Telling Your Own Fairy Stories

The purpose of this activity is to have students consider the traditional narrative structure of fairy stories, and to create their own fairy stories using this structure.

Activity

1. Ask students what features they associate with fairy stories, such as a happy ending, a moral, good characters, bad characters.

2. Brainstorm other types of narratives they may be familiar with, such as myths, legends, fables, rhymes, folk tales, fairy tales, real-life experiences, creative stories, fantasies, and adventure tales.

3. Discuss what is understood about the organizational structure of a traditional story (orientation, complication, a chronological sequence of events, resolution).

4. Use the traditional framework (see sample below) to record the structure of some well-known fairy stories.

Beginning	
Orientation:	
❷ setting	Countryside
❷ characters	Mother, three little pigs, wolf
❷ introduction of problem	Mother sends pigs out into the world
Middle	
Complication	Wolf wants to eat pigs
Sequence of events	1. Pigs build houses of straw, wood, and bricks.
	2. Wolf blows down houses of straw and wood. Pigs escape.
	3. Pigs plan to kill wolf.
	4. Wolf falls down chimney and dies.
End	
Resolution/moral of the story	Plan and take time to do things properly.

5. Explain that as preparation for creating their own fairy stories, the class is going to brainstorm some common associations with these stories using the following headings. (Students may like to suggest additional ideas as headings.)

   ❷ **Characters**: good characters such as handsome princes, beautiful princesses, young children, fairy godmothers; bad characters such as wicked witches, dragons, foxes, wolves, toads

   ❷ **Family members**: stepmother, spiteful stepsisters, missing or deceased mothers, bossy or weak fathers

- **Settings and homes**: forest, woods, castle, cottage, toadstool house, pumpkin house, gingerbread house
- **Plots**: children who become lost, frogs that turn into princes, sleeping princesses, cruel adults, or beasts who harm innocent children
- **Special accessories**: coaches, magic carpets, broomsticks, wishing wells, pumpkin carriages, magic beans, spells. A good reference point is *The Fairy Catalogue: All you need to make a fairy story* by Sally Gardner.

6. In small groups, students create their own fairy stories using a traditional narrative structure.

7. Each group shares the story it has created.

8. Ask students to consider in what ways the stories were stereotyped. They should consider the characters, the roles the characters played, the outcomes for the characters, the language they used. Discuss how important students consider the issue of stereotyping to be in these stories.

Extension/Variation

Have students prepare role plays of their stories. These could then be presented to students in younger grades.

Student reflection

Complete the Group Assessment Sheet on page 83.

or

Reflective stems:

- When creating a traditional narrative, the important points to remember are . . .
- What do I like/dislike about the traditional narrative structure?

Teacher reflection

- How effectively did this activity develop students' understanding of traditional narrative structure?
- How well developed is the students' understanding of the concept of stereotyping?