare and contrast many versions of the same story. Also, in Activity 3 they will compare one of the fractured fairy tales to one of the fairy tales they read and compare it to the fractured fairy tale that they write.

Writing CCSS: 2.3-Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure. Students will meet this standard as they write their own Fractured Fairy Tale in Activity 3.

Writing CCSS: 2.5-With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing. Students will meet this standard in Activity 3, as well, when they finish their own Fractured Fairy Tale and edit and revise it to make their final copy.

Notes

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- 1 k5chalkbox 2016.
 - 2 Heiner 1999/updated 2007.
 - 3 Dictionary.com n.d.
 - 4 Corner n.d.
 - 5 Heiner 1999/updated 2007.
 - 6 Heiner 1999/updated 2007.
 - 7 Kinsella n.d.
 - 8 Wikipedia 2016.
 - 9 Ogden 2014.
 - 10 Kinsella n.d.
 - 11 Stivender n.d.

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