

LESSON 14: LITERARY TELLERS

MATERIALS:

- Read aloud: Lang and Grimm versions of the ending of *Sleeping Beauty* (teacher copies)
- Word Continuum Cards (one card per group)
- Fairytales Patterns sheet (one copy per student)
- Read aloud: *The Little Mermaid* (teacher copy)
- Word Wall card (literary teller)
- Three large pieces of paper and 15 index cards
- Green and red crayons, pens, or markers
- Thesaurus (optional)
- Folktale Recording Chart
- Folklorist Journals

OBJECTIVES:



When a folktale is altered and embellished, it becomes a literary folktale, and is usually more stylishly written than traditional folktales.

Some folklorists are not retellers, but are literary tellers who create brand new tales.

Students will be able to:

- read a wide range of literature to build an understanding of human experience.
- apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts.
- apply knowledge of language structures, language conventions, and genres to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- employ a wide range of strategies as they write to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.



Key Terms:

- literary teller

Suggested Story Vocabulary:

- inclinations
- conceal
- clerk
- pardon
- vipers

SEQUENCE:

TEACHER NOTES:

READ ALOUD: Different endings to *Sleeping Beauty* (Fairytale)



Invite students to find a comfortable place for listening. Explain that the teacher will be reading two versions of the end of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Encourage students to listen closely to the story and to think about the differences and similarities they hear between the two tales, or to any other version of the story they may already know.

Read the Lang and Brothers Grimm endings to *Sleeping Beauty*.

Ask the students to discuss: *What differences did you hear between the Brothers Grimm and Lang versions of Sleeping Beauty? Why do you think these changes were made?*



It may be helpful for the teacher to draw a Venn diagram on the board so that students can visually compare and contrast the two versions of *Sleeping Beauty* during this discussion.

WORD WORK: Word Choice (Word Continuum)



Review with students that adjectives are words that describe a noun, and that synonyms are different words that have a similar meaning.

Remind students that different words have different levels of strength along a meaning continuum (i.e., “enraged” has a stronger meaning than “upset”). For students who have difficulty visualizing a continuum, teachers can draw stair steps and then model, using the word “angry,” how the words are increasing or “going up” as their meaning is intensified.

Example: **Angry:** upset – irate – furious – enraged

Divide students up into three groups of mixed ability and give each group one of the word cards. Teachers can create groupings based on student performance on previous journal entries (i.e., students who consistently use colorful adjectives versus students who reuse the same words over again). Each group should receive one of the following Word Continuum Cards:

- **Size** (big or small)



The group work may be more successful if it is modeled whole class first, although it will extend the time.

When students explain why one word is more intense than another, they will often say it just “feels” bigger or hotter. Students are recognizing word connotation, that different words have a certain “feeling.” This should be validated.

Remind students that intense or “big” words may not always be best. For example, “enormous” may be a better word than “astronomical” given context. Ask students why this is the case and how they will make their decisions.

Record all the wonderful adjectives on the

- **Behavior** (good or bad)
- **Appearance** (ugly or pretty)

In their groups, students should brainstorm adjectives that describe the noun on the front of the card. The adjectives need to be synonyms for one or both of the words in parentheses.

Example: **Appearance:** beautiful, gorgeous, hideous, ugly

After brainstorming for about 3-5 minutes in their groups, students can use a thesaurus.

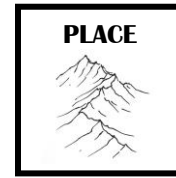
Then, have students select their strongest five words. Give each group a large piece of paper and instruct them to write the word from their card in the center (i.e., size, behavior or appearance) and circle it. Then, students should create a word web by drawing five lines extending from the word in the center of the page and writing their five selected word at the end of each of those lines. Students should leave their webs flat on the desk for the activity.

Give students green and red pens. Model for the students how to circulate the room, going from web to web. With their green pen, they will write in additional synonyms stemming from the Word Continuum Card word. With their red pen, they will add onto existing stems, adding more intense words along that stem to show a continuum.

Allow all students to rotate through the word webs. Then, ask the students to return to their original web and review the newly added words. Students should select five of the best words from the web that are good adjectives for their original word card and write each word on a large index card or piece of paper.

One by one, groups should stand in a line facing the class at the front of the room, holding their index card in front of them. Then, the class should dictate how to arrange the words on a continuum from “the least” to “the most” by rearranging the students holding the cards. Guide the class discussion as they explain the “whys” behind their placement of words along the continuum.

Word Wall to use in the storytelling activity at the end of the lesson.



Encourage students to think about vocabulary or phrases that are commonly used where they live (i.e., for behavior, they may say, “I’m on it like stink of a polecat” or “he’s madder than a hornet”). Encourage students to add these words to the word webs made in class using a different colored pen or marker to denote colorful language.

Example: **Size:** big – huge – enormous – astronomical

Explain to students that literary folktales are often considered to be more descriptive than oral tales. Their purpose is to create a picture in the reader’s mind, but writers can provide more evocative (suggesting) detail. Ask students to consider: *Do the adjectives on the word webs give you stronger feelings than the words on the original word cards? What is the advantage that writers might have over oral storytellers?*

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: Literary Fairytale



In the mid 1600s, telling fairytales became trendy at parties in Paris. These special parties, called *salons*, were especially popular with women who weren’t allowed to go to college and had to keep their opinions to

themselves. Before this time, fairytales were not valued by educated people, but were limited to the nurses and maids to tell to the children of the wealthy.

These French women retold and created new tales, which influenced future storytelling (Charles Perrault was influenced by the new tales; his famous book of tales was even called *Tales of My Mother Goose*). A famous version of *Beauty and the Beast* (told by Madame Le Prince de Beaumont in 1756) came from these salons.

One hundred years later, Hans Christian Andersen became the most famous of the **literary tellers**. He read versions of his stories out loud to friends to perfect them. He carefully mixed the power of oral tales with a literary voice. Literary voice simply refers to how the story is told. This includes the descriptions, details, structure, and voice of a piece. Add the **literary teller** card to the Word Wall.



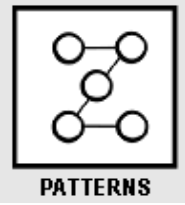
Some important quotes to consider and share with your students as they begin writing their own fairytales:

“These are contrived literary creations, based only marginally on folklore.”
–D. L. Ashliman

“Nobody can write a new fairytale; you can only mix up and fess up the old, old stories.”
–Andrew Lang (in the preface to *Lilac Fairy Book*)

“Since the mid-eighteenth century European creative writers have been mixing up and dressing up the old, old stories.”
–D. L. Ashliman

INSTRUCTION: Fairytale Structure



Explain that even though tales have constantly changed throughout time, they still retain a specific story structure. According to famous folklorist, D. L. Ashliman:

“After ‘Once Upon a Time’ the main character, usually a human, follows a typical pattern (like a hero quest) that is fixed by magic.”

Ask students to take out their Folktale Recording Chart. Reiterate the big idea that folklore contains formulaic elements that appear across stories.



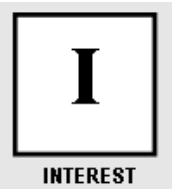
Create a web on the board and write *Fairytale Structure* in the center. Ask students to look at the stories you have read so far and brainstorm some common themes, patterns, or structures that reappear across the

tales. Encourage students to give specific examples from the stories read in order to support their ideas. Add these elements to the web so that students can reference them later, when brainstorming ideas for their own folktale.

If they are not identified, share that the most prominent plot patterns found in fairytales involve:

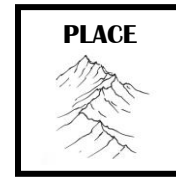
- (1) Childhood, (2) Conflict, (3) Marriage

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Analyzing a Fairytale



Ask students to select their favorite fairytale from the collection of stories studied in class, and create student pairs or small groups according to interest.

Give each student the Fairytale Patterns sheet and ask each student pair/small group to analyze the patterns that fairytale. Students should consider: *How well does this story fit the Fairytale Structure?*



As an optional homework assignment, ask three people where you live to orally tell you a folktale. Pay particular attention to the structure of the story. Do all three stories follow the same familiar structure? Do you notice any themes or patterns throughout the three stories?



Optional: For the Fairytale Patterns activity, teachers can choose to allow students to select a new tale from the following websites:

<http://www2.ferrum.edu/applit/bibs/tales/-Other>

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimmtales.html>

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: Writing a Tale

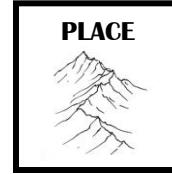


Explain to the students that they will begin writing their own folktale next class. For this project, they have the choice to:

- (A) Turn a basic folktale into a literary one
- (B) Write a new tale given a set of elements
- (C) Write an original tale

Remind students that before they begin writing, all good writers pre-write. Guide the students through this process by modeling the brainstorming process, and write these prompts on the board for them to reference as they begin brainstorming:

- *Decide which type of tale you would like to write. Write ideas in your Folklorist Journal, and choose one to write about.*
- *Think about this tonight or brainstorm ideas with your family at home.*
- *You may choose to write about something else, but write down one idea now to think about.*

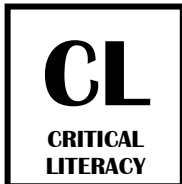


Students can choose to write a new or original tale for this writing project. Encourage students to create a story about where they live. Prompt students to think about the people around them **who** can serve as characters in the story, **where** in the area the story will take place, and to consider **what** morals or values are important to people in the area that could serve as possible motifs.



This tale will be collected and turned in as an assessment to see what the students have learned about folklore and to see if they understand/can apply elements of fairytales/folktales to their writing. The teacher should not assist students in the editing/revision process, as this assessment should be the student's personal work to gauge growth and understanding.

CLASS DISCUSSION: *The Little Mermaid*



Spiral back to when the students listened to the opening of *The Little Mermaid*. Ask the students: *Who has heard this tale before? Now that you have heard the beginning of this tale, how many of you would like to finish the story?* Reiterate that a good beginning can entice the reader to keep reading.

Based on time, the teacher can choose to read Hans Christian Andersen's version of the fairytale, or just give a synopsis of the story (i.e., explain that the story is



The Little Mermaid is a perfect example of Andersen's mixing of fairytale styles.

about a mermaid who falls in love with a human prince. In order to be with prince, she trades her beautiful singing voice for legs).

Ask the students: *Have you ever felt like you had to give up something to fit in? How many of you have had to give up your own voice (i.e., dialect, accent) in order to fit in with others?*

Explain that many people may give up an accent or regional dialect from their place because they feel like they need to so they can fit in and not be judged by others. Some people also feel the need to change their original way of talking when they are in certain circles (i.e., they may speak without an accent in the workplace but shift to using an accent when with friends). This is called code switching.

Ask the students to think about how they change the way they speak depending on to whom they are speaking or the context in which they are speaking. For example, students probably speak to an adult differently than they would another student on the playground.

Explain: *This is called “code switching.” It is changing the words you use and how you talk based on whom you are talking to and where you are. Do you think the loss of the Little Mermaid’s voice is like code switching?*

Encourage students to share their experiences with a partner or to write them down in their Folklorist Journals.