

Fairy Tales

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Objectives: Students will recognize how the mentalities and values conveyed in fairy tales have impacted many aspects of our culture and personal belief patterns. Students will be able to apply critical lenses (feminist, marxist, etc) to fairy tales and other story mediums. Students will explore their own attitudes toward movies, television and advertising and relate these attitudes to the influences of fairy tales. Students will be actively involved in the learning process and learn to draw upon their creative skills while making comparisons and identifying contrasts in literary texts.

Connection to Minnesota State Standards in Literature: The following plan will introduce many aspects relevant to the standards.

Week 1: An Introduction to Fairy Tales

Day 1

Objective: Students will recognize patterns in fairy tales and stereotypical characterization. Students will begin to think about how fairy tales can be changed to make them less predictable.

To begin the class, the instructor will read the original version of “Rapunzel” to the class without providing any commentary. After the initial reading, 3-4 students will act out the story as the narrator reads the text (if possible, this can be prearranged with students). Teacher will provide some simple costumes and props. After the reenactment, the class will be asked to identify characteristics of each of the characters and the ways the characters are stereotypical to fairy tales/other aspects of culture. Some possible questions that the teacher might ask include the following:

- Do variations of these characters appear in other stories/fairy tales? Which ones?
- How is this fairy tale the same or different from others you have read? Is it predictable?
- How would you describe each of the characters? What are three adjectives you might use for each? Write these down.

After a brief discussion of the above questions, instructor will read’s version of Rapunzel, which challenges the conventional roles and plot of the fairy tale. The above process/questions will be repeated. Students will also be asked to reflect on the differences between the two versions. Some possible reflection questions might include the following:

- What is the definition of a fairy tale? What do you personally think a fairy tale consists of? Why do you think this?
- Is the 2nd version still a fairy tale? Why or why not?
- Which version do you prefer?

Day 2

Objective: Students will begin to question the plot and character conventions in fairy tales as they read them. Students will create a piece of artwork, which will help them to visualize the story they have read and produce a creative reflection which they can support, to some extent, with the text.

Instructor will provide enough fairy tale books and/or anthologies so that all students can have their own. Distribute the books and have students select one fairy tale to work on. For the sake of time, have students just open their books and focus on whichever fairy tale they land on (if they are having difficulty choosing). After all students have settled down and chosen a story, the class will engage in quiet reading for 15-20 minutes (as they read their tale). After about 10 minutes, or whenever the fastest readers finish, hand out short questionnaires to all of the students. These questionnaires might include the following questions:

- What is the premise of the fairy tale? In a few sentences, explain what took place within the story.
- What is the “moral” to the story—if there is one). What ideas/values are important within the story?
- How are the characters stereotypical or unusual?
- Does the fairy tale remind you of any modern day TV show, movie, or song you have seen or heard? If yes, which one?
- Do you have any problems with the story? Did you enjoy reading it? If you could ask the author two questions about the characters/plot, etc., what would those questions be? Have students save the answers to their questionnaires for later use.

Have students think about the story they just read and ask them to visualize some of the elements. Teacher will model the next activity to the class by drawing on the chalkboard and having some magazine cut outs or images handy. Instructor will explain some of the visual aspects of Rapunzel and then draw some images on a large poster or chalk board. Explain to students that they will be working on their own illustrations/collages/creations that captures the images they envisioned as they read the story. Stress to the students that their creations do not need to be literal: they can focus on the abstract qualities of the images they imagined and/or use symbols and color to convey moods and environments. Give students freedom to use their creative abilities and encourage them to do their best work- (these creations will be displayed in the classroom or hallways and be a part of their portfolios, which will be discussed in detail later in the week).

Day 3

Objective: Students will continue to use their artistic abilities to create an aesthetic piece of work that represents a literary text. Students will practice supporting their artistic decisions with evidence from the text they studied. Students will express their ideas in small presentations to peers.

Students will continue working on their collages and illustrations of fairy tales for approximately 30 minutes. After completing this, the class will be numbered off in 4's and organized into small groups. In these groups, students will be asked to take turns sharing their creations as well as their response to the questionnaires handed out on day 2. Each person will have 15 minutes to share their findings, and to answer peers' thoughtful questions about the story and their art. Instructor might want to either designate a timer within the group or to monitor 15-minute increments throughout the class.

After everyone has had an opportunity to share with their peers, the large class will come together. Some individuals might be asked to show the entire class their work. The teacher might choose to have students comment on how this activity either helped or hindered their understanding of the fairy tales they studied. As a concluding activity, students would be asked to help hang up their projects around the room or in an adjoining hallway.

Day 4

Objective: Students will improve their researching skills in the library, on the internet, and by using various media sources (tv, movies, etc.) Students will independent choose a fairy tale they find interesting and worth researching over a period of time.

* Instructor should reserve the library and/or media center for this class period so that students have access to internet, encyclopedias, and fiction books.

During this class each student will “claim” a different fairy tale of their own to look at more closely throughout the exercises in the days and weeks ahead. Students have the option of choosing a popular fairy tale (which may make some of the projects and activities easier to research) or an obscure tale (if they are willing to be creative and resourceful in their approaches to the assignments). As an instructor, it may be important to reserve a few tales for your own use in modelling and explaining activities. For example, in my class, I might reserve “Rapunzel” and “The Little Mermaid,” since these are two of the tales I will be focusing on in class. A sign-up sheet will go around at the end of the day so that no two students have the same tale.

After students have chosen their tale, they will be asked to research it. As a part of this research, students will be expected to find as many different versions of the fairy tale as possible, but they are required to find a minimum of four versions aside from the classic. (* note: For those students who have chosen a less popular tale, finding alternate versions may be more difficult. It is not necessary that the alternate versions refer to the original tale, only that they are similar in plot and/or character development. Students may also draft their own alternative version for one of the four they need). These can be in the form of poems, movies, books, tv shows, songs, or other genres.

Another part of this research project involves looking up the history surrounding the author and time frame in which the story was written. Students should find information about the political and historical climate, and other artists, authors, and musicians famous around the time. This information should be typed up in 1-2 pages*, ready to be placed in the final portfolio (to be discussed on day 5). * this can be due either the following week, or at the end of the unit.

Day 5

*Reserve Media Center

Wrap up of Introductory Week/Catch up Day/Introduction of Fairy Tale Portfolio:

Students may work on the following-

- Artwork representative of a fairy tale (days 2-3)
- Research surrounding fairy tale in media center (day 4)
- Working on a 1-2 page paper about the history surrounding the fairy tale (days 4-5)

Instructor will introduce the final project, which is a “Fairy Tale Portfolio.” The portfolio will consist of the individual’s work completed throughout the 4 weeks of the fairy tale unit. The final grade will be based on the student’s completion of all the work (listed below), as well as evidence of critical thinking, creativity, and understanding of the concepts covered.

Fairy Tale portfolio:

Visual representation of a tale/accompanying questionnaire

1-2 page historical overview

freewriting about various topics

Modernized version of individual fairy tales

Video/digital tape version of final fairy tale performance

Other assignments as given

Week 2: Looking at Fairy Tales in the Media

Day 1

Objectives: Students will recognize how much the media representations of fairy tales have influenced and permeated our culture through a discussion about and media presentation of “The Little Mermaid”.

Begin the class by writing the words “mermaid” and “merman” on the board. Ask the students to freewrite quietly about this topic for 5-10 minutes. When finished, have students share some of their ideas with the class. Have either a student or the instructor write some of these ideas on the board. After the discussion, begin the media portion of the lesson.

Teacher will bring in several different “versions” of The Little Mermaid. Possibilities might include:

- Disney’s animated version,
- the “Fairy Tale Theater” version with real actors (stays relatively consistent with the original ending),
- play/theater version,
- *Splash*, ads with mermaids (magazines),
- TV commercial (Mastercard), ask students to share other examples of mermaids they recall.

Show students portions of the films and the ads. Ask students to identify similarities or differences that reappear over and over: ex. The mermaids are always white, or the mermaids are never fat. Other questions might include:

Why are there so few mentions of mermen but so many of mermaids?

Who do you think the intended audiences are for the above films and ads?

Why do you think the media is so successful in filling our minds with ideas and images?

Have the class as a whole discuss the ways their associations with the word mermaid have been influenced by one or more of the above films/ads/etc. Provide some background information about the origin of the concept of mermaids.

Day 2

Objectives: Students will recognize that fairy tales, though written many years ago, still impact our culture tremendously. Students will learn to draw parallels between old and modern-day texts and to identify plots and characters that follow a prescribed schema.

The instructor will begin the lesson by presenting some examples of advertisements that borrow from fairy tales. Some examples might be ads for engagement rings, prom or wedding dresses, clothing, hair products, and many others. Try to include ads directed at a variety of audiences; female/male, young/old, etc. The instructor might also show examples of “real-life” fairy tales and the way the media presents the lives of Hollywood stars. Clips of shows focusing on the lives of the rich and famous (VH1 shows, broadcasts of royal weddings, and Barbara Walters specials all highlight the ‘fairy-tale’-like lives of wealthy and beautiful stars). Acknowledge different ‘genres’ of fairy tales: country-western, royalty, poor to rich (winning the lottery), ugly to beautiful (‘Extreme Makeover’), revenge-based, others.

After the introductory activity, ask the students to spend 15-20 minutes thinking and writing about their fairy tale and the ways they might be able to modernize it to either sell a product, or make a movie, tv show, or video game. The following prompts might be used to guide student responses:

- How would you make your tale into a tv show/movie/ad, etc. that would be successful today? What actors would you cast? What costumes would you have characters wear? Who would be the protagonists/antagonists?
- Do you think the story line of your tale would “sell”? Why or why not?
- What products could you imagine your fairy tale helping to sell?
- What ads/movies/tv shows have you seen that remind you of your tale? Are there any ‘real-life’ stories that remind you of your tale?

Have the students share their ideas for their tales in small groups while continuing to brainstorm about the ways fairy tales have been used over the course of time. Ask students to discuss amongst themselves how effective the media is in making these tales seem desirable. Have you as an individual fantasized about how your life would be if it turned into a fairy tale? Give examples.

Day 3: Introduction to the Feminist lens

Objectives: Students will be able to look at a text from a feminist perspective. Students will identify ways the text either empowers or belittles women by way of appearance, position, and/or voice. Students will learn how certain story elements can be changed so that the women and men within them are not defined by stereotypical gender roles.

To start this unit, the teacher will write the names of protagonists within fairy tales on the board. Some examples might be Cinderella, Prince Charming, The Little Mermaid, the land prince, Beast, Beauty, etc. Beneath each of these names, students will be invited to write an adjective that describes them. For example, beneath Cinderella, one might write words such as “beautiful,” “small,” “weak,” “sad.” Beneath the Beast, one might write words such as “ugly,” “big,” “rich,” “kind.” The teacher will remind students

of the stereotypes discussed over the past week, and ask them to focus more specifically on the stereotypes of gender. The main questions that we will be addressing in this discussion will be:

- Why are most protagonist women in fairy tales depressed and forlorn until they meet their prince?
- Why are most protagonist men in fairy tales strong and mighty rescuers?
- How could we rewrite these tales so that the women and men could be more complex, realistic, and human? (Applying a feminist lens)

The next activity will relate to the students' individual tales. Each student will write a list of the main characters in their stories and beneath them write a brief description of their traditional role within the story. After doing this for all the main characters, students will change the ending or some major aspect of the story that challenges the motives and traditional gender roles of the characters. After spending 10-15 minutes writing, the students will convene as a large group and share some of their alternative endings, events, and descriptions that transform their tale into a less constricting and more complex feminist account.

Day 4: Introduction to the Marxist lens

Objectives: Students will be able to look at a text from a Marxist perspective. Students will identify issues of class and inequality within various texts and reflect on the ways class differences affect relationships, distribution of power, and reputation within a society.

*activity taken from Appleman's book and modified for fairy tale unit

To begin this activity, the instructor will hand out brief, simplified descriptions of Marxist theory. The students will be asked to read it and a discussion will follow. The instructor will introduce concepts of "ideology" and ask students to reflect on the ideologies they think might have been present at the time that fairy tales were written.

The instructor will hand out copies of a "social ladder." The students will then use this graph to indicate the characters in their fairy tale that have the most power down to the least power. Additionally, the students will mark on the side what conflicts arise and what these conflicts might have to do with class and/or power of the individuals involved.

The final activity relates to the students' own lives. On a social ladder or a concentric circle diagram, students will indicate what they believe to be their own placement in the class/power system within the school or the culture as a whole. Finally, in a journal format, students will be asked to reflect on this activity and comment on whether or not it changed their viewpoints of the fairy tales they've been studying and/or about their own lives.

Day 5: Review of lenses and catch-up day

Week 3: Fairy Tales and Drama

Day 1: Introduction to drama

Objectives: Students will become comfortable transferring themselves into playing the roles of different characters. Students will ease into the activities of the following week by participating in a number of warm-up activities. Students will practice writing short dialogues with the characters from their fairy tales in mind.

Instructor will begin the class playing the role and wearing the attire of a well-known fairy tale figure (do not inform the students who you are). Try to choose a figure the class has not talked about a lot in order to prevent students from immediately guessing. The students will be allowed to ask the instructor yes or no questions until they are able to identify the character.

After the brief introduction above, have students participate in a variety of warm up drama activities, such as the “bunny-bunny” activity, charades, miniature identity role plays, role plays based on place, and others. Engage in these activities until most, if not all, students appear to feel comfortable.

For the last activity of the day, divide students into groups of 3-4. Have the groups separate themselves from other groups so that they cannot hear the discussions going on with their peers. For about 15-25 minutes, have each group come up with a dialogue/acting presentation that is modelled after a fairy tale. Students may choose one that they are currently studying or opt for a new one. Their dialogue should last at least 5 minutes and can be true to the time period or modernized. They also might choose to act out the parts rather than use dialogue, but an interpretive performance is chosen, they must use dramatic gestures/movement/facial expression so that the class has something to go on. When the students are done planning, have each group come to the front of the class and perform. The rest of the class is to remain quiet during the performances and then guess, at the end, at which fairy tale the group was reenacting.

Day 2: Continuation of role plays from previous day / Introduction of final drama unit

Objectives: The class will move from acting out simple plots to writing a complex dialogue that will be performed for class the final day. Students will collaborate successfully with peers to plan and write a script they will perform for the class. Students will think about the ways they wish to portray characters and the audiences they want to reach.

The class will continue to perform fairy tale role plays until all groups have finished. After this, the instructor will introduce the final activity for the unit. The final project will involve students working in groups again. This time, students will have two days to plan an elaborate presentation that centers around a fairy tale that the students write themselves and then turn into a dramatic performance of some sort. Students might choose to create a TV or movie version of their tale, or perhaps a talk show or trial.

The project will be broken down into several planning days. The rest of day two will be spent on the writing process. Instructor will assist students in this step, making sure to remind students to focus on both external dialogue as well as stage cues, expressions, and body language. All elements of the drama should be planned out precisely and written on their final scripts (which will be included in their portfolios). Remind students that the writing process is the most important part of this activity. Encourage them to make thoughtful decisions about what type of fairy tale they want to create. Some questions might be:

- Do you want the tale to empower women, minorities, the poor? And if so, how will you do this?
- What type of audience do you wish to attract?
- What emotions do you wish to evoke in your audience? How do you want them to feel about each character and how will you aim to achieve your desired responses?

Let the class know that the writing process will be continued over the next few days along with other processes.

Day 3: Costumes/soundtracks, continuation of writing/rehearsing

Objectives: Students will recognize the complexities of script writing and the many components that contribute to a drama's overall effect. Students will work together to make decisions about visual and sound aspects of their performance that will enhance their presentations.

*instructor will bring a variety of costumes and music

The instructor will introduce the class to elements of costuming by showing media clips that use costumes and music to help create mood and environment within a film. Examples might be clips from "The Lord of the Rings," "Dracula," horror films, or popular teen movies from the 80s up to the present. After this introduction, the teacher will bring in a variety of clothes and costumes. Each group will be invited to use these items for their performances, and also encouraged to bring in their own costumes if they have better ideas from home. The instructor might also choose to talk briefly about how music can create tension, happiness, sadness, and many other emotions within a film or performance. Show or play some examples for the class and then provide some CDs which might help them plan the soundtracks for their performances. Again, encourage students to bring in their own music of any kind (as long as its censored/appropriate).

Day 4: Camera effects/ props/sound effects/staging/final rehearsals

Objectives: Students will contemplate the role that camera shots and staging elements have in creating mood. Students will use props and sound effects selectively. Students will see the value in rehearsing and practicing a final performance.

* If possible, instructor will have access to several digital video cameras for the following 2-3 days.

Instructor will show students clips of effective camera shots, lighting, sound effects, and props. Make sure to give examples of the way that these elements can be used to create many different moods and audience reactions such as fear, sadness, laughter. After the introduction, allow the students to practice filming their performances and experimenting with sound, lighting, and props. The remainder of the day will be spent rehearsing and taking care of last minute issues before the final performances on the following day.

Day 5: Performing

Students will perform their dramatic pieces for the class. Before beginning, make sure that the students are reminded of the importance of supporting one another and providing a welcoming environment for their peers to express themselves. Students may rely on members of other groups to support them in technical areas such as video taping, lighting, music elements.

* The final performances will be viewed live, or if cinematic elements are employed, the students may choose to prerecord their performances so that the class can view it as a film. All of the live performances will be recorded for inclusion in the students' fairy tale portfolios.

Concluding the Unit

Spend the first few days of the following week finishing the group performances and wrapping up the unit. Make sure to address each of the themes covered throughout the three week unit and ask students to share their favorite activities as well as their feelings on what they have learned.

Final Fairy Tale Portfolio Assessment / 100 points

Rubric

Grading Criteria:	Exceptional:	Good:	Fair:	Unacceptable:
Student includes all required elements of the assignment in his/her final project: freewriting activities (4+), 1-2 page historical overview, sources for 4 alternate fairy tale versions, video recording of final performance	Final portfolio includes all elements of the assignment, completed in a creative, successful, timely manner	Final portfolio includes all but 1 element of the assignment completed in a creative, successful, timely manner	Final portfolio includes 3-4 elements of the assignment, one of which may be completed incorrectly	Final portfolio includes 2-3 elements of the assignment, which are completed incorrectly
Student demonstrates his or her knowledge of the themes within the fairy tale unit shown by the critical thinking and inferences included in the freewriting and formal assignments.	Student conveys his/her knowledge of critical themes addressed throughout the unit. The freewriting and formal assignments clearly and insightfully demonstrate awareness for the way fairy tale mentalities affect our culture.	Student conveys his/her knowledge of critical themes addressed in most freewriting and formal assignments. The student grasps parallels between themes and understands the way fairy tale mentalities affect our culture. This knowledge is usually evident in the student's work.	Students created 2 or fewer interview questions. The final reflection addressed some issues of poetry, but failed to incorporate critical thinking into the discussion.	Students did not conduct an interview and/or final reflection. No demonstration of critical thinking about poetry is present.