

## Examining and Comparing Fairy Tales throughout the Ages

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### Introduction

Once upon a time in a little kingdom known as “Newark, Delaware” lived a young girl. She comes from a modest family with two loving parents and a younger sister. This little girl loved to read stories, particularly stories of magic, fantasy and ones with a happy ending. Much like her favorite tale and character Belle did in Walt Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*...this little girl too wished that one-day she would be a princess. This little girl grew up watching Walt Disney’s fairy tale animated stories. She became fixated on the idea of Prince Charming, fair maidens becoming princesses, good conquering evil and those with hope “...live happily ever after.”

This little girl, as you may have figured out, is the author of this curriculum unit. I can easily describe myself as a Disney baby; I grew up in the 1980’s and 1990’s when Walt Disney Studios released many of their animated features focusing on fairy tales. My first fairy tale/ Disney film I was exposed to was “The Little Mermaid” when I was four. I watched the VHS so much I broke it. I loved how Ariel was a young princess that pursued what she wanted and made it happen any way that she could: finding her true love. She chose to defy her father by trusting the evil witch Ursula and gave up her fins for legs. In the end, Prince Eric defeated the evil sea witch and the two were married and true love reigns over all. Disney was able to capture these magical characters that you wanted to be: the beautiful princess pursuing her dreams, the hero who rushes in and is victorious, true love prevails, the evil and greedy get their true punishment, and you have a sense of comfort knowing there will be happily ever after. It was here I became obsessed with the idea of everyone achieving their happily ever after, meeting and falling in love with prince charming thinking that this is the definition of a fairy tale. But as I got older reality set in; Walt Disney was not the original creator of “The Little Mermaid” and the fate of the mermaid was much different.

The true story *The Little Mermaid* was a fairy tale written by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen in 1837. In the original tale, it is still a story of a mermaid who is willing to give up her life in the sea and her identity as a mermaid to gain a human soul and the love of the human prince. Though, Andersen’s version is darker than what Walt Disney created for his young viewers. In reality, the mermaid loses her love to another and she ends up dying and forever lies as sea foam upon the ocean. The original versions of other fairy tales such as Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella follow similar

dark tendencies. But why were these changes made to the plot? Is this version of reality too dark for people to handle?

## **Rationale**

A couple weeks ago, I broke the news to my current sixth graders that the fairy tales stories we grew up with (Disney animations/cartoons) are not the original version of the story; they are the modified version of what was originally told hundreds of years ago. Many of them were shocked to find out that Walt Disney did not create all of these tales himself; they were under the same assumption I was growing up that since his name was on the animated version that it was the original tale. Even at eleven and twelve years old they tend to forget that stories were originally shared orally...not through a giant, electronic screen. I find that my sixth graders don't question what they see; they just assume that what is visually in front of them is the only and accurate interpretation of the information. I've come to the conclusion that they lack the inquiry skills and don't know how to question and critique the information that is presented to them. This is my goal with the creation of this unit: I want to teach my students how to be good interpreters of information and analyze that information for inadequacies.

To start of the unit, we will first read several different fairy tales to identify the key features that create this genre. The stories we will focus on are as follows: The Little Mermaid, Snow White, Beauty and the Beast, and Sleeping Beauty. Following the practice of "Flipped Classroom" student will use their Google Chrome laptops and Schoology to watch the Disney version of these tales at home. This way, we will be able to use this as their background knowledge to compare these modified versions of the fairy tales to the original. Students will assess the changes that were made to each story and question on whether those changes should have been made in critiquing the author's choices

Next, we will transition from just looking at one author's modifications (Walt Disney) to looking at how different cultures from around the world modify the story. Together in class, "Yeh Shen", the Chinese version of Cinderella and compare to the modern pop-culture Disney (American) version of the tale to see if there are differences in the plot, theme, and points of view. Typically with a fairy tale such a Cinderella being modified based on cultural background, parts of the plot are changed to reflect that culture while the theme or outcome of the story remains the same. Using "Yeh-Shen" as our model, students will work in groups to research the culture of one of these countries and their version of Cinderella: Germany (Grimm Brother's version), Italy, France, Russia, Korea, Vietnam and Native American. I want students to investigate whether modifications were made and question why modifications were made while other factors remained the same. They will create a presentation discussing their country and their version of Cinderella.

## **Demographics**

Conrad Schools of Science (CSS) is a unique school in the Red Clay School District housing grades from sixth to twelfth. The school is considered a magnet school with a primary focus on mathematics, science and technology. The high school courses offered are meant to lead into various pathways: Allied Health, Sports Physical Therapy, Engineering and Biotechnology. All students now have to apply and interview in order to be accepted into the school. I am currently teaching 6th grade English/Language Arts and Special Education. In the past couple years at CSS the Special-education component was served using the inclusion model. Since I am dual-certified in teaching special –education and middle school English, I would teach a group of regular education students with the special-education population in the same class. The past school year, I have co-taught in in sixth grade English/Language Arts class where I am considered the content teacher while I had another special-education teacher assist on one day while an English Language Learner (ELL) specialist would come in the next day. Going into the 2015-2016 school year, I will continue to teach 6<sup>th</sup> grade English/Language Arts in an inclusion setting.

For this curriculum unit, I will focus on my sixth grade English/Language Arts class. Since the classes will be an inclusion setting, the lesson will focus on differentiating instruction so that the gifted students as well as the classified special-education students and the ELL students in the class will be able to comprehend the material. This unit has been made to fit a block schedule of 90 minutes classes.

## **Essential Questions**

- What traits qualify a story to be called/placed under the genre of fairy tale?
- What changes were made from the original text to the modification?
- Which version or point view is the audience most drawn to and why?

## **Understanding the Genre of Fairy Tales and the Interpretations of its Stories**

There are many debates on where fairy tales got their original start and will always remain a mystery. Originally, fairy tales is considered s sub-class of a folktale and were not seen as their own specific genre. Deriving from the German word “Märchen” it meant “little story”, these tales got their start much like most stories: they were told orally.

Evidence indicates that fairy tales have been around for thousands of years passed down as oral stories by professional storytellers as amusement for adults. People of wealth and status would higher these professional storytellers to act out their tales; “...they may also have been told in the home when neighbors assembled to listen, or among groups of

people engaged in dull, repetitive work such as spinning or shoemaking or agricultural labor.”<sup>1</sup> But just as Tolkien stated, once adults got tired of these tales and longed for new ones, they were handed down to the children. Nurses or caretakers of the children would orally share these tales of fantasy and magic to often put the children to sleep at night. <sup>2</sup>

Eventually, the stories were finally captured in literary format and these “little stories” had proved how their worth and the need for making them their own genre:

“The fact that a particular type of story is appealing and popular enough to encourage storytellers to repeat it over centuries and across national boundaries in a recognizably similar form shows us the remarkable stability of the narrative, especially in the fluid nature of oral transmission, where conceivably each narrator could dramatically change alter any story he or she related.... the stability reveals the underlying appeal and significance that narrative for its audience.” <sup>3</sup>

But what makes these stories unique, whether told orally or written down, they were not invented by one particular individual. Yet, they all share certain qualities that are present within the characters and events that make them recognizable worldwide.

What qualifies a story as a “Fairy Tale”?

Throughout the years, many different versions of the various fairy tales have come into existence. Individual versions may vary in their motifs or the details used to relate the events; however, their adherence to the plot outline or sequence of events remains the same. According to Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri based on what they write in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, this is a summary of what makes a fairy tale:

“These stories have stereotyped characters and a certain predictability of event. They embody the social wisdom of their communities and an implicit morality or didacticism...the protagonist commits some kind of transgression, but recovers through a central ‘magical’ event on which the plot turns, often a turn of wish-fulfillment; the hero finds his beloved, the heroine hers; or there is an unexpected escape—occasionally the ending is sad, but more often happy.”<sup>4</sup>

Even though these stories can be explained in this simple summary, there are much more beneath the surface as of why people are drawn to them and continue to read them hundreds of years after they are written.

1. The protagonist: a common, ordinary person

One reason for this is that the protagonist of the fairy tale is often a common, ordinary person that shares in the same human desires we the audience has. The protagonist reminds us of ourselves, often reaching a very personal level by sharing the same questions and concerns we have.

In his essay “Creativity and the Tradition in the Fairy Tale”, Neil Philip goes on to share a deeper purpose the fairy tale in our communities. Philip discusses that in every culture there is a tension present between the needs of the community as a whole to the needs of an individual; the fairy tale is said to have exist to act as a balance between the two. “It mediates between the life we have and the life we want; between the world we inherit and the world we imagine.”<sup>5</sup> To tell the fairy tale, as story is to interpret the world in which we live; they share what we see, what we experience as well as what we imagine and perceive. Fairy tales interpret our experiences as well as act our wishes for ourselves by finding a balance between what our reality and our dreams/wishes are for us. The fact that these tales have been retold over and over again for centuries shows that these stories have touched people’s lives and it tells us something about ourselves that we want and need to know (the ability to speak to the human heart).

Fairy tales also depict feelings or attitudes of the protagonist as being similar to our own, especially those feelings we share of our parents, siblings, and of possible love interests. For instance, we see concern of a child’s relationship to a parent and other family members in fear of being rejected, oppression, or jealousy dramatized. The fairy tales serves the purpose to help us recognize and cope with these issues we may face by following the story’s example.

## 2. “The Happy Ending”

Not only does the protagonist have to be relatable but also he or she has to be represented as being a good and deserving individual who is being unfairly afflicted by a problem. Fairy tales often will address the basic problems we confront of a daily basis; so the successful solving of the dilemma/conflict the protagonist faces is an essential part of the plot of the fairy tale. The plot events encourage social values and moral virtue (like following the “golden rule”) so that the protagonist is always portrayed as being the best version of themselves. Fairy tales will always reward the deserving and punish the transgressors. So, the outcome of the story serves to justify why the protagonist deserves to be rewarded. More often, the protagonist will turn out be a princess or be worthy enough to marry and prince or princess.

## 3. “Transformation” is Key

Another key aspect that must be present according to Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri based on what they write in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, “transformation is

key and fairy tales have been endlessly transforming themselves throughout history.”<sup>6</sup> Transformation within a fairy tale can mean a couple different things. Transformation is the idea of a character changing based on the events is a key feature of the genre. As seen through a series of events or transformation, the protagonist discovers their true self. However, as we see through history that different versions of these tales arise. The idea of transformation also means that even if a new version of the tale arises it can transform itself to reflect the community in which it is being told but remarkably remains the same in the essence/moral propriety within the theme and plot development. It transform the story using a sense of imagination because it is still revealing deep truths about human nature and behavior but resists explaining those truths (it rather explores those truths based on the circumstances around the story).

#### 4. Elements of Magic

In his book *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror and Imagination* Steven Swann Jones identified that the presence of magic is a feature that must be present in the narrative in order for it to qualify as a fairy tale as well as be distinguished away from other sorts of folktales. “Fairy Tales depict magical or marvelous events or phenomena as a valid part of human existence.”<sup>7</sup> This is where the name of the genre derives: these stories depict the wondrous magic of the fairy realm and magical fantasy. So most fairy tales feature European folkloric fantasy characters such as dwarves, elves, fairies, giants, gnomes, mermaids, goblins, mermaids, trolls or witches. Neil Philip defined the use of fantasy in fairy tale as follows:

“The tale begins and ends within the family sphere but the hero is driven beyond the bounds of the family to seek his fortune within the enchanted realm. Within that realm the hero or heroine will be required to pass a series of tests set by adversaries and be wise enough to recognize the assistance of supernatural helpers when this is offered.”<sup>8</sup>

The function of fantasy in fairy tales is related to be generic characteristic of addressing issues of everyday life but creates a sense of drama. With the use of an ordinary person, we need to magnify the desires and foibles of human nature through the use of exaggerated symbolism. Fantasy is used to represent the deep feelings of ordinary people facing the challenges of everyday life.

“Fairy tales speak the language of the unconscious mind...the fantastic creations in fairy tales may be seen as metaphoric dramatizations of the thoughts and feelings audience members may harbor about their daily lives and the problems they face. These metaphoric dramatizations are expressed in the symbolism of the unconscious mind...to help express the unconscious fears and desires.”

For example, in *The Little Mermaid* many people can relate to Marina falling in love with the prince. The love that we have for someone will drive us to do whatever it takes to be with this person and to make him or her happy. Marina turns her life upside down, leaves everything she has behind to be with the person she loves. And when he falls in love with another, she was given the choice to kill him to receive her original life as a mermaid back. But the only thing she wanted was for her prince to be happy, even if that meant with another woman. She died sacrificing her life and happiness to make her loved one happy which many of us can relate to.

Fantasy/magic present in fairy tales also serves to underscore and affirm a moral propriety in the universe, documenting a cosmic morality or a good life. For instance, when magic elements come to rescue the protagonist (like the fairy godmother in Cinderella), we see the protagonist become a part of the cosmic morality; this shows us that if we are inherently good we will be rewarded. Throughout the story, Cinderella does everything she is asked of by her stepmother. She doesn't complain or argue and treats every person and creature with kindness, even if they do not show her the courtesy in return. Thus, when the fairy godmother is revealed, Cinderella is showered in gold dust and provided a means of attending the ball. Cinderella is being rewarded for her kind actions. This also means, however, fantastical elements a moral propriety can be used as a way to punish the evil characters. Cinderella's stepsisters had their eyes pecked out by numerous birds, hence moral judgment for their spoiled, selfish and unkind actions towards Cinderella.

Using these key features of the protagonist, happy endings, transformation, and magical elements as a points of study for the unit, I am going to have my students comparing different versions of fairy tales, both different stories as well as different version of the same tale from different cultures. Neil Philip has defined the fairy tale as a 'family drama, in which the characters, by means of series of transformations, discover their true selves'".<sup>9</sup>

### Comparison of Original Fairy Tales to the Modifications of Disney

Once thoroughly dire and dark, fairy tales that were once meant to amuse adults were re-imagined as entertainment for kids in the 19th century. "They were moved like old furniture from the parlor into the nursery — that's how Tolkien put it," Ethan Gils Dorf explains in his article "Hollywood's Grimm obsession: Why grown-ups embrace the promise of happily ever after, now more than ever".<sup>10</sup> Disney, in particular, made a point of leaving out the nastiest stuff — the child abandonment, the cannibalism, the incest that was heavily embedded in these tales of love and fantasy. But what proposed these changes to the plot and characters if they were already successful in their original form?

As a class, we are going to study the original version of the following fairy tales discussed below. In the sense of a "Flipped Classroom" students will watch the Disney

interpretation of each fairy tale at home or in an allotted time provided after school. In class, we will learn the history behind and read the original version of the story in class to begin our inquiry of what remained the same, what was changed, and why were modifications made.

### *The Little Mermaid*

Hans Christian Andersen wrote numerous plays, novels and poems but he is best known for his fairy tales. His stories have been translated into 125 different languages and are widely read throughout the world. They have become culturally embedded in our everyday lives presenting lessons of virtue and resilience in the face of adversity.

His famous fairy tale *The Little Mermaid* was written in 1837 by famous author Hans Christian Andersen. The Little Mermaid lives in an underwater kingdom with her father (the mer-king), her grandmother, and is the youngest of five sisters. As she comes to be fifteen years of age, the Little Mermaid is able to venture to the surface to see the upper world for the first time. Upon her first visit she sees the handsome prince and it is love at first sight. Though, a violent storm hits and the mermaid saves the prince from drowning. Unfortunately, the prince never realizes it was she who saved him. Instead, this other young maiden comes on to the beach and the prince thinks she has saved his life. The mermaid becomes depressed; she wants to become human so that she can be with her prince and have an eternal soul. Thus, the little mermaid makes the decision to see the sea witch. The sea witch warns her that once she becomes human, she can no longer return to the sea (which is different than Disney-Ariel had a specific timeframe; if Ariel's quest was unsuccessful she would belong to the sea witch). The little mermaid is determined and decides her fate to become human; the sea witch cuts out her tongue and she is given the potion to turn her human. With her newfound legs, she will have the pain of knives shoot up her body to forever remind her of her fin. Such pain and agony was not included in the Disney animation.

Though, the mermaid successfully finds her prince, it is short lived. The prince is promised to marry another princess. The prince would prefer to be with the little mermaid (but secretly his heart is still captured by the mysterious maiden that saved him on the beach). An unfortunate twist in the plot is that the princess the prince is already arranged to marry is his mystery woman! The prince has found his true love but much to the mermaid's dismay she is not the keeper of his heart. In the tragic end, the prince marries the princess and the mermaid dies and turns into sea foam. This ending is completely different than what Disney created! In the Walt Disney version, Ariel the Mermaid is a pawn in the sea witch's plan. The sea witch seeks revenge on the king and wants to use Ariel as a tool of persuasion. So the storytellers at Disney create more depth to the villain of the story than the original tale; it provides sense of background knowledge in understanding characters motives. In the end of the Disney version, Ariel wins her prince charming and ends up marrying him in its conclusion. This tends to be the 'happy ending'



the audience longs for since it is something many wish for themselves. However, in Andersen's version the little mermaid does receive a 'happy ending' by being promised an eternal soul after 300 years of good deeds as a spirit; it just a different happy reality. Often we really wish for certain things to happen and circumstances cause the outcome to come out different than planned. But, the outcome could still remain a positive one.

### *Snow White*

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm wrote a collection of German fairy tales first published in 1812; this first volume consisted of eighty-six stories. Their second volume of fairy tales was later published in 1815 holding seventy more stories. But along with the Brothers Grimm, other authors have their own versions of *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*. Below I discussed the different versions of the tales but we will use the Grimm's Brother interpretations in class.

*Little Snow White* as the Brothers Grimm called the tale; the brothers published the tale in 1812 as a part of their first volume of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. At the beginning of the tale, a young queen gives birth to the baby she wished for: one with skin as pale as snow, lips red as blood, and hair black as ebony. Unfortunately, the young queen died in childbirth. A year later, the king marries a second wife; she became known as the evil queen. She possessed a magic mirror in which every morning she would ask: "Magic mirror on the wall, who's the fairest one of all?" The mirrors would always say the queen was the fairest of them all. This made the evil queen happy (for the mirror would never lie). Snow White grows up and the new revelation that she was the fairest one of all shocked the queen. So the queen plotted to have Snow White banished from the kingdom and killed. The huntsman was to take her into the woods and cut out her liver and lungs to prove she is dead. The huntsman cannot go through with the act of killing the young princess.

Snow White finds refuge in the forest living with seven dwarfs. But the evil queen finds out she is still alive. She disguises herself as a farmer's wife and gives her a poisoned apple to eat. Thought to be dead, the dwarfs place Snow White in a glass coffin. Time passes and a prince stumbles upon the glass coffin; seeing her beauty, the prince falls in love instantly. The prince plans to take the coffin back to his kingdom when his servants drop the coffin and dislodge the apple stuck in Snow White's throat. The two fall in love and plan to be married. Every king and queen is invited to the wedding, including the Snow White's stepmother. The evil queen arrives at the wedding and realizes Snow White is not dead; as punishment for her attempted murders, she was to dance with glowing-hot iron shoes until she dropped dead from pain.

The fate of the evil queen is different in the Disney version. We see the dwarfs play a more active role is trying to save Snow White. Dressed as an old peddler woman, the queen tricks snow white into taking a bite of the apple. The dwarfs find Snow White and

immediately go after the queen. They chase her to a cliff where she falls to her death. The transgressor is punished (which is a common trend) but not as harshly as the original tale depicts.

### *Sleeping Beauty*

This is a classic tale written by Charles Perrault in 1697. The Grimm's collected this story from Perrault and entitled the tale *Little Briar-Rose*. In this original version by Perrault, the tale begins at the christening of a king and queen's long-wished for child. Seven fairies are invited and are named godmothers to the princess. An eighth evil fairy shows up to the ceremony (she was thought to be dead) and was overlooked by the king and queen. The six of the seven fairy godmothers bestowed gifts of beauty, wit, grace, dance, song, and music to the infant. For being overlooked, the eighth fairy bestowed a curse on the baby princess: she will prick her hand on a spinning wheel and die. The seventh fairy godmother tries to reverse this evil curse; she could not reverse the curse entirely. She was able to keep the princess from dying. Instead she would fall into a deep sleep for 100 years and be awakened from a kiss from a prince.

The king banishes all spinning wheels from the palace to avoid the evil curse. The curse was avoided for fifteen years. The day of her sixteenth birthday, the princess sees a woman spinning thread and asks to try. Low and behold, she pricks her finger and falls into a death-like sleep. The king and queen place her in their finest room; the fairies put everyone in the kingdom into a deep sleep as well. 100 years pass and a prince from another kingdom spies the castle while on a hunting expedition. He ventures in the castle, hearing stories of the beautiful princess that sleeps there waiting for a prince's kiss. The prince, struck by her beauty instantly falls in love the sleeping princess. The princess awakens and the two talk; later they are secretly married. Still keeping their marriage a secret, the princess has two children with the prince (they need to keep their marriage a secret from his mother since she is an ogre). The ogre queen finds out what her son has done and kidnaps the princess and her two children. She attempts to have her cook make them into a stew, but the cook fools the ogre queen. In the end, the ogre queen is the one who ends up in the soup.

The Grimm brothers rewrite the Perrault's version of the story and give it a different title of *Little Briar Rose*. However, in the version of *Sleeping Beauty* written by Giambattista Basile, this version is much darker. *Sleeping Beauty* is named Talia where she is cursed at birth that she is in danger from a splinter. There's a major plot twist in this version catch though. A king awakens Talia from another realm...but not right away. This king stumbles upon Talia in her abandoned kingdom; he puts her in a bed and then rapes her while she sleeps. While still asleep, Talia gives birth to twins and is awakened by them later on. The king returns to find her awake with the twin babies. The king falls in love with Talia...and plots to kill his current wife by cooking her alive.

## Comparison of Different Culture's Interpretation of Cinderella

"Culture" is defined as everything that makes up a person's life. As way to highlight what makes their way of life unique, many countries have turned to incorporating fairy tales. These apparently simple tales have been of enduring interest in many cultures over many centuries; in return many versions of these tales that carry many similarities and differences of the same story. For example, the fairy tale Cinderella has five hundred different versions written worldwide. Below are the versions of Cinderella we are going to focus on in class. Yeh-Shen will act as our model; the others listed are the versions students will read and research with their group to create a presentation for the rest of the class.

### *The Original or France's version of Cinderella*

The first written European version of the story was published in Naples by Giambattista Basile, in 1634. It was later retold by Charles Perrault in 1697 and then by the Brothers Grimm in their folk tale collection *Grimm's' Fairy Tales* in 1812. The version of the tale people are most familiar with is the version written by Charles Perrault in 1697, under the name *Cendrillon*. The popularity of his tale was due to his additions to the story, including the pumpkin, the fairy godmother and the introduction of glass slippers.

In Perrault's version, Cinderella is forced into servitude by her stepmother, where she was made to work day and night doing menial chores. After the girl's chores were done for the day, she would retire to the barren and cold room given to her, and would curl up near the fireplace in an effort to stay warm. She would often arise covered in cinders, giving rise to the mocking nickname "Cinderella" by her stepsisters. Cinderella bore the abuse patiently and dared not tell her father, since his 2nd wife controlled him entirely.

One day, the Prince invited all the young ladies in the land to a ball, planning to choose a wife from amongst them. The two stepsisters gleefully planned their wardrobes for the ball, and taunted Cinderella by telling her that maids were not invited to the ball. As the sisters departed to the ball, Cinderella cried in despair. Her Fairy Godmother magically appeared and immediately began to transform Cinderella from house servant to the young lady she was by birth, all in the effort to get Cinderella to the ball. She turned a pumpkin into a golden carriage, mice into horses, a rat into a coachman, and lizards into footmen. She then turned Cinderella's rags into a beautiful jeweled gown, complete with a delicate pair of glass slippers. The Godmother told her to enjoy the ball, but warned that she had to return before midnight, when the spells would be broken. At the ball, the entire court was entranced by Cinderella, especially the Prince. At this first ball, Cinderella remembers to leave before midnight. Back home, Cinderella graciously thanked her Godmother. She then greeted the stepsisters, who had not recognized her earlier and talked of nothing but the beautiful girl at the ball.

Another ball was held the next evening, and Cinderella again attended with her Godmother's help. The Prince had become even more infatuated, and Cinderella in turn became so enchanted by him she lost track of time and left only at the final stroke of midnight, losing one of her glass slippers on the steps of the palace in her haste. The Prince chased her, but outside the palace, the guards saw only a simple country girl leave. The Prince pocketed the slipper and vowed to find and marry the girl to whom it belonged. Meanwhile, Cinderella kept the other slipper, which did not disappear when the spell was broken.

The Prince tried the slipper on all the women in the kingdom. When the Prince arrives at Cinderella's villa, the stepsisters tried in vain to win over the prince, as they wanted the prince. Cinderella asked if she might try, while the stepsisters taunted her. Naturally, the slipper fit perfectly, and Cinderella produced the other slipper for good measure. The stepsisters both pleaded for forgiveness, and Cinderella agreed to let bygones be bygones. Cinderella married the Prince, and the stepsisters married two lords.

### *Grimm Version of Cinderella*

The Grimm's brother's version is slightly different. *Aschenputtel* begins with Cinderella's mother passing away reminding her to be good and kind. Her father remarries another woman who has two daughters of her own. We soon learn how wicked this stepmother and stepsisters truly were. The stepsisters stole the girl's fine clothes and jewels and forced her to wear rags. They banished her into the kitchen to do the worst chores, and gave her the nickname "Aschenputtel" ("Ashfool"). Despite all of this the girl remained good and kind, and would always go to her mother's grave to cry and pray to God that she would see her circumstances improve.

One day, the gentleman visited a fair, promising his stepdaughters gifts of luxury. The eldest asked for beautiful dresses, while the younger for pearls and diamonds. His own daughter merely asked for the first twig to knock his hat off on the way. The gentleman went on his way, and acquires presents for his stepdaughters. While passing a forest he got a hazel twig, and gave it to his daughter. She planted the twig over her mother's grave, watered it with her tears and over the years, it grew into a glowing hazel tree. The girl would pray under it three times a day, and a white bird would always come to comfort her.

The king decided to give a festival that would last for three days and invited all the beautiful maidens in the land to attend so that the prince could select one of them as his bride. Obviously the stepmother found a way for the girl not to go. In the Grimm's version, rather than a fairy godmother appearing the girl received help of a flock of white doves sent by her mother from heaven at the base of the fig tree that was planted at her mother's grave. For each of the three nights of the ball, the white bird dropped three beautiful gowns, though the final being the most beautiful with gold slippers. Each night

she went to the feast and the prince danced with her, and when sunset came she asked to leave. On the third night of the feast, Aschenputtel lost track of time, and when she ran away one of her golden slippers got stuck on that pitch. The prince proclaimed that he would marry the maiden whose foot would fit the golden slipper.

The next morning, the prince went to Aschenputtel's house and tried the slipper on the eldest stepsister. The sister was advised by her mother to cut off her toes in order to fit the slipper. While riding with the stepsister, the two doves from Heaven told the Prince that blood dripped from her foot. Appalled by her treachery, he went back again and tried the slipper on the other stepsister. She cut off part of her heel in order to get her foot in the slipper, and again the prince was fooled. While riding with her to the king's castle, the doves alerted him again about the blood on her foot. He came back to inquire about another girl. The gentleman told him that they kept a kitchen-maid in the house – omitting to mention that she was his own daughter – and the prince asked him to let her try on the slipper. The girl appeared after washing herself, and when she put on the slipper, the prince recognized her as the stranger with whom he had danced at the ball.

In the end, during Aschenputtel's wedding, as she was walking down the aisle with her stepsisters as her bridesmaids, (they had hoped to worm their way into her favor), the doves from Heaven flew down and struck the two stepsisters' eyes, one in the left and the other in the right. When the wedding came to an end, and Aschenputtel and her prince marched out of the church, the doves flew again, striking the remaining eyes of the two evil sisters blind, a punishment they had to endure for the rest of their lives.

We see that the Grimm's version of the tale has a more gruesome ending for the stepsisters than its predecessors. It is also interesting that in the original versions Cinderella's father is still present while in the Disney version he has died. This is to give some explanation of why the father doesn't intervene while his daughter get abused by her family members rather than just seem like a bystander letting everything happen to his daughter. In class, we are going to read the Grimm Brother's version of the tale in

### *China's Version of Cinderella*

“Yeh-Shen” is a Chinese folk-tale written by Ai-Ling Louie in 1949. As a part of their custom, the chief had two wives and his second wife had a daughter named Yeh-Shen is the orphaned child of her father and his second wife. Unfortunately, both Yeh-Shen's mother and the chief fell ill and died. This left the chief's other wife to raise Yeh-Shen; her stepmother was jealous of Yeh-Shen's good nature and beauty (worried she is outshining her own daughter), the step mother would force Yeh-Shen to do the heaviest and most unpleasant chores.

Yeh-Shen only had one friend—a fish she caught and raised—that would come of the water and wait to talk to Yeh-Shen while she did her chores. Yeh-Shen would always

give the fish a portion of her meal to share. The stepmother soon found out about fish and was infuriated! One day, she sent Yeh-Shen on a chore far n the forest. The stepmother then disguised herself as Yeh-Shen by wearing her clothes so that she can lure the fish. The stepmother caught the fish and cooked him for that night's dinner. When Yeh-Shen returned, the only thing she discovered left of her friend was his bones.

Low and behold, a spirit of an old man appeared to Yeh-Shen and said that the bones of the fish are magical. She can ask of them for whatever she needs. At times, she asks him for dinner since she is starved by her stepmother on a daily basis and is refused food to eat. Spring comes and with it the spring festival where the young males and females of the village will mingle and maybe want to marry. The stepmother does not allow Yeh-Shen to go to the festival, worrying she will make her daughter look undesirable. Yeh-Shen begs to the bones of the fish to help her get a dress to wear to the festival. Magical, a beautiful garment appears on Yeh-Shen accompanied by sandals made of gold. She goes to the festival and catches the eye of the prince. She dances with him until she thinks her stepmother has recognizes and runs away. In running away, she loses on of her gold sandals. A merchant later recovers the shoe and gives it as a gift to the king. The king declares that whoever fits this slipper will become his wife.

Looking at this version of the tale, I want my students to pinpoint the aspects of Chinese culture that create the plot of this tale. For example, rather than a fairy godmother, the spirit that appears is a male. In Chinese culture, males are dominant figureheads of the household and seen to be the wisest. This would explain the spirit being a man rather than a woman. But to no avail, not one maiden foot fit (due to magic powers shrinking the shoe every time a maiden tried on the shoe). The king decided to put the shoe on display to see if the owner will come claim the shoe.

Yeh-Shen saw this as her opportunity to get the sandal back and reunite it with the other to get her fish back. Though, she was caught by the king's guards. The king demanded an explanation for her stealing of the shoe; Yeh-Shen tells him everything. Intrigued by her story, the king has her try on the sandal. Beholds! It fits! Thus the king asks Yeh-Shen to become his wife. She leaves her stepfamily behind where they are banished into the woods to fend for themselves.

Right away we see significant differences in this version of the tale of Cinderella that highlights aspects the Chinese culture. The most obvious difference is that there is only one stepsister. As a part of the culture, China prefers males while females are seen as secondary. Each family would strive to have a male heir; female children were often put up for adoption if a male heir wasn't born. This is why there was only one sister involved rather than two. Men, especially the eldest male in the family, were regarded as the wisest. This is most likely why spirit is of a man rather than of a female fairy godmother. Another piece of Chines culture that is infused into the Cinderella tale. Fish in China is considered a lucky mascot. In ancient times, on the eve of the Spring Festival, every

family prepared a entire fish to make a dish, which represented a fine desire of keeping lots of wealth in the coming new year. This tradition was passed down from generation to generation. Even now, the fish is still a main dish in Chinese dining table, especially in important activities and festivals. These are the cultural explanations I want my students to research and discover about their selected version of Cinderella.

## **Strategies**

### Cornell Notes

The Cornell method provides a systematic format for condensing and organizing notes. The student divides the paper into two columns: the note-taking column (usually on the right) is twice the size of the questions/key word column (on the left). The student should leave five to seven lines, or about two inches, at the bottom of the page. Notes from a lecture or teaching are written in the note-taking column; notes usually consist of the main ideas of the text or lecture, and long ideas are paraphrased. Long sentences are avoided; symbols or abbreviations are used instead. To assist with future reviews, relevant questions (which should be recorded as soon as possible so that the lecture and questions will be fresh in the student's mind) or key words are written in the key word column. These notes can be taken from any source of information, such as fiction and nonfiction books, DVDs, lectures, textbooks, etc. Within 24 hours of taking the notes, the student must revise and write questions and then write a brief summary in the bottom five to seven lines of the page. This helps to increase understanding of the topic. When studying for either a test or quiz, the student has a concise but detailed and relevant record of previous classes.

This is the template I use in my classes to take notes. Often, I have a computer template where I will type in the terminology and questions that students will need to know. For special-education students, you can manipulate the template to make it more 'fill-in-the-blank' to assist them in writing definitions. We will use Cornell Notes to keep track of vocabulary learned when discussing the genre of Fairy Tale.

### Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. Students at home view short video lectures before the class session, while in-class time is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions.

We will use this concept with Activity Two. Students are performing a literary comparison on a selected fairy tale with their group. We will not have time in class to watch all the films necessary for their research so they will watch the film at home. I will be able to upload the movies into Schoology and the students can use their Google

Chrome books (laptop) to access Schoology and watch the film at home. This way, after they watched their assigned films students can discuss with their group the next day.

### Collaborative Groups

Collaborative learning can occur peer-to-peer or in larger groups. Peer learning, or peer instruction, is a type of collaborative learning that involves students working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts, or find solutions to problems.

Students will be working together in groups of 3 to 4 to discuss, analyze the similarities and differences between the fairy tales in a literary analysis of either Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, or Beauty and the Beast. They will also be collaborating in groups to share their research about the culture of the selected version of Cinderella that highlights the similarities and differences of the tale in small groups and share results with the rest of the class in a power point presentation.

### Google Docs/Presentations

Google Docs is a free Web-based application in which documents and spreadsheets can be created, edited and stored online. Files can be accessed from any computer with an Internet connection and a full-featured Web browser.

We are a 1:1 technology school where students will be each getting their own Google Chrome book to use at home and in classes. With this added feature in the classroom, I want students to use Google Docs and Presentation to collaborate and work in groups. Google is unique in that multiple students can work on the same document, at the same time, and from different computers. Students will work together using Google Docs when discussing the different interpretations of a fairy tale and researching about their selected culture for various interpretations of Cinderella.

### Teacher Resources

Website for Different Versions of Cinderella from Around the World:

<http://www.lowvilleacademy.org/webpages/MBlow/cinderella.cfm?subpage=868111>

Film *The Little Mermaid* by Ken Ariga

Clips of Walt Disney's *Little Mermaid*

Google Chrome books or access to computers for students

Paper copies of fairy tales used in class

### Classroom Activities

Activity One: Understanding the Genre of Fairy using "The Little Mermaid"



Essential Question: What traits qualify a story to be called/placed under the genre of

*Part A. Vocabulary*

Objective:

- Students will understand what qualifies a story to be a fairy tale

Essential Questions:

1. What is a fairy tale?
2. Are there certain literary elements that have to be present in order for a narrative to qualify as a fairy tale?

Vocabulary: Fairy Tale, Elements of a Fairy Tale: Protagonist, Antagonist, Happy Ending, Transformation, Element of Magic

As a class, we will first define what the genre of “Fairy Tale” using the Cornell Notes Template.

*Part B: Modeling with the Little Mermaid*

Objective:

- Students will identify what modifications were made from the original version of the fairy tale to the animated film to gain a cohesive understanding of the concepts
- Compare two interpretations of the same text made by two different authors to identify the similarities and differences and evaluate their approach

Essential Questions:

1. What did the filmmakers change in the story? What remained the same?
2. Was their approach in highlighting the theme or the lesson the same as Andersen’s?

As a class we will first read Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid* to apply the vocabulary and understand the makeup of the fairy tale genre. Students will complete their graphic organizer (Appendix B) while reading the story. Students will share their responses as a whole group.

Next, we will watch the animated version *The Little Mermaid* by Ken Ariga and Yoshio Takami. Students will complete the graphic organizer (Appendix C)

Finally, we will watch clips from Walt Disney’s version; we will watch the scene where Ariel makes the arrangement with Ursula the Sea Witch and the ending of the movie in

order to compare those two scenes to the Ken Ariga version (Ken Ariga is heavily correlated with Andersen's original tale). Students will

#### Activity Two: Literary Comparison of Original Fairy Tales to Disney

Students will be broken up into groups of three to four. Each group will be assigned to compare one of these fairy tales:

- Snow White
- Sleeping Beauty
- Beauty and the Beast

Using the strategy of the Flipped Classroom, students are expected to log in to the Schoology and watch the Disney film of their selected film at home on their Chrome book. While watching, students need to complete Appendix B Graphic Organizer.

In the class the following day, groups will be given the original fairy tale in order to compare it to the Disney film seen the night before. As they read the original tale, they need to complete Appendix B Graphic Organizer. Together, they will compare the two versions by completing Appendix C together. This will help them prepare for the share out at the end of class. Questions for share out (below) will be displayed throughout class so student are prepared and see their end point.

Questions Posed to Groups for Class Discussion/Share out:

1. What are the similarities and differences between each version?
2. Which version or point view is the audience most drawn to and why?

#### Activity Three: Research Different Cultures Interpretations of Fairy Tales

Objectives:

- Describe how the plot unfolds and how the character responses as the plot moves towards the resolution
- Analyze the differences in the plot to identify cultural references to China
- Compare and contrast the differences in the other countries' versions of *Cinderella*

Essential Question:

1. How did different cultures adapt the fairy tale *Cinderella* to reflect their lifestyles?

#### Part A. Modeling with “Yeh-Shen, Chinese Cinderella”

Together we will read the original version of Cinderella by Charles Perrault. Students will be told that this version was written in France. Next, we will read Ai-Ling Louie's "Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China" in search of differences that are cultural based:

#### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the original version of the story has two stepsisters while Yeh-Shen only has one?
2. In the original version of Cinderella, the fairy godmother was a woman. Why do think in the Chinese version the spirit was a man? What does this show of the Chinese culture?
3. What do you think of the role of Cinderella's father? What do you think his motivation was for his lack of action?
4. What symbols are present in the story? Why do you think each story has its own different symbol?

#### Part B: Researching Another Version of Cinderella and Culture

With their group, students will pick one of these countries' versions of Cinderella to compare to the original Charles Perraulttale's tale:

Germany  
South Korea  
Russia  
Norway  
Egypt  
Scotland  
Vietnam

Students will create one power point presentation for their entire group. Each member of the group will have a research role (research one topic below) and create a power point slide in their groups overall presentation:

Cultural Background (slide needed for each topic)

Geography

Customs/Traditions

Similarities to American Culture

Differences to American Culture

Countries Version of Cinderella (One slide needed for each topic)

Summary of the Tale

Elements of Magic Used

Similarities to Original Cinderella  
Differences from Original Cinderella

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Blow, Michael. "Cinderella Tales From Around the World." Cinderella Tales From

Around the World. 2015. Accessed December 13,

2015. <http://www.lowvilleacademy.org/webpages/MBlow/cinderella.cfm?subpage=868111>.

Good website to gather the different versions of the fairy tale *Cinderella* from different cultural perspectives.

Davidson, H. R. Ellis. *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003.

Another very useful tool in understanding the genre of Fairy Tale. It also shared a lot of quality input on what attributes make a fairy tale and how you can teach them within an English classroom.

Gilsdorf, Ethan. "'Hollywood's Grimm Obsession: Why Grown-ups Embrace the

Promise of Happily Ever After, Now More than Ever.'" *The Boston Globe*,

March 24, 2013.

An article written by Ethan Gilsdorf discussing the modern take on fairy tales. He discusses Hollywood's new obsession with getting each character, whether good or evil, their happy ending. He also questions as of why Hollywood is taking the turn to screen writers reverting back to the original, dark version of the fairy tale rather than the modified Walt Disney version that is more kid-friendly.

Jones, Steven Swann. *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of Imagination*. New York,

New York: Twayne Publishers ;, 1995.

This book was a valuable resource in explaining what qualifies a story to be considered a fairy tale. It explained in depth the attributes of the tales referencing a lot of written examples as a part of the explanation.

## **Appendices**

### Appendix A: Common Core Standards

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3**

Describe how a particular story or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5**

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7**

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9**

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Appendix B:

| <b>Element of a Fairy Tale</b>  | <b>How it is being used in story</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <p><i>Protagonist:</i> Describe the main character</p> <p>Is the main character a common, ordinary person?</p>                                  |                                      |
| <p><i>Transformation:</i> idea of a character changing based on the events in the story.</p> <p>Was there a transformation within the tale?</p> |                                      |
| <p><i>Element of Magic</i></p> <p>Is there magic present in the tale?<br/>Summarize why it was used.</p>  |                                      |
| <p><i>Happy Ending:</i> Summarize how the tale ended.</p> <p>Would we say this qualifies as a happy ending? Why or why not?</p>                 |                                      |

Appendix C

|  | Similarities to Original Fairy Tale | Differences to Original Fairy Tale |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>The Little Mermaid</i> by Ken Ariga and Yoshio Takami |                                     |                                    |
| Disney's <i>The Little Mermaid</i>                       |                                     |                                    |

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri, *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, p. 4

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 4-5

<sup>3</sup> Steven Swann Jones, *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of Imagination*, pg. 4

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, pg. 39

<sup>6</sup> Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri, *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, p. 40

<sup>7</sup> Steve Swann, p. 9

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 6

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p. 6

<sup>10</sup> Ethan Gilsdorf. "Hollywood's Grimm obsession: Why grown-ups embrace the promise of happily ever after, now more than ever."



**Curriculum Unit Title**

Examining and Comparing Fairy Tales throughout the Ages

**Author**

Michelle Hilbeck

**KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7: Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9 Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT**

- What traits qualify a story to be called/placed under the genre of fairy tale?
- What changes were made from the original text to the modification?
- Which version or point view is the audience most drawn to and why?

**CONCEPT A**

Defining Fairy Tales

**CONCEPT B**

Literary Comparisons: Comparing Theme

**CONCEPT C**

Literary Comparisons: Comparing Cultures

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A**

What traits qualify a story to be called/placed under the genre of fairy tale?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B**

What changes were made from the original text to the modification? What remained the same? Which version or point view is the audience most drawn to and why?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C**

What changes were made from the original text to the modification? What remained the same? How does the author infuse their culture?

**VOCABULARY A**

Fairy Tales  
Hans Christian Andersen

**VOCABULARY B**

Literary Comparison  
Grimm Brothers

**VOCABULARY C**

Literary Comparison  
Culture

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

Website for Different Versions of Cinderella from Around the World:

<http://www.lowvilleacademy.org/webpages/MBlow/cinderella.cfm?subpage=868111>

Film *The Little Mermaid* by Ken Ariga

Clips of Walt Disney's *Little Mermaid*

Google Chrome books or access to computers for students

Paper copies of fairy tales used in class