Cooperative "Fractured" Fairy Tales

A "fractured" fairy tale is a traditional story or theme that's been altered or updated for humorous purposes. This activity is cooperative since you'll be writing your own fractured fairy tales as part of a team.

Your fairy tales will be written in six steps. Everyone in your group takes a blank sheet of paper and completes step one. At that point, pass your paper to the person on your right and complete step two. Keep completing each step and passing your paper on until all six steps have been completed. Then return the papers to the people who began the story at step one.

Step One

Think of a fairy tale or a character who appears in a fairy tale. Don't worry about what's going to happen in the story. Someone else will take care of that for you. Instead, write a beginning or introductory sentence that starts "Once upon a time . . ." In this sentence, give the start of the story an unexpected twist. In the story your teacher read, the frog wanted to learn how to tap dance. You might invent a wicked witch who goes to charm school or a wolf who wants to play ice hockey. "Fracture" your fairy tale in any way you like.

When you finish your introductory sentence, **pass your story to the person on your right** and the person on your left will pass you their story.

Step Two

Read the introductory sentence on the paper you've received. Someone else will later continue the plot of the story. Your task is to write a second sentence including as many descriptive details as you can about anything that was mentioned in the first sentence. Feel free to add details that seem a bit unusual for the character. The frog who wanted to learn to tap dance, for example, was extremely clumsy.

When you finish your sentence, **pass the story to the person on your right** and the person on your left will pass you a story.

Step Three

The task at this stage is to write a sentence that introduces some problem to the story. Whatever the character or characters want to do, you're going to put some obstacle in their path. It doesn't have to be huge problem to be effective. The frog, for example, couldn't find a tap dance teacher.

Whatever the content of your sentence, you must include one subordinate clause. A subordinate clause begins with a subordinate conjunction. Subordinate conjunctions, such as *unless, when, while, since,* or *although,* are used when it makes more sense to show a cause and effect relationship or emphasize the order in which things happen. Subordinate conjunctions make one idea dependent on another. In the story, the statement that the frog had money for lessons is joined using the subordinate conjunction *although* to the statement that he couldn't find a teacher.

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When you finish your sentence, **pass the story to the person on your right** and the person on your left will pass you a story.

Step Four

After reading through the story to this point, you're going to add a sentence that continues the action of the story. Your sentence must include one or more prepositional phrases. In the sample story, the frog searched "*in his pond, under all the rocks, and all through the forest.*" (The prepositional phrases have been highlighted.)

When you finish your sentence, **pass the story to the person on your right** and the person on your left will pass you a story.

Step Five

After reading the story you've received, add a sentence that resolves all of the problems in the plot. It doesn't matter how far-fetched or fanciful your solution is: one way or another, it's up to you to get things settled.

When you finish your sentence, **pass the story to the person on your right** and the person on your left will pass you a story.

Step Six

You have two tasks to perform. The first is to write a concluding sentence to the story that ends in a "tag" question. The sample story ended with the sentence, "He was a pretty smart frog, wasn't he?"

When you've written your concluding sentence, give the fairy tale a title and hand it back to the person who wrote the first sentence.

Your teacher will direct the next steps.

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Background

Students will have little difficulty with this activity if they've already completed A Game Of 'Tag' from Chapter 2, Sentence Combining Challenges: Conjunctions, from Chapter 4, and Prepositional Poetry from Chapter 5.

Learning objectives

- To review the use of modifiers, subordination, prepositional phrases, and "tag" questions.
- To write "fractured" fairy tales in a cooperative manner.

Activity introduction

Introduce the activity by reading aloud the following "fractured" fairy tale. The student activity sheet contains an explanation of the activity and a step-by-step blueprint for students to follow as they complete their own stories. The students should work in groups of four to six members.

The Frog Who Wanted to Tap Dance

Once upon a time, a frog named Harry wanted to learn how to tap dance. Harry was a small, green, near-sighted frog with two very large and very clumsy webbed feet. Although he had money for tap dance lessons, Harry couldn't find a dance teacher. He searched in his pond, under all the rocks, and all through the forest. Harry finally decided to pay for scuba diving lessons instead. He was a pretty smart frog, wasn't he?

Answer key

1. Have the students read aloud their own finished "fractured" fairy tales in turn in their small groups. The object is to enjoy the final product, not to critique the stories.
2. Ask for a volunteer from each group to read aloud a fairy tale to the whole class group. If time allows, return to the groups for a second or third volunteer.