

## **Magic in Fiction**

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### **Introduction and Rationale**

I have the privilege of teaching at West Park Place, an elementary school about a mile away from University of Delaware. As you may guess, many students have parents who work for UD or are visiting UD from other countries to teach or attend higher education programs. There are two great effects of residing on the fringe of academia. The first is that education is highly valued in our WPP community. The second is that there is a transient entity to our population: some of my students are only with me for six months. Their immersion into our American culture is intense and will end around February when they return to their home countries.

I teach in a self-contained 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom where 9 of my 23 students are English Language Learners: five are Chinese, two are Korean, one is Indian, and one is Hispanic. There are four students who arrived in August just before school began. These four do not know the English alphabet so I need to start from scratch to teach them sounds, letter names, and simple words. All of my ELL students face many challenges as they progress through American elementary schools such as learning to speak, understand, and write in English. My five stronger ELL students are more confident and seem prepared for the rigors of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. But how do I really know if any of my ELL students really understand what I say? Just because they are quiet, respectful, and compliant, doesn't mean they get what I'm trying to teach.

During my morning meetings, my whole class sings the months-of-the-year and days-of-the-week songs to warm up their voices. My students who are newest to America are very determined to learn English and sing with the American children. When we listen to stories on tape so that the children can act out the stories, I know that my ELL students have really gotten the hang of our story Big Pumpkin by Erika Silverman because they are fully engaged in pulling and tugging each other to "pull the pumpkin off the vine". These calendar songs and dramatic play serve to invite the ELL children to enjoy literature and arts. I love encouraging the children to act, think, speak, and move like certain characters and I have found that this role-playing helps all children shift perspectives. This imaginative play also sends the children back to their unfiltered storytelling roots where they can conjure up their own original tales. When I began developing this unit, I realized that fairy tales are the perfect conduit for writing fiction. Fairy tales have a formula that is simple: a character who needs to overcome a hardship, a beginning, some kind of magical element, an intruder who tampers with this magic, ensuing challenges, and an ending.

This three-week unit focuses on the magic of fairy tales and uses the arts to teach fiction writing. With frequent and extended opportunities to read stories, speak about them, and engage in dramatic play to get physically involved with language, all students will build their reading and writing skills. I am designing my unit to emphasize story elements, dramatic play, readers theater, and writing. By the end of this unit, my students will create and publish their own fairy tale.

## **Background Information and Content**

### Fostering a love of fiction

In a time where teachers across the country scramble to make sense of Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Testing, we tend to forget what is most important to children—reading. I remember reading stories for fun in a quiet, cozy nook at my town’s public library. There was an upper level for children’s book and at the heart of the room was reading area, complete with a loft where you could climb up a ladder and read book after book. Reading acclaimed author Neil Gaiman’s lecture “Why our future depends on libraries, reading, and daydreaming”, helped me recall my library experiences of inhaling Beverly Cleary stories and gobbling up Encyclopedia Brown’s mysteries. There was so much freedom at my public library and comfort at that time in my life, before the rigors of third grade took away my reading for pleasure.

Gaiman asserts that “fiction is a gateway drug to reading.”<sup>1</sup> Fiction takes us to familiar or strange worlds and offers us a refuge from routines that might otherwise bog us down. This form of escape is necessary to our students’ imagination. Gaiman also states that reading fiction builds empathy by using our imagination to create a world where we can see situations through other people’s point of view. This ability to shift perspectives helps us to stop being self-absorbed and instead realize that we have the power to change things if we want to.

I believe that reading is critical and that the more children read, the more they will learn. Therefore, my students participate in the Daily Five Program. Everyday, students read to themselves, read to someone, work on writing, listen to reading, and work on spelling. Since some children have no books at home, I make my classroom library completely available for children to take books home every night and encourage them to read to younger siblings or stuffed animals and snuggle up with parents and read together.

In my seminar, **The Things that Happen in Fiction**, we discussed how two basic things happen in fiction: a hero goes on a journey and a stranger comes to town. When a hero takes a journey, first he starts out on his mission only to be deterred from reaching his goal by facing challenges. The final challenge is more difficult and challenging than those faced before.

In Where the Wild Things Are, Max goes on a journey to avoid eating his dinner. He travels via his imagination to a land where wild things are and faces the challenge of taming them by staring at them without blinking once. Then he plays with the beasts for a while. Finally, Max returns home where he finds his dinner waiting for him.

When a stranger comes to town, one character shows up and disturbs the order of things. The main character must face several challenges in order to achieve a goal by the story's end. In The Hobbit, Gandalf comes to town to provoke Bilbo to join his band of treasure hunters. Bilbo joins the dwarves and wizard and faces many challenges along the way. Finally, the band defeats Smaug, the dragon, secures the Arkenstone, and returns home. Fairy tales often chart the rise of a single, central hero as he moves through a magical foreign realm from an oppressed condition in the drab world of everyday reality to a shining new reality. Both types of tales require the character to face new challenges, thus requiring him to find some sort of personal strength to tackle the roadblock. Max relied on his imagination to overcome his reluctance to comply with house rules and Bilbo relied on his courage and trust in his fellowship to triumph over evil. I want my students to find out something about their own hidden strengths and abilities to overcome obstacles as they write their own tales.

### Fairy Tales and The Grimm Brothers

One of the first types of fiction many children hear is the fairy tale. This genre of literature is rooted in oral tradition and has similar plots, characters, and themes that are found across the world. Fairy tales contain standard elements which include special beginnings and endings like "Once upon a time" or "They lived happily ever after." There are good characters and evil characters. Themes like poverty, hunger, greed, and jealousy run rampant and drive the plot of fairy tales. Fairy tales often feature a hero who goes on a journey and encounters magic that may be good or evil. The magical element influences events and the hero tries to make his way home.

When I think of fairy tales, I immediately think of the Grimms Brothers. Jacob and Wilhelm were born in 1786 in Hanau, Germany (1785 and 1786 respectively). From reading their backgrounds, I can see how the brothers faced many hardships that are common themes in the fairy tales that they collected:

#### *Society and Class*

The Grimm's father was a town leader, lawyer, magistrate for their town and held high expectations for his large family. Unfortunately, their father died when they were both under twelve years old and the family was forced to move out of their large house with servants to a much smaller house where everyone was expected to pull their weight to get their chores done.

### *Poverty*

With no government programs to help the poor, their mother relied on help from her relatives to subsidize her husband's small pension and, as a result, the social status of the Grimm's children declined.

### *Hunger*

Feeding the large family was difficult so it was expected that Jacob, the eldest, would keep the family fed, tend the budget, and plan for the family's future.

### *Intelligence*

Education was a priority and even though Jacob and Wilhelm did not have a strong educational background to meet with immediate success at their rigorous high school, they worked very hard to overcome their weaknesses and the unfair treatment of rude teachers who preferred students who had better early schooling and came from rich families.

### *Coming of Age and Overcoming Adversity*

Times were bad and the Hessian rulers decreed that since there were so many University applicants, only the first seven levels of society could attend. The Grimms had dropped to the eighth level, so neither Jacob or Wilhelm would be accepted regardless of their achievement. But their mother wrote a letter seeking special permission and Jacob was accepted to the University of Marburg. The next year, Wilhelm was accepted, but suffered from asthma and was confined to bed for six months while he was at university. While at University of Marburg, the brothers studied under an inspiring young professor who gave them access to his library. Free libraries were not accessible at the time, so this was a great opportunity for Jacob and Wilhelm to learn research methods.

The brothers became interested in the folklore of their region and began recording oral storytelling. They collected fairy tales that were passed down through generations by interviewing peasants and villagers. In 1812, they published their stories in a collection called called *Kinder- und Hausmarchen* which means the *Nursery and Household Tales*. These stories were not meant for children and usually included sex, violence, and very dark elements and through subsequent editions, the brothers revised the stories to make them more suitable for children. I will focus on fairy tale number 103 Sweet Porridge. This tale is not dark at all, but very playful. In Sweet Porridge, a kind old woman gives a magic porridge pot to a girl. There are words that start magic and other words that stop the magic. I think that magic words are very intriguing to children. The idea that the magic words must be said perfectly to stop the magic was very fascinating to my class. I

saw that this helped them learn about following directions. When they wrote their own fairy tales, my students created their own magic words that would start and stop their magical event.

### Sweet Porridge

Hunger is very important theme in Grimm's Brothers fairy tales. Many fairy tales originated in times of famine and some characters go to great lengths to satisfy their hunger. When all else fails, magic intervenes. Sometime between 1815 and 1857, the Brothers Grimm wrote Sweet Porridge, otherwise known as tale number 103- The Magic Porridge Pot. The protagonist is a little girl who lives in poverty with her mother near a forest. Since they had neither money nor food, the girl ventured to find something to eat and along the way met a kind, old woman who understood the girl's need and offered her a little pot. The woman instructed the girl to say, "Cook, little pot, cook" to cook sweet porridge when she was hungry and to say, "Stop, little pot, stop" when she was satisfied and wanted the pot to stop cooking. The girl immediately took the pot home, showed it to her mother, and made porridge. The pot worked every time the girl summoned it and the two were not hungry. One day, the girl went out to play and the mother wanted porridge so she said the correct words to start the pot cooking. However, the mother forgot what to say to make the pot stop cooking so the pot went on cooking porridge until it spilled out of the pot, across the floor, and out the door. Porridge poured through the street, seeming to want to satisfy the hunger of the town. When it got to the final house, the girl saw the mess and knew what happened and simply said, "Stop, little pot, stop" and the pot stopped. The people of the town had to eat their way back to their house.

When I first read Sweet Porridge to my class, all the children were wide-eyed and quiet, as they imagined porridge taking over a town. Then, when I reread the tale and invited the children to act it out, I saw the kids completely immerse themselves in the story, wading through porridge, helping each other trod through the sweet, warm muck. We discussed the magic words that needed to be incanted precisely to make the porridge stop. We also talked about how the mother was like an intruder because she used the pot without permission and knowing all the magic words.

Because fairy tales evolve in their retelling, I decided to read two versions of Sweet Porridge by children's authors Tomie DePaola and Naomi Howland. I wanted my students to see how the simple tale could be recreated and placed in different settings: a rustic town in Calabria and a small drafty cottage on the first night of Chanukah. In addition, I wanted them to see that the container can be changed from a little pot to a pasta pot or to a frying pan. And, the food can be changed from porridge, to pasta, or to latkes! Finally, the magic words are changed:

<u>Sweet Porridge</u>	Cook, little pot, cook.	Stop, little pot, stop.
<u>Strega Nona</u>	Bubble, bubble, pasta pot, Boil me some pasta, nice and hot, I'm hungry and it's time to sup, Boil enough pasta to fill me up.	Enough, enough, pasta pot, I have my pasta, nice and hot, So simmer down my pot of clay, Until I'm hungry another day. *Blow three kisses to the magic pasta pot.
<u>Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat: A Chanukah Story</u>	Latkes, latkes good to eat. Cook me up a Chanukah treat.	A great miracle happened here.

#### Tomie DePaola and Strega Nona

Born in Connecticut in 1934, Tomie dePaola grew up with his parents and three siblings. He developed a love of reading because his mother read to him everyday. Tomie dePaola knew at a very young age that he wanted to create books for children. He drew upon his childhood as a source for inspiration. His book, The Art Lesson is based on his childhood aspirations of being an artist. Tomie dePaola has illustrated more than 200 books and written more than 90 books.

Tomie dePaola trained at Pratt Institute and taught at Colby-Sawyer College in Connecticut. It was during a faculty meeting at Colby-Sawyer College that dePaola doodled a character that he named Strega Nona. He loved folktales, myths, and stories that taught life lessons. So, Strega Nona became a character that could be wise and help explain things. Tomie dePaola made Strega Nona the main character in his story based on the Sweet Porridge fairy tale. To make the story more accessible to children, Tomie dePaola changed porridge to pasta. Set in Calabria, the protagonist is Strega Nona, a sort of witch doctor, who provides remedies to her fellow villagers. She helps her neighbors with their troubles by curing headaches, helping single women find husbands, and ridding people of warts. She is looking ahead at retirement and employs Big Anthony. Big Anthony spies Strega Nona singing a spell to a magic pasta pot. He is fascinated as the pasta pot cooks wonderful pasta. He doesn't pay attention to how Strega Nona makes the pot stop. When Strega Nona takes a mini-vacation, Big Anthony tries to show off and use the magic pot to cook pasta for the village. He can start the pasta cooking, but does not stop the pot so the pot continuously boils pasta. The pasta spills over the town and Big

Anthony has no clue how to stop it. As if by miracle, Strega Nona returns home and knows exactly what happened and makes the pasta pot stop. At the end of the story, Big Anthony must atone for his disobedience and curiosity by eating up the pasta.

DePaola wrote other stories about Strega Nona and Big Anthony that have the basic theme. With each new story, my class was riveted by what silliness Big Anthony would undergo when he misused Strega Nona's magic.

### Naomi Howland and Latkes, Latkes Good to Eat

Former art teacher, Naomi Howland writes and illustrates books for children. One of her favorite childhood stories is Sweet Porridge and on her website she says, "I loved the idea of streets filled with porridge and all the villagers having to eat their way home."

In Latkes, Latkes Good to Eat, Howland bases the character of Sadie on a photograph of her grandmother. Howland's protagonist is a little girl named Sadie who lives in a quiet village with her brothers. When we meet Sadie, we witness how the children must fend for themselves while their mother is away helping her sister adjust to life with a new baby. Sadie and her brothers are hungry and need firewood so Sadie goes into the woods and befriends an old woman who needs wood too. Sadie gives her the wood that she gathered and in return, the old woman gives Sadie a pan. She tells Sadie to say the words, "Latkes, latkes, good to eat," when she is hungry and the pan will make delicious latkes. When she's had enough latkes, Sadie is to say, "A great miracle happened here" to make the pan stop cooking latkes. Sadie immediately returns home and makes dinner for her brothers. This goes on during the days of Chanukah, and Sadie sets out to thank the old woman and invite her for dinner. Despite Sadie's warning to stay away from the pan, her brothers try out the pan for themselves. They are able to start the latkes cooking but cannot recall the words that will stop the pan, so their house soon fills up with latkes, and latkes pour onto the street. True to Sweet Porridge, Sadie senses what happened and says "A great miracle happened here" and the pan stops cooking latkes. The villagers are invited to share food and celebrate together on the last night of Chanukah.

### **Teaching Strategies**

In attaining my goal to teach my class how to write their own fairy tales, there are four key strategies that I employed.

#### Making Storytelling Personal

My first strategy that made a huge impact was getting my students invested in their stories. When I read a story to children, I read the words that are fixed on a page. But as I read, I will edit the words by adding my own emphasis even though the words are given to me already formed. However, when I tell my own story, I create the story as I go. When I retell my story, I may keep some phrases the same, but for the most part I am

thinking of the words I need as I go along. This demonstrates to children that storytelling is creative. When I tell these stories, the children are not just passive listeners but active participants in the creative process. As a storyteller, I can respond to my listeners constantly. In a sense, children help me create the story, because by listening to my audience's responses, I can add details here and there to make the story personalized. I find that my class enjoys these playful adaptations and they, in turn, find it fun to do it in their own writing too.

Once my new to English learners had a working knowledge of simple vocabulary of consonant-vowel-consonant words such as let, run, tag, and rug, I realized how personalizing stories could be effective for them. One example is a story that I wrote called "Let's Play Tag." I used students' names and basic words like "recess" and "said".

### Let's Play Tag

At recess, Yuna said, "Let's play tag!"

Tom said, "Okay!"

Omar said, "You got it!"

Peter said, "Sure!"

Jeff said, "Okee-dokie!"

This story was very easy to act out and very relevant to my students because they learned new English words and phrases to say "Yes." Subsequent stories continued to strengthen reading skills like "The Cat and the Cup," "The Mat," and "Top of the Hill" where my students were the main characters and phrases were repeated: "I am big! I am fast! I am on top of the hill! Can you tag me?" Each child had their moment to say those words and continue the story. I love watching the delight on these children's faces as they see their own names in print and read about their own role in the story.

The practice of personalizing writing helped all of my students to write their own fairy tale using their own favorite foods cooked in their choice of magic container: a magic cereal bowl, magic lasagne pan, magic cheeseburger platter, ramen noodle bowl... Each child imagined what would be the tastiest thing to eat and used it in their storytelling. Through making storytelling personal, my students had fun writing about a situation that they may want to have happen to them.



## Readers Theater

My second successful strategy was Readers Theater. I loved how Readers Theater integrated reading, speaking, and listening in an authentic context so that all my students could thrive. First, I used Readers Theater to improve all my students' oral reading fluency, especially my new ELL learners. It was just as beneficial to my struggling readers because the repeated readings built their confidence.

Next, I used it to improve my students' comprehension because they were reading for different characters. They changed roles frequently and so they used different voices. Also, students learned to listen to each other and take turns reading like they would need to do in productive conversations. Finally, Readers Theater was good for all my students because it led to experimentation. In the article, *Extending Readers Theater: A Powerful and Purposeful Match with Podcasting*, I read that:

“to portray a character’s emotions, one requires a deep understanding of the plot and the character’s goals and motives. Considering the audience in a performance reading compels the reader to engage in deeper analytical thought to make the story come alive so that the audience can envision it.”

I saw many earnest faces and changing emotions as the children read different roles in the *Strega Nona: Readers Theater* which I have attached in the appendix. As a result of the practice in reading *Strega Nona* and *Sweet Porridge Readers Theater*, I believe that my students told stories more fluidly. And in many cases, they wrote more smoothly too. Through Readers Theater, my students gained an understanding of how characters talk to each other and when they wrote their fairy tales, they began learning how to write dialogue.

## Dramatic Play and Creative Movement

My third strategy was dramatic play. Initially, I used audiotapes for the children to listen to during our morning meetings. Each morning, the class independently formed groups to act out *Strega Nona*. Once again, the members of the group were flexible with each other and enjoyed switching characters. The parts that always made me enjoy were when the students acted out the inanimate objects like the magic pot and strands of pasta. Now, if I gave the direction to the class to be a magic pot, no one would know what to do. However, through free dramatic play, the children treated the pot as though it was another character. I would see Aira squatting and holding her arms as if she were holding an imaginary balloon. Then she would get animated as she (the magic pasta pot) would boil and make hot delicious pasta. Her friend Jordan played a strand of pasta oozing out from between Aira's arms and as she spilled onto the floor. Then Jordan, as a noodle, would slip and slide as if she were chasing Azani who was playing Big Anthony. The class was

instructed to be quiet during these play times so everyone could still hear the narration. Dramatic play encouraged the playfulness of my students as it inspired creativity. This exercise was arguably the favorite time of day. I think that my class enjoyed their unbridled freedom to act out these tales.

In addition to audiotapes, I used dioramas and stick puppets to help make learning lively. I copied images of the characters, settings, and key objects of the story and had my students color and cut them out. Then I showed the class how to construct a triangular paper diorama to set the stage for play. My students had a lot of fun retelling the story to themselves and arranging the characters and props. I used the same cut-out idea to have my class make stick puppets only they taped the cut-outs to popsicle sticks. This artistic play made their storytelling concrete and evolving.

Finally, I used movement and acting to follow story lines. As my class listened to narrations, they moved as characters and objects to create beginning, middle, and ending sequences. Their movements demonstrated how they interpreted their characters personalities. For example, when the girl in Sweet Porridge suddenly realizes that her magic porridge pot was used without permission, I saw many of my learners acting out feigned shock and furrowed brows as they chastised the mother character.

Dramatic play and creative movement offers students a time to express themselves artistically. Whether it is through listening and moving or moving stick puppets and speaking, students enhance their abilities to think, move, act, and play in satisfying and inventive ways. These “outside the box” thinking exercises teach learners how to learn creatively and become creators themselves.

### Story Elements and Planning

My fourth strategy was giving a format for students to use that included story elements and a phrase collection of beginnings, transitions, and endings. A plot structure is like a road map: it's your guide to help you find your ending destination. It gives you the tools to develop a clear beginning, middle, and end. Giving my class the tools to write fiction is essential. We discussed how the protagonist is the main character in a story and the antagonist is the character or force in the conflict with the protagonist. The plot is the chain of events that makes up a story, the setting is the time and place of a story, and the complications are the problems that arise as the characters struggle to reach their goals. As we read Sweet Porridge, Strega Nona, and Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat, we broke each of the tales down and these questions guided my students as they planned and wrote their own fairy tale:

- What is the set up? Who is the protagonist and what is the setting?
- What does the protagonist want or need?
- How does the protagonist encounter magic?

What magic words start and stop the action?  
 What antagonist or intruder appears?  
 What challenges and struggles ensue?  
 How is the story resolved?

As we read fairy tales together, my class amassed beginnings, transitions, and endings. This collection made their storytelling much easier and my writers used it in their writing to great success. Using the various phrases, my students wrote very freely, unencumbered by figuring out how to transition between events. Before they knew it, they were finished writing their own tale.

Beginning	Basic Sequencing	More interesting	Ending
Once upon a time... Once there was a ... ... There once was...	First, Then, Next, Finally,	One day... The next day... After a while... When all of a sudden... After that... In a flash... It wasn't long before... Just then... As soon as... At that moment... A little while later... As time went on...	And they all lived happily ever after. And they never were ____ again.

### First Classroom Activity

Essential Question: What are the story elements of Sweet Porridge?

Activating Strategy: Ask the class if anyone knows who the Brothers Grimm are. Explain how the brothers became famous for collecting stories from villagers and peasants. Show the students a copy of Sweet Porridge. Tell them that it is one such fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm. Discuss the length of the story. Ask them to look at the paper and wonder what this story will be about.

Vocabulary: Beginning, introduction, setting, hero/protagonist, intruder/antagonist, magic, storytelling, fiction, narration, challenges, resolution, transitions, ending

Lesson: Read the story aloud. Afterwards, discuss the story elements and write a graphic

organizer on the board to record the elements. Focus specifically on the 1. introduction to the protagonist and setting, 2. what the problem is/what the protagonist wants or needs, 3. the magic encountered and the required magic words to say, 4. what the antagonist or intruder does, 5. the challenges that follow, and 6. the resolution. Reread the story and invite the children to act out the story.

Assessment Prompt: The students will return to their seats and retell the story to their partner.

### **Second Classroom Activity**

Essential Question: How can dramatic play help give you ideas for writing?

Activating Strategy: Ask the class, “What can be learned from listening closely to stories?” “Can you speak as if you are a character in the story?” “Why do stories have a narrator telling parts that happen?”

Vocabulary: Readers Theater, dramatic play, pretend, imagine, narrator, acting, listening, speaking, catchphrase

Lesson: (This lesson takes place after reading Strega Nona aloud and after discussing the and six story elements.) Pass out Strega Nona: Readers Theater and discuss how there are four times to change roles. Ask: “How might you sound different between speaking Strega Nona’s and Big Anthony’s part?” “Can you tell anything about a character from the way he talks or what he says or the way he says it?” “Does any character have a catchphrase, something they tend to say a lot?” Read through the entire Readers Theater booklet once. Have the class return to their seat and perform a reading at their table groups. With each page, direct the students to switch roles so they can shift their point of view.

Assessment Prompt: The students will return to their seats and complete a graphic organizer that examines either Strega Nona or Big Anthony. Students will fill in what the character tends to say, what the character is thinking, and how the character is acting.

### **Third Classroom Activity**

Essential Question: How can you write your own fairy tale?

Activating Strategy: Ask the class: “How do you think authors get ideas for stories?”

Vocabulary: Readers Theater, dramatic play, pretend, imagine, narrator, acting, listening, speaking

Lesson: (This lesson takes place after reading Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat aloud and after discussing the six story elements.) Pass out the Storytelling Planner. Explain how after reading and acting out many fairy tales, it is time to write an original tale that contains:

1. an introduction to the protagonist and setting,
2. the problem: what does the protagonist want or need,
3. the magic encountered and the required magic words to say to activate it
4. an antagonist or intruder
5. the challenges or obstacles that follow
6. the resolution

Assessment Prompt: The students will return to their seats begin planning their story.

## **Appendix A Common Core State Standards English Language Arts Standards**

Reading: Foundational Skills

Phonics and Word Recognition

R.F.2.3F Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

Fluency

R.F.2.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

R.F.2.4A Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

R.F.2.4B Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

R.F.2.4C Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Reading: Literature

Key Ideas and Details

R.L.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

R.L.2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

R.L.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Craft and Structure

R.L.2.4 Describe how words and phrases supply rhythm and meaning in a story.

R.L.2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

R.L.2.6 Acknowledge the differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

R.L.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

R.L.2.9 Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

R.L.2.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Speaking and Listening: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-level topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

SL.2.1A Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g. gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion.)

SL.2.1B Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

SL.2.1C Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

SL.2.2 Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL.2.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

SL.2.4 Tell a story with descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

SL.2.5 Create and add drawings or other visual displays to stories.

SL.2.6 Produce complete sentences to provide details, ideas, thoughts, or feelings.

Writing

W.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.

W.2.5 With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

W.3.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## **National Standards**

Dance Standard 1: Performs movement skills to interpret stories.

Theater Standard 2: Uses acting skills to tell stories.

## **Appendix B Sweet Porridge**

### Sweet Porridge by the Brothers Grimm

There was a poor but hard-working little girl who lived alone with her mother, and they no longer had anything to eat. So the child went into the forest. There she met an old woman. The old woman knew of the girl's hardship, and presented her with a little pot. The woman told the little girl that when she was hungry, she just needs to say, "Cook, Little Pot, cook" and the little pot would cook good, sweet porridge. When she has all she can eat, she just needs to say, " Stop, Little Pot, stop," and it will stop cooking.

So the girl took the pot home to her mother, and now they were freed from their poverty and hunger, and ate sweet porridge as often as they chose. One time when the girl had gone out, her mother said, "Cook, Little Pot, cook." And it did cook, and she ate until she was full. Then she wanted the pot to stop cooking, but did not know the correct words. So the pot went on cooking and the porridge rose over the edge, and still it cooked on until the kitchen and whole house were full, and then the next house, and then the whole street, just as if it wanted to satisfy the hunger of the whole world. It was terrible, and no one knew how to stop it. At last when only one single house remained, the child came home and just said, "Stop, Little Pot, stop," and it stopped cooking, and anyone who wished to return to the town had to eat his way back.



<u>Readers Theater: Strega Nona 1</u>	
Narrator	Strega Nona                      Big Anthony
Narrator	Once upon a time, there was an old lady named Strega Nona.
Strega Nona	I love to help people. I fix potions to cure warts.
Narrator	Strega Nona needed someone to help take care of her house and her garden.
Strega Nona	I need someone to sweep the house and weed the garden.
Narrator	Then a boy named Big Anthony came to help.
Strega Nona	You must sweep the house and weed the garden.
Big Anthony	Yes, I will sweep the garden and weed the house.
Strega Nona	No, no. You must sweep the HOUSE and weed the GARDEN.
Big Anthony	Oh.... I will sweep the house with the ...
Strega Nona	broom.
Big Anthony	Then I will weed the ....
Strega Nona	garden.
Narrator	This is the beginning of their story.
<u>Readers Theater: Strega Nona 2</u>	
Narrator	Strega Nona                      Big Anthony
Narrator	Once there was a boy named Big Anthony who did not follow directions.
Big Anthony	Now I will sweep the garden.
Strega Nona	No, no. You must sweep the house and weed the garden.

Narrator	Strega Nona has a magic pasta pot.
Strega Nona	You must never touch the pasta pot.
Big Anthony	I will sweep the house and weed the garden.
Strega Nona	Now I must go to see Strega Amelia.
Narrator	Strega Nona left. Big Anthony saw his chance!
Big Anthony	Bubble, bubble pasta pot, Boil me some pasta nice and hot, I'm hungry and it's time to sup, Boil enough pasta to fill me up.
Narrator	Soon pasta bubbled and bubbled... and bubbled....
<u>Readers Theater: Strega Nona 3</u>	
Narrator	Big Anthony
Narrator	One day, Big Anthony said the magic words to make pasta.
Big Anthony	Now I will tell the people to come eat at Strega Nona's house!
Narrator	The people came to Strega Nona's house and ate pasta. Soon everyone ate enough so Big Anthony sang the magic words to stop the pasta pot.
Big Anthony	Enough, enough my pasta pot, I have my pasta nice and hot, So simmer down my pot of clay, Until I'm ready another day.
Narrator	But Big Anthony did not blow three kisses. The pasta kept boiling and boiling.
Big Anthony	Oh, no! The pasta did not stop!
Narrator	Pasta rolled out of the house, into the street, through the town....
<u>Readers Theater: Strega Nona 4</u>	
Narrator	Strega Nona Big Anthony
Narrator	Big Anthony used Strega Nona's magic pasta pot without permission. Now pasta has covered the town.

Big Anthony	Stop pasta, stop!
Narrator	Just then, Strega Nona came back to town.
Strega Nona	Enough, enough my pasta pot, I have my pasta nice and hot, So simmer down my pot of clay, Until I'm ready another day. Kiss..... Kiss..... Kiss.....
Narrator	As soon as Strega Nona blew three kisses, the pasta stopped.
Strega Nona	All right, Big Anthony. You wanted my pasta and I want to sleep in my bed tonight. So start eating.
Narrator	And he did....

## Appendix D Storytelling Planner

Storytelling Words and Phrases		
Once there was...	Once upon a time...	There once was...
One day...	Then...	Next...
After that...	Finally...	And they all lived...
happily ever after...	One morning...	The next day...
After a while...	When...	In a flash...
It wasn't long before...	Just then...	As soon as...
At that moment...	A little while later...	As time went on...
Storytelling Planner		
Introduction <u>Once upon a time,</u> there was a _____ who lived _____.		
Problem _____ wants to _____.		
Magic and Magic words		
Intruder/Antagonist		
Challenge 2		
Challenge 3		
Resolution _____ finally _____		

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## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Gaiman, Neil, "Neil Gaiman: Why Our Future Depends on Libraries, Reading and Daydreaming." *The Guardian*. October 15, 2013. (Accessed October 22, 2015).

**Curriculum Unit Title**

Magic in Fiction

**Author**

Merry Ostheimer

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

Students will study the Grimms Brothers fairy tale Sweet Porridge, read two versions of it, and write their own fairy tale

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

What is the introduction for Sweet Porridge, Strega Nona, Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat? What does the protagonist want or need? How does the protagonist encounter magic? What magic words are spoken to start and stop the magic? What intruder appears? What challenges and struggles ensue? How is the story resolved?

**CONCEPT A**

Studying story elements of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale Sweet Porridge, Strega Nona and Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat

**CONCEPT B**

Integrating dramatic play into learning

**CONCEPT C**

Writing an original fairy tale using magic

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A**

What are the story elements of Sweet Porridge, Strega Nona, and Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat? What beginning, transition, and ending phrases do you find in other fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm and in other tales of Strega Nona? How is magic used?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B**

What can you learn from listening closely to stories? How can you act out events? What can you learn from speaking as if you are a character in the story? What is the purpose of a narrator?

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C**

How can you write your own fairy tale?

**VOCABULARY A**

character, introduction, setting, hero/protagonist, intruder/antagonist, magic, storytelling, fiction, narration, challenges, resolution, beginning, transitions, ending

**VOCABULARY A**

Readers Theater, dramatic play, pretend, imagine, narrator, acting, listening, speaking

**VOCABULARY A**

character, introduction, setting, hero/protagonist, intruder/antagonist, magic, storytelling, fiction, narration, challenges, resolution, beginning, transitions, ending

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES**

Tomie DePaola's other Strega Nona books: Big Anthony and the Magic Ring, Strega Nona's Magic Lessons, Merry Christmas, Strega Nona, Strega Nona Meets Her Match, Strega Nona: Her Story, Big Anthony: His Story, Strega Nona's Harvest.