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MAKING CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE USE OF FAIRY TALES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Reading Option

by
Suzanne Robbins
September 1994

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Abstract

Learning is a process of making meaningful connections. Students often have difficulty making these important connections. The purpose of this project was to develop a handbook for teachers to help students make connections by using fairy tales.

The research supporting this project focused on two main areas: making connections and fairy tales. Research indicated that successful readers make connections between reading and writing (Heller, 1991), between background knowledge and text (P. D. Pearson, 1985), and between texts (Hartman & Hartman, 1993). Students make some connections naturally as they gain experience with literacy. Teachers can help by participating in the reading/writing process, demonstrating strategies to students, and arranging materials to facilitate the making of connections.

In the area of fairy tales, research revealed that fairy tales are meaningful to children, present the world at their level of thinking, and build on their knowledge of story structure (Bettelheim, 1976). Students make connections as they read, discuss, and compare different versions of fairy tales and specific fairy tale elements and write their own fairy tales.

A teacher handbook was written providing activities and strategies for using fairy tales in the classroom to make connections. The handbook also includes a reference list of some familiar fairy tales and their variants.

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Chapter One

Learning is a process of making connections. Such connections enable one to see relationships and organize information so everything fits together and makes sense. Organized, connected information is easier to understand and recall than unrelated facts (Wilson & Anderson, 1986). Learning is more than rote memorization. True learners reflect on and analyze both new information and their background knowledge as they search for connections that help them relate to and make sense of the world.

Unfortunately, many students have difficulty making connections between what they read and hear in school and their personal lives. Such things appear irrelevant to their lives outside school. Many have difficulty making connections between texts because they do not know it is appropriate to use their background knowledge along with the text to create meaning.

Traditional curriculum does not help students make connections because it is fragmented into subjects and skills. Reading, writing, math, science, and history are taught as separate, unrelated subjects. Within individual subjects, particularly reading and writing, curriculum is often divided into sequences of skills and subskills for students to master. According to this perspective, breaking the curriculum down into smaller and smaller

pieces makes learning easier. One skill or concept is taught at a time and each builds on previous skills and concepts. Unfortunately, this attempt to make learning easier actually makes it harder because the learning is out of context and purposeless. Students practice skills and memorize unrelated facts rather than making connections and constructing meaning (Goodman, 1986).

Students who do not master the skills are often labeled and placed in special programs where they receive additional assistance. This extra help is usually more instruction and practice in the isolated skills they did not understand in the first place. At the same time, because they have been labelled "unsuccessful" they are not considered as capable of learning as "successful" students. Traditional schooling values students who fit into the system. Those who do not fit (such as language different and minority students) usually do not get their needs met because they are expected to adapt to the system (Goodman, 1986; Routman, 1991).

Traditional methods of schooling need to be replaced with more holistic, meaning oriented methods that respect and empower all learners. Language, both verbal and written, is used to communicate meaning. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening for real reasons and real audiences is more effective than practicing isolated, individual skills. There is a natural reason for communicating: to

construct and convey meaning. When language is broken down into isolated sounds, word parts, and phrases, it loses purpose and emphasizes conventions over meaning.

Authentic, meaningful communication and learning takes place when language remains whole, real, and natural, and the emphasis remains on meaning (Goodman, 1986).

Language is best learned through use, not practice. Students learn to read and write by reading and writing. They learn how to use language to learn as they use language (by speaking, listening, reading, and writing) while learning about other things. Teachers can foster both language development and content area learning by structuring the curriculum around meaning. Language learning can be integrated within other subjects, and subjects can be related to show the connections between them, such as math and science. Students learn when methods of instruction encourage them to make connections (Goodman, 1986; Routman, 1991).

All students come to school with different abilities, interests, experiences, and background knowledge. They all have different needs. Teachers who carefully observe their students to see both strengths and weaknesses and then use that information in curricular planning better meet the needs of their students. They begin where students are and with what they are interested in. They focus on strengths, what each student can do. Such teachers do not expect all

students to have the same needs, strengths, and interests. They focus on individual achievement rather than comparing students against each other. They respect all students and expect all students to learn. This expectation is communicated through their words, actions, and attitude (Goodman, 1986, Routman, 1991, Watson & Crowley, 1988).

All learning involves risk-taking. When students are treated as individuals capable of learning, they feel comfortable taking risks. They are empowered to assume responsibility for themselves and take control of their own learning. Such students learn how to think for themselves and are not completely dependent upon the teacher. Teachers who give up some of their control are "giving more ownership and choice to students and trusting students to be responsible" (Routman, 1991, p. 24). They recognize that students will not learn to do things for themselves if they do not have the opportunity to try. They share the responsibility of learning with the learners and invite them to provide input into curriculum development.

Whole language is . . . about having teachers and students decide together what is worth knowing and how to come to know it. It is about setting up a learning environment that is purposeful, authentic, and based on both the children's and teacher's needs and desires to know (Routman, p. 26).

One way to begin the transition from a traditional, skills-based curriculum to one which helps students make connections while keeping language whole and purposeful,

valuing diversity, and empowering learners is through the use of fairy tales. Fairy tales are both interesting and meaningful to children. The simplified view of the world presented in fairy tales is at a child's level of understanding. Children see the world as good or bad, black or white, with nothing in between. While fairy tales do not specifically address modern problems, they do center around universal themes, such as good eventually succeeds over evil and hard work pays off. Children find these themes deeply meaningful and receive reassurance from them that they can solve their problems. Fairy tales are also open to interpretation, so children take from them what they need (Bettelheim, 1976).

Fairy tales are familiar, predictable stories. Students draw from their background knowledge of fairy tales and story structure to construct meaning and make connections. Because the language and structure of fairy tales is familiar and predictable, children can read them more easily than other texts written at the same level (Worthy & Bloodgood, 1992-1993).

Fairy tales are universal. They originate from many countries and cultures. Different versions and variations developed as they were passed down orally from one generation to another. Similar versions exist in different cultures, each reflecting the cultural traditions it draws from. Reading and comparing these versions helps build

understanding and respect for different cultures (Bishop, 1987; Mueller, 1984).

Children can make connections and build their background knowledge as they examine cultural variants and modern adaptations of fairy tales. Their understanding of the world and various cultures increases as they compare different versions of familiar tales. As they see similarities and differences between tales, they make connections. Students learn more about the genre/ characteristics of fairy tales. They gain an increased understanding of story structure as they compare the characters, plot, setting, style, and point of view in different versions of traditional tales. Students also begin to read like writers and consider the tales from an author's perspective. This helps them see the interrelatedness of reading and writing and prepares them to write their own tales (Moss, 1982; Sipe, 1993; Worthy & Bloodgood, 1992-1993).

In summary, traditional curriculum focuses on mastering individual skills and facts rather than constructing meaningful connections. Many students struggle within the system because it does not meet their needs. On the other hand, holistic, meaning oriented methods of instruction respect learners, expect them all to learn, and adapt the system to not only meet the needs of the learners, but empower them to take responsibility for

their own learning. One way to begin the process of moving toward a more holistic, meaning oriented curriculum is through fairy tales. Fairy tales can be used to make connections, build background knowledge, and focus on meaning.

Chapter Two

In reviewing the current literature on making meaningful connections and fairy tales, several major themes emerged which were used to guide the writing of this chapter. These themes are: reading/writing connections, the role of background knowledge, connecting texts, fairy tales, and using fairy tales with students.

Reading/Writing Connections

Reading and writing are interrelated processes which require similar thinking. Writing, or composing, consists of actively constructing meaning. Reading, or comprehending, involves reconstructing meaning written by someone else. Both require the use of language. According to Squire (1983), children learn to think as they learn language. "Language is the major vehicle through which thinking occurs" (p. 582). Through language, children learn to compose and comprehend ideas. Teachers hamper their students' ability to think, as well as to read and write, when they do not foster an understanding that composing and comprehending are interrelated processes.

Comprehending and composing follow similar stages. The first stage, pre-reading and pre-writing, prepares individuals to read or write by setting a purpose and calling up relevant background knowledge. The second

stage, reading and writing, requires mental and emotional involvement as individuals create meaning and monitor their thinking. Monitoring includes planning, predicting, and checking predictions. In addition, writing involves rereading and rethinking to clarify meaning. The final stage is reflecting, or thinking about what was read or written. Those who reflect are better readers and writers because they can describe what they do to construct meaning and know how to activate relevant background knowledge. The stages are not separate, distinct, and sequential. Individuals may combine stages or move back and forth between them (Heller, 1991; P. D. Pearson, 1985).

Calkins (1986), specifically focusing on the writing process, agreed that these stages overlap and repeat rather than occurring in a distinct, linear sequence. She named the three stages rehearsal, drafting, and revision. Rehearsal, or getting ready to write, involves talking, observing, and reading to gather ideas and organize thoughts. Drafting is writing. Early drafts are tentative and exploratory while later drafts narrow down ideas and clarify meaning. Revision is literally re-vision, or looking at the writing from a different perspective. "Writers become readers, then writers again" (p. 18) as they go through the process of writing.

Students become effective writers as they learn to interact with texts and take charge of their own writing.

As they ask questions such as "What am I trying to say?" and "How does it sound?" of themselves, they realize that writing provides the opportunity to create and share meaning. They recognize they have something to say that others want to hear and that authors follow the same writing process they do to create meaning. Calkins (1986) explained,

They are the times when youngsters look up from their writing and suddenly recall another author who has struggled with similar issues. They are the moments of connectedness that a child experiences because he or she is an insider in the world of written language (p. 232).

Smith (1985) discussed the literacy club, which is made up of written language users. Children become junior members of the club, or insiders (as referred to by Calkins, 1986), when they are accepted by a group of readers and writers. These more experienced members help children participate in written language activities. They recognize that children are not experts in reading and writing, but will become more experienced with time. Members of the literacy club see authorship from an insider's perspective. They see how written language is used, receive needed help in a risk-free environment, and see themselves as active participants.

Readers who see authorship from this insider's perspective, or read like writers, begin to think like writers. They realize authors choose what messages to send

and how to use language to best convey these messages. Students then apply this to their own reading and writing as they create and share meaning with others. Hansen (1987) cautioned that primary focus on meaning, rather than conventions, is essential if students are to produce worthwhile text. Students who are encouraged to construct meaning take risks because they know it is safe to do so. Conventions are then addressed when text is edited for publication. When there is too much concern with spelling, punctuation, and grammar early in the writing process, students are afraid to take risks. They use only the words they know and their writing is less interesting and less meaningful.

While Calkins (1986) and Hansen (1987) specifically addressed writing, Zamel (1992) focused on readers who use writing to construct meaning of previously written text. Readers make connections as they dialogue with text through writing their ideas and reactions. Writing allows individuals to see their thoughts because it is tangible and concrete. Students learn that reading is open to revision as they see alternatives and new perspectives through their writing. Reading journals/logs allow students to record and elaborate upon their reactions to text. In double entry journals, students copy passages they find significant or confusing in one column, then write their reactions to the passages in a second column.

Writing about these passages generates ideas and meaning they might not have found otherwise. "Giving students the opportunity to write about what they find interesting/significant/moving/puzzling may help them realize that their understanding of complex texts evolves as they (re)read and that written reflection makes this understanding possible" (p. 474).

Reading and writing follow similar stages. Interaction between background knowledge and text, or reader and writer, creates meaning. Both processes involve constructing and reconstructing ideas, gaining and using information from a variety of sources, and applying previous knowledge.

Rubin and Hansen (1986) described five kinds of knowledge involved in the reading-writing process: information, structure, transactional, aesthetic, and process. Information knowledge refers to prior knowledge of vocabulary, concepts, and the world. Individuals bring this information to text. Structure knowledge provides the understanding that text is written for a variety of purposes. By knowing the purpose of different text structures, students are better prepared to comprehend the text. Transactional knowledge describes the interaction between the reader and writer. Readers use previous knowledge to construct meaning from text. Writers draw upon background information as they use text to convey

meaning. Aesthetic knowledge includes affective or emotional involvement and literary devices such as alliteration and rhyme. Process knowledge combines the other four types of knowledge. For example, the writing process engages students in all types of knowledge as they read and write.

The Role of Background Knowledge

Background knowledge, labelled information knowledge by Rubin and Hansen (1986), and previous experience play a large role in reading comprehension, or understanding what one reads. Readers bring to text all of their past experiences. They use this background as they interact with text. Reading is more than decoding or pronouncing individual words. It involves bringing up related previous experiences that allow readers to make sense of what is written (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Smith (1973) discussed the role of previous knowledge in the reading process in terms of visual and nonvisual information. Visual information is text, or words printed on a page. Nonvisual information is the background knowledge a reader brings to text, or what is already known about reading, language, and the world in general. Reading is an exchange between visual and nonvisual information, what is printed on the page and what is already known. The more nonvisual information readers contribute, the less

visual information is needed to construct meaning from text. When readers have little previous knowledge, they need more information from text. This causes them to read slower because only a small amount of visual information can be processed by the brain at a time.

Readers who apply appropriate background knowledge not only read faster, but also better understand and remember what they read. Recalling relevant previous experiences prepares readers to interact with text by setting expectations of what is important and what is likely to occur. As readers encounter new information, they link it to prior knowledge. When it connects and makes sense, they understand it. Readers who do not have relevant prior knowledge or who do not make connections between the old and new information have difficulty understanding and remembering it (Carpenter & Just, 1986; Wilson & Anderson, 1986).

Students who use what they already know make better inferences while reading. Anderson and Pearson (1984) found that children often used their own information when answering inferential questions about familiar subjects rather than relying upon information supplied by the text. P. D. Pearson (1985) reported several studies where researchers taught students to use their background knowledge to interpret stories they were reading. Many students, particularly poor readers, had been unaware they

could and should use prior knowledge in reading. They became better at answering inferential questions once they learned how to use this information. P. D. Pearson also found that prior knowledge better determines comprehension than reading ability. Students who recall relevant background information comprehend text better than students who do not.

Comprehension occurs when new information fits with old information (previous background knowledge) and makes sense. People are usually unaware of the process when it occurs smoothly. However, when new information does not make sense, people realize something does not fit. They then either modify their understanding to incorporate the new information, or reject it because it does not fit (Wilson & Anderson, 1986).

Anderson and Pearson (1984) and Wilson and Anderson (1986) discussed mental categories of understanding, or schemas. The brain collects and stores information in categories called schemas. Schemas are linked together through networks. They organize otherwise arbitrary bits of information so it is easier to recall needed data and make connections. Schemas allow individuals to piece together information either forgotten or not previously learned. Authors leave out information that readers should be able to infer due to shared background knowledge. Combining schemas (background knowledge) with text allows

readers to make predictions and inferences about missing information. Comprehension occurs when readers use or create schemas that fully explain the relationship between their previous knowledge and ideas in the text.

Readers use their background knowledge, or schemas, along with text to construct meaning. Those who recall relevant experiences require less information from text. They make predictions and inferences based on what they already know and link new information to previous knowledge. Comprehension occurs when old and new information fit together and make sense.

Readers actively construct meaning. Their background knowledge interacts with the text to make sense of what they are reading. "The act of reading becomes a transaction; as the reader focuses on the text, the text stimulates the retrieval of what has been experienced, learned, and stored" (Hamann, Schultz, Smith, & White, 1991, p. 25). Readers cannot arbitrarily assign meaning; interpretation must be based on the text. However, because readers approach text with different background experiences and ways of organizing information, their interpretations will vary (Heller, 1991; Orasanu & Penney, 1986).

Similarly, an individual can experience the same text differently under different circumstances. "A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit,

a different event -- a different poem" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 14). Yolen (1985) summarized the transactional nature of reading this way:

There is no real story on the page, only that which is created in between the writer and the reader. Just as the writer brings a lifetime to the creation of the tale, so the reader carries along a different lifetime with which to recreate it. Even the author may reread her own story days, weeks, months later and understand it on another level (p. 590).

Readers bring not only their past experiences to text, but also the present: questions, concerns, and goals, along with strategies for constructing meaning and purposes for reading (P. D. Pearson, 1985). As they begin reading, the past and present form a framework upon which they base their predictions of what will happen next. They expect what they are reading to make sense, and as they read, they check their predictions. Children's reading errors often result from misleading expectations, not from misreading individual words (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Many students do not activate prior knowledge while reading. P. D. Pearson (1985) reported that students who are taught to use a variety of strategies as they read comprehend better and can monitor their own comprehension. In one study, students received instruction in the use of strategies called **right there**, **think and search**, and **on my own**. They learned how to combine their background knowledge with the text to create meaning for themselves.

Heller (1991) labelled similar strategies **What do you think?, How do you know?, and Can you prove it?**

Writing also helps students recall relevant background knowledge and connect to text. One group of ninth grade students wrote about personal experiences related to a text's theme or message (not storyline) before reading. Students in a second group did not. Hamann et al. (1991) found that those who wrote before reading made more connections between the literature and their lives. They became more involved in the text and responded more because they were able to relate it to themselves. Zamel (1992) agreed that writing about personal experiences before reading prepares individuals to read. Such writing "not only helps students explain the matter to themselves, but sets up a connection, a readiness" (p. 478) to read and construct meaning from text.

Knowledge of text structure also helps students relate to text. Students come to school with a fairly well developed sense of story, or narrative. Most reading and writing in the primary grades involves narrative, so students gain even more experience. In the intermediate grades, however, the focus shifts to expository texts. Students often lack experience with these texts. They do not know how expository texts are organized, nor do they realize different text structures are used for different purposes. Students need instructional experience with

different text structures if they are to comprehend and compose them (Heller, 1991; Squire, 1983).

Readers actively construct meaning. They make predictions and inferences as they combine background knowledge with text. Many students do not know they can and should use their background knowledge to make sense of text. Teachers can help students connect to text by teaching comprehending strategies, having students write about relevant personal experiences before reading, and introducing them to different text structures.

Connecting Texts

According to Hartman and Hartman (1993), good readers make connections between new texts and previous texts. These connections help them extend their understanding and response beyond a single text. Hartman and Hartman posed questions for teachers to consider while planning intertextual links. One question relates to text type. Text ranges from linguistic to nonlinguistic materials, a broad definition which includes anything that symbolizes meaning. Film, video, dance, drama, painting, and photography can be included with written texts to provide more materials and more variety. This encourages children to make connections among many sources, just as very young children do naturally as they make sense of the world. Another question deals with how to arrange materials.

Different groupings include choosing items the author intends to go together, grouping by theme, collecting versions or variants of the same story, presenting materials with conflicting or alternative perspectives, or rereading the same text to see how thinking has changed over time. The main concern in any arrangement is that it provides opportunities for students to make their own connections.

Harste, Short, and Burke (1988) discussed the benefit of grouping related texts to provide opportunities for students to make connections. "When readers read two or more texts that are related in some way, they are encouraged to share and extend their comprehension of each text differently than if only one text has been read and discussed" (p. 358). While many of their categories were similar to Hartman and Hartman's (1993), additional ideas include grouping by genre or collecting different illustrations of the same text.

Cairney (1990) used the term intertextuality to describe this process of making connections between texts, particularly using previous texts to give meaning to new text. He asked a group of sixth grade students if they thought about things they had read while writing. Seventy two percent said yes. Cairney then examined their writing and found that all of the students had incorporated things from their reading. Most students used ideas and plots

from previous stories. Others combined stories, related factual information through stories, and used the genre, characters, or characteristics of previous reading experiences.

Readers and writers make connections between texts. Readers see similarities and relationships. Writers draw upon their background knowledge, which includes things they have read or heard. Teachers can specifically arrange materials to provide opportunities for students to make connections.

In summary, reading and writing are interrelated processes of constructing meaning. Both require transactions between the reader and writer, or background knowledge and text, to create meaning. Individuals gain a deeper understanding of text as they make connections between texts.

Fairy Tales

Literature can help unite humanity as it shows how all people experience similar emotions, needs, and desires. It can also help people understand and appreciate the differences that make each group special. Literature can develop an understanding of the effects of social issues, such as racism and poverty, on the lives of individuals. In addition, it transmits values. Folklore is an especially appropriate genre, because every cultural group

has developed folktales. These tales provide insight into the traditional dreams, values, and other characteristics of groups. Reading and comparing stories from different cultural groups can help develop multicultural understanding. Bishop (1987) stated,

Reading is an active experience. Each time we read a good piece of literature, we are changed by the experience; we see the world in a new way. It is this capacity to change us, to change our perspective on the world, that makes literature a vehicle for understanding cultures and experiences different from our own (p. 66).

Folktales, which include fairy tales, are universal. In early societies, folktales were told orally. While they provided enjoyment, they also taught values, transmitted culture, and showed people how to survive the struggles of living. Different versions and variations developed in many countries and cultures as stories were passed down orally from generation to generation and circulated from one country to another. These variations reflect the geography, culture, values, and traditions of the people (Campbell, 1990; Mueller, 1984).

Folktales and fairy tales are short stories which contain action and adventure. They begin and end simply ("Once upon a time" and "They lived happily ever after"), and devote most of the story to developing the main idea or topic. Time often passes quickly in fairy tales. Characters are good or bad, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly; there are no gray areas. Good succeeds and evil is

punished in the end. Fairy tales follow patterns, use repetition, and have fairly predictable outcomes (Campbell, 1990; Mueller, 1984; Phillips, 1986; Routman, 1991).

Fairy tales address universal themes. Children easily relate to these themes and apply them to themselves. In fairy tales, good succeeds over evil. The good and humble are rewarded while the proud and evil are punished. Evil may appear attractive and even temporarily succeed (for example, an evil queen or wicked stepsisters), but the good and just always prevail in the end. Unselfishness, humility, kindness, and honesty are rewarded. Planning, thinking through problems, and hard work lead to success. In addition, fairy tales teach courage and provide an acceptable way to handle violence (Bettelheim, 1976; Mueller, 1984; Routman, 1991; Trousdale, 1989).

According to Bettelheim (1976), fairy tales are deeply meaningful. They speak to children at their level. Children do not see gray areas -- things are either white or black, good or bad. This polarization exists in fairy tales as well, so children easily see the difference between good and bad. Fairy tales state problems simply and provide possible solutions. While they do not specifically address modern problems, "more can be learned from them about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's

comprehension" (p. 5). Routman (1991) agreed that the clearly defined good and evil helps children become aware of the consequences of behavior, both positive and negative, and "make connections to problems in society that are not so clearly defined" (p. 77b).

Because people bring their own experiences and background knowledge to text and interact with text to construct meaning, many interpretations are possible. The deepest meaning is different for each person, and often varies for the same person at different times in his/her life. Fairy tales can speak to children's inner conflicts and provide reassurance that they can be solved (Bettelheim, 1976; Routman, 1991).

Purcell-Gates (1989) found that inner-city students attending a university literacy center repeatedly chose fairy tales for read-aloud time. "Our children were not expressing only a passing interest in the traditional tales; they were exhibiting a need for this literature which bordered on craving" (p. 251). Students found fairy tales meaningful and relevant. They benefitted from choosing their own books for read-aloud time and from hearing the chosen fairy tales over and over.

Folktales and fairy tales transmit culture and values while providing entertainment. They center around universal themes and are deeply meaningful to children. Fairy tales present the world at a child's level of

thinking and help children overcome their problems.

Bettelheim (1976) expressed concern that children are not being exposed to traditional versions of fairy tales. Many children read and hear simplified, illustrated versions that seek merely to entertain. These modern versions do not transmit the same deep, personal significance as the traditional ones. The illustrations distract children from using their imagination and creativity to form their own mental picture of the story. Both these things cause tales to lose personal significance (Bettelheim, 1976).

Mueller (1984) stated that traditional folktales often become lost as the world becomes more modernized. Through this, much knowledge of early culture and cultural heritage is lost as well. It is important to keep traditional tales alive by passing them down from generation to generation.

According to Trousdale (1989), some adults consider the violence and brutality in many traditional versions of fairy tales harmful to children. They try to protect children from it by choosing safer, rewritten versions that remove death and brutality. However, Trousdale argues that traditional versions of fairy tales are not only appropriate for children, but necessary for healthy psychological development. Attempts to make them less frightening (for example, having the wolf in "The Three Little Pigs" escape rather than being killed) may actually

make them more frightening (the wolf could come back). Removing the violence also removes a sense of security and finality.

Trousdale (1989) analyzed children's retellings of fairy tales before and after the children heard or watched different versions of the same tale. All of the retellings included the element of danger and escape from danger. All the children needed a safe, secure, happy ending. One child told the traditional story of "The Three Little Pigs", where the wolf is eaten by the third pig. A week after viewing a version in which the wolf is left alive, she again retold the traditional version where the wolf is killed. Trousdale states,

It appears that within the framework of what she considered to be the "real story," she was able to tolerate and enjoy a playful parody in which the dangerous wolf is not eliminated in the end. She knew what the "real story" was -- one which has an ending that takes care of the dangerous wolf (p. 73).

Other children's responses to fairy tales showed they approved of punishment if it made sense to them, but they were satisfied if the danger could be resolved without punishing the villain. As long as the danger was resolved in the end, the children could handle the violence.

Traditional versions of fairy tales are deeply meaningful. They allow children to handle violence in an acceptable way and provide a sense of security. In

addition, traditional tales contain information about early cultures. If they are not retold and passed along, they become lost.

Using Fairy Tales with Children

Worthy and Bloodgood (1992-1993) conducted a unit on Cinderella tales with upper elementary grade classrooms and within a university reading clinic. They found that "connecting the known stories to new, structurally similar ones is a powerful tool for reading instruction and an excellent foundation for exploring other subjects through literature" (p. 290).

Students read a variety of Cinderella tales. They identified story elements, such as plot and characterization, and stylistic features, such as common language (once upon a time), themes, and motifs (for example, impossible gifts, supernatural elements, disguises, events happening in threes). They discussed similarities and differences among the fairy tales and examined the illustrations.

Writing was an integral part of the unit. Students kept response journals throughout the unit to record their thoughts about stories before, during, and after reading them. Early entries were mostly plot summaries, prediction, and answers to teacher-posed questions about their reactions to the stories. Students gradually began

to add personal thoughts and feelings, plot development, character analysis, and evaluation. Students transformed existing stories or wrote new ones based on the features of fairy tales. The familiar structure of fairy tales provided support and made it easier for them to write.

Benefits of the unit were seen in reading and writing. Students exhibited growth in comprehension, critical analysis and evaluation, and writing. They were more independent and motivated to respond to stories in personal ways. They developed a more positive attitude toward reading.

Moss (1982) found literature a natural resource for writing when her fourth grade students read and compared traditional fairy tales with humorous modern versions. They identified characteristics and themes within the tales and discussed how the modern tales were like and unlike traditional tales. Students then wrote their own fairy tales. Their own tales included traditional features, such as kings, queens, tasks, rewards, and punishments, along with "humorous and clever twists and unexpected contemporary touches" (p. 659). Their mastery of the genre was shown through their ability to play with the language and develop their own variations.

A group of sixth graders enjoyed revisiting fairy tales and folktales they remembered from their earlier years. Sipe (1993) extended this enjoyment by introducing

transformations, or modern adaptations of traditional fairy tales. He chose versions that deliberately manipulated or extended traditional stories, rather than retellings or cultural variants. Categories of transformational tales included parallel tales, deconstructed tales, extensions of the original story, and illustrations. Parallel tales change one or two elements and keep everything else the same. Deconstructed tales are loosely based on traditional versions but have little else in common with them.

The class read pairs of stories and discussed them. The comparing and contrasting allowed students to examine the fairy tales with more depth and perspective and make connections between tales that would have been overlooked if they had read the tales separately. Students created charts to visually compare tales so they could see what had been changed. The class also listed the ways to transform stories they had found by examining modern variants.

The transformations provided a strong model for writing. After the whole class transformed a story together, groups of three students chose their own tale to transform. Through this activity, students became engaged in the reading-writing process. Sipe (1993) stated,

Although the reading, modelling, and discussion were valuable in themselves, they also broadened the students' choices and sharpened their thoughts for their own writing. . . . We were impressed by the quality of the writing and by the degree to which students' stories forged intertextual links (Cairney, 1990) with what they had read (p. 22).

According to Bailey and Ginnetti (1991), whole class collaboration and small group composition of fairy tales provides modeling, guided practice, and support. All students actively participate in the process of adapting fairy tales before doing it independently. One class prepared simple story maps of each story and compared them to see which parts changed. The class then chose one fairy tale to adapt, or fracture, as a whole class. After mapping the story, students brainstormed ways to fracture various parts of the story map and voted on who would change each part. After the whole class collaboration, small groups of four to five students chose a tale and repeated the process. Writing tales in groups provided support and guided practice while preparing students to write individually.

A third grade class read and compared a variety of fairy tales and discussed fairy tale elements. Students then wrote their own tales. They were encouraged to use fairy tale elements in their writing, they did not have to. When Bearse (1992) asked the students if they had consciously thought about stories they had read while writing, 11 of the 21 said yes. Bearse then examined their writing and found that all of the students had used fairy tale elements and language. Some included specific fairy tale details, such as a castle or magic kiss. Others combined details and events from several different tales

into their own story. Bearse concludes that students do make connections between texts while reading and writing to create meaning. "As students compose and become active creators of meaning in text, they make conscious and unconscious decisions about incorporating literature into their writing. This transaction is central to the creation of meaning" (p. 688).

Second graders explored authorship by creating their own version of The Jolly Postman by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. To begin the unit, students shared fairy tale books from home. They noticed there were different versions of each tale and began looking at the similarities and differences. They also talked about common themes. Students "began to perceive that authors made choices and rewrote stories however they wanted. For the children, it legitimised their own freedom to create or amend as they wished" (N. Pearson, 1989, p. 120). In The Jolly Postman, a postman delivers letters for fairy tale characters. To adapt the story, students used different fairy tale characters in each of the story's events. They learned how to write for different purposes as they wrote apology letters, advertisements, postcards, legal letters, and invitations. They began to think about audience and context. Pearson was surprised by her students' "ability to slot into the character from whose stance they were writing. They also surprised me by the way they were able

to take on the demands of being different kinds of authors" (p. 130).

Phillips (1986) conducted a study to determine if using literature with children rather than basals would influence their writing, and if it would help them apply form (genre and structure) and content (ideas and topics) in their writing. In the study, one first grade class listened to literature and wrote daily for 12 weeks. Five other first grade classes used basals.

The literature group focused on fairy tales for the first four weeks. Prereading discussion centered on making predictions, sharing relevant personal experiences, and emphasizing a few main features of fairy tales. In postreading discussion, students confirmed or disconfirmed predictions and shared what they would have done in similar situations. Each afternoon, the morning's story was again discussed to highlight features children could include in their writing. Children then wrote fairy tales. They were encouraged to base their writing on the fairy tales they had heard and on their own ideas, invent spellings, edit their writing, and share their stories with the class.

After the 12 weeks, the students' writing was evaluated according to six criteria: form, content, vocabulary, sentence structure, reaction, and originality. The literature group showed increases in all areas over the basal groups. Student writing from the basal classes

contained simple sentences and undeveloped stylistic features. In contrast, students in the literature group used rich language, including many descriptive adjectives and action verbs. The length, fluency, and quality of their writing had increased. When students shared their writing with the class they began to realize when something did not make sense. They became critical listeners of their own stories because they wanted others to understand what they had written.

As students read and compared fairy tales, they made connections between texts, examined story elements in detail, and began reading from an author's point of view. Some wrote original tales, incorporating fairy tale elements, while others adapted existing tales, deciding which elements to change and how to change them. Through this students became engaged in the reading/writing process.

Summary

In reviewing the current literature from a holistic perspective, one sees that learning is a process of making meaningful connections. It takes place when students recognize that reading and writing are interrelated processes, use their background knowledge to interact with text to construct meaning, and make connections between texts. Using fairy tales with students provides them with

the opportunity to make these important connections.

Reading and comparing different versions of fairy tales, including traditional tales, cultural variants, and modern adaptations, help students build background knowledge and provide a model for writing.

Chapter Three

This project is designed as a teacher handbook showing how fairy tales can be used to help students make connections. These connections include the relationship between texts, the transaction between self and text to construct meaning, and the interrelatedness of reading and writing.

There are two specific goals of this project. First, to provide background information about the importance of making connections in the learning process and discuss the different kinds of connections. Second, to provide some examples of how fairy tales can be used to help students make those connections.

There are several limitations to this project. First, the fairy tales mentioned within the project and listed in the reference section represent only a few of the fairy tales available. This project is not intended to provide a comprehensive list of fairy tales. Teachers will find a variety of others in libraries and bookstores. Careful examination of the story and illustrations will enable teachers to find worthwhile versions.

Second, the fairy tales chosen for this project are those specifically written for children, as opposed to versions written for adults and later adapted for children.

Third, this project specifically addresses fairy tale

books. It makes no attempt to discuss movies, videos, or other non-print materials.

Fourth, the availability of specific versions of fairy tales could be a limitation. Teachers may find certain fairy tales are hard to find. Those who plan ahead and begin collecting tales early will have more success in finding specific tales they want.

Fifth, while this project presents some ideas for using fairy tales, it is not intended to be a daily lesson plan. The intent is to offer some suggestions and examples of ways to use fairy tales to encourage students to make connections.

Sixth, some understanding of whole language principles would be helpful. Students will be reading, writing, speaking, and listening as they compare tales and discuss fairy tale elements in small groups. This requires freedom to move around the room, flexible grouping, and the opportunity to talk. Teachers who prefer a more structured environment will have difficulty implementing these ideas in the intended way.

Seventh, this project is specifically written for use with fourth grade students. Ideas may need to be modified for use with younger or older students.

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Appendix:

Connections Through Fairy Tales

Introduction

Learning is a process of making connections, or putting information together so it makes sense. Traditional schooling breaks curriculum into individual subjects, skills, and subskills. This makes it difficult for many students to see connections. I have become dissatisfied with these traditional methods of teaching as I have seen so many students struggle to learn. Those whose needs are not addressed by the curriculum are often labeled (Chapter 1, RSP, learning disabled, etc.) and given more of the same instruction they did not understand the first time. Limited English Proficient (LEP) students test out of the bilingual program when they can speak and understand English, but lack the proficiency to read or write in English. Without additional support, they cannot succeed in the classroom.

In contrast, holistic, meaning oriented methods of instruction keep language whole, natural, functional, purposeful, and relevant. They strive to integrate subjects so students can make connections, see relationships and patterns, and recognize how parts fit into the whole. Individual learners are valued for what they bring with them to the classroom. They are empowered to take control of their own learning and work with others to create a community of learners.

I am just beginning the transition from traditional, skills-based methods of teaching to more holistic, meaning oriented ones. It is a difficult process, different for everyone, because there is no right place to start and right way to do it. I have chosen to begin by emphasizing connections. Some important connections are between reading and writing, between self (background knowledge) and text, and between texts.

Connections

Reading/Writing Connections

Students actively construct meaning as they read and write. When they read, they use printed text (books, magazines, newspapers, signs, etc.) along with their background knowledge to reconstruct meaning written by others, or put the information together so it makes sense. When they write, they share their ideas and experiences with others.

Reading and writing follow similar steps. Prereading and prewriting activities include talking, brainstorming, observing, gathering thoughts, and organizing ideas. They help students get ready to read and write by setting a purpose and encouraging students to recall relevant background knowledge. In the second step, reading and writing, students make predictions about text and check those predictions as they read. As students begin writing, they start with general ideas. They narrow down these ideas and become more specific as they reread, rethink, and rewrite. In the final step, reflection, students think about what they read or wrote. These steps are not separate and sequential. Students overlap, combine, and move back and forth between steps as they read and write.

Students begin to read like writers. They realize authors choose what to write about and how to write it.

They begin to think about what an author is trying to say and why he/she wrote something in a particular way. Students begin using this new understanding in their own writing and ask similar questions of themselves.

Self and Text

A second type of connection is between self and text, or using previous knowledge to make sense of new information. Many students do not know they can and should use what they already know along with the words in the text to construct meaning while reading. Students who apply this background knowledge are able to read faster, better understand, and better remember what they read. They know text is supposed to make sense, and they make and check predictions while reading. Students who know nothing about the subject (or do not apply what they know) read slower because they need more information from text.

Students draw upon their past experiences and knowledge while writing. When allowed to focus first on meaning, rather than conventions such as spelling and punctuation, students write about meaningful ideas and experiences. This early emphasis on meaning allows students to take risks and write what is important to them because they know the conventions can be addressed later.

Students can learn to connect their background knowledge with text. One way is through teaching

strategies that encourage students to reflect on what they know, what the text says, and how the two are related. Another way is through writing. Writing about personal experiences related to the theme of a text before reading helps students recall relevant personal experiences and prepares them to read. Writing during and after reading, such as in literature logs, allows students to record their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to text. Students often discover new understanding of text through writing.

Connections between Texts

A third type of connection is between texts. Students deepen their understanding of one text as they see how it is related to another text. Teachers can provide students with opportunities to make connections by grouping related materials. Texts can be arranged by genre, subject, theme, and author or illustrator. Students see similarities and differences as they compare different versions of the same story or different views of the same theme. As students read, reflect, and share their ideas with others, they make new connections which extend their understanding.

Students use and adapt things they have read in their writing. Some do it consciously, while others are unaware of it. They may use language, style, and story elements from their reading while creating their own text.

Summary

In conclusion, students make many connections as they make sense of the world. The more connections they find, the more understanding they gain. Teachers can help students make connections by emphasizing the interrelatedness of the reading and writing processes, encouraging students to draw upon what they already know while reading and writing, and arranging materials in a way that facilitates the making of connections.

A Fairy Tale Unit

In the previous section I discussed three types of connections: reading and writing, between text and self, and between texts. Here I will illustrate how fairy tales can be used to develop these connections. These activities are included as examples and represent only a few of the ways fairy tales can be used. Adapt the ideas and activities as necessary to fit your needs.

By way of information, my use of the term "fairy tales" throughout this handbook refers to both fairy tales and folktales, because there is no clear dividing line between them. Also, this handbook specifically addresses written fairy tales. There are many videos and other materials available which I have not looked into. Finally, I have focused on fairy tales specifically written for children rather than those written for adults and later adapted for children.

Background on Fairy Tales

Fairy tales and folktales were originally told orally. Storytellers passed them down from generation to generation and around to various countries. New versions evolved as different storytellers repeated them. Similar versions of tales exist throughout the world, each reflecting the particular culture it comes from. One example of this is

the Cinderella story. There are hundreds of versions, found in nearly every country and culture. In addition to familiar, traditional tales and their cultural variants, there are many clever, and often humorous, modern adaptations of fairy tales. Incorporating this wide variety of tales into a unit of study can help students make connections (Bettelheim, 1976; Mueller, 1984).

Why Fairy Tales?

There are three main reasons for using fairy tales with children. First, fairy tales are deeply meaningful to children. They can be interpreted in many different ways, which allows children to interact with text at their own level. The simplified view of the world (good or bad, beautiful or ugly, rich or poor) coincides with children's understanding of the world and helps them make decisions about right and wrong. Fairy tales center around universal themes, such as good conquers evil and hard work pays off. This sends a message to children that they can overcome their problems and succeed in life. Some tales are violent, but they allow children to handle violence in an acceptable way (Bettelheim, 1976; Routman, 1991; Trousdale, 1989).

Second, many children begin school with both a fairly well developed sense of story structure and some experience with fairy tales. They find fairy tales familiar and

predictable. Using these tales in the classroom builds on their knowledge of story structure and develops their understanding of specific story elements contained in fairy tales.

Third, fairy tales are readily accessible. They can be found in libraries, stores, and personal collections of teachers, friends, and students (Mueller, 1984; Routman, 1991).

Gathering Tales

Fairy tales are available as both collections of tales and single tales in picture book format. I have found that picture books are more appealing to students than large collections and are easier to use when comparing tales.

It does take some time to gather a large assortment of fairy tales, especially if you are looking for specific titles, authors, or illustrators. Some books, especially modern adaptations of traditional stories, are extremely popular and often checked out of the library. Also, because there are so many tales, one library probably will not own everything you want.

I recommend looking for fairy tales early and checking a variety of sources, including public and school libraries, bookstores (especially children's bookstores), teacher supply stores, book orders, other teachers, and students. The quality of language and illustrations vary

from version to version. I like to include a few of lesser quality (inexpensive versions are frequently available in department stores and toy stores) to allow students to see the difference. The wider the variety of materials included, the more opportunities students have to see similarities and differences.

Arranging Tales

Providing different versions of the same tale, including traditional retellings, cultural variants, and modern adaptations, allows children to make comparisons which lead to deeper understanding. Fairy tales can also be grouped around common themes. Teachers who plan in advance how to arrange fairy tales will find it easier to compile a selection of tales which lead students to make connections. The following list provides some ideas for grouping tales and examples of titles and authors, while complete bibliographic information and additional fairy tales are listed later in this handbook. Look for your own ways to group tales, and encourage your students to do the same.

Grouping by tale:

Cultural versions

Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper by Marcia
Brown

Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China by Ai-

Ling Louie

The Egyptian Cinderella by Shirley Climo

Modern adaptations paired with traditional versions

The Emperor's New Clothes by Hans Christian

Anderson

The Principal's New Clothes by Stephanie

Calmenson

All versions and variants

see Fairy Tale References, beginning on page 67

Grouping by theme:

The role of modern princesses versus traditional ones

Walt Disney's Cinderella

Walt Disney's Snow White

The Sleeping Beauty by Charles Perrault

The Paperbag Princess by Robert Munsch

Petronella by Jay Williams

Princess Smartypants by Babette Cole

The effects of a magic kiss

Walt Disney's Snow White

The Sleeping Beauty by Charles Perrault

The Frog Prince

The Frog Prince Continued by Jon Scieszka

Princess Smartypants by Babette Cole

Check Out System

I recommend establishing a check out system to help you keep track of the fairy tales, especially if you borrow a lot of books from the library or other people. I use a pocket chart. Each student has a library card pocket with his/her name on it, arranged in alphabetical order, stapled to the wall. To check out a book they simply write the title and author of the book on a small slip of paper and put it in their pocket. I can quickly find who has specific books I am looking for, and the check out process does not take a lot of my time.

Literature Logs

Literature logs provide a place for students to explore their thoughts and ideas about text through writing. Students develop a deeper understanding of their reading and make new connections as they use the logs (also know as literature response logs, reading response journals, and reading journals or logs) to write their thoughts and reactions to text before, during, and after reading. Because they are open ended, students of varying abilities and interests can use them to respond to literature in different ways and at different levels.

Literature logs help prepare students for discussion by providing the opportunity to read, think, and write their ideas about a text before meeting as a group.

In the beginning, students who are unfamiliar with literature logs often merely retell the story or record their favorite parts. Providing more structured activities and demonstrating the process for students gives them support and guidance and helps them understand the purpose of literature logs. Ideas for structured activities include asking them an open-ended question to respond to after reading or having them write their predictions about a specific story or story event. Students will begin to include personal responses, evaluation, and comparisons between tales as they gain experience (Routman, 1991; Worthy & Bloodgood, 1992-1993; Zamel, 1992).

Introducing the Unit

Begin the unit by asking students to think of the characteristics of fairy tales -- what makes a story a fairy tale? Record their responses on a chalkboard, chart, or overhead projector. Some discussion may be needed to clarify that you are asking about general fairy tale characteristics, not details from specific tales. Then have students read some fairy tales as individuals or in small groups (two to three students works well). Ask them to record in their literature logs any characteristics they

find from the list compiled earlier and any new ones they encounter. Regroup as a whole class and discuss the students' findings (Routman, 1991). You may need to add to or revise your original list. The following is an example of a revised list compiled by fourth graders:

make believe -- not true
fantasy -- not realistic
happy ending
beginning -- "Once upon a time"
ending -- "They lived happily ever after."
good guy and villain
the number 3
pretty girls
kings and queens, princes and princesses
wishes come true
after wishes, things go back to normal
something happens -- problems
problems solved
people get saved
smart person

Reading and Recording Fairy Tales

Have students list all the fairy tales they have read or heard in their literature logs. As students encounter new tales, encourage them to add them to the list, recording the title, author (in some cases this will be a

translator or reteller), and illustrator.

Throughout the unit, share tales orally and encourage students to read a wide variety of tales on their own.

Pair students who have difficulty reading with more proficient readers or tape record the stories so they can listen to them as they follow along in the book. The more fairy tales students become familiar with, the more opportunities they have to make connections.

Fairy Tale Beginnings

Discuss traditional beginnings to fairy tales by asking your class, "How do most fairy tales start?"

Typical responses include:

Once upon a time there lived a . . .

A long time ago . . .

One day . . .

Long, long ago . . .

Once there was . . .

Through discussion, students recognize that many fairy tales provide only a general setting (ex. a castle or forest) and happened in the past (ex. "A long, long time ago . . ."). Characters are introduced, a problem occurs, and the action begins right away. In their literature logs, students can keep a list of interesting or unusual beginnings they find while reading various tales (Routman, 1991).

The Role of Magic

Many fairy tales contain elements of magic and enchantment. As a class, discuss the role of magic in the fairy tales they have read so far. Then have them choose a fairy tale to examine in more detail, either a familiar tale or one they have not read yet. As they read, ask them to note in their literature logs what would happen in the story if the magic did not work. What would the characters do? How would they handle the situation? Have students meet as a whole class or in small groups to discuss their ideas (Mueller, 1984; Routman, 1991).

Themes and Morals

Discuss the theme or moral of fairy tales by asking students what a particular story means to them or what they learned from it (Mueller, 1984; Routman, 1991). Some students may express similar ideas while others generate original interpretations. For Cinderella, one student responded, "Don't give up." For Goldilocks and the Three Bears students stated, "Do what your mom says" and "Don't go into other peoples' houses when they aren't home."

When students express different interpretations about the same story, it provides the perfect opportunity to talk about reading as a process of constructing meaning from both text and background knowledge. Students realize that there is not one right answer. Any interpretation is

acceptable as long as it can be supported with information from the text.

Flexibility

As students become actively involved with fairy tales, discussions and activities may flow in unanticipated directions. Students may adapt activities to meet their own needs and interests. Teachers who are flexible and encourage them to explore new ideas and make adaptations find students make more connections and develop greater understanding through the process.

A class discussion about The Three Little Pigs led to an unplanned debate over whether the third little pig worked harder than his brothers because he was smarter or because he had different building materials. I was amazed to see my students so involved and to hear their many ideas. They drew upon past Social Studies lessons and their knowledge of building materials to make their points. If I had not been flexible and encouraged the debate, opportunities for making connections would have been lost.

Comparing Fairy Tales

With any new activity or strategy, it works well to introduce it to the whole class first, then encourage students to use it when appropriate. I found this especially true when comparing tales. To introduce

comparison to my class, I first read outloud a traditional version of The Three Little Pigs (Salzman, 1988) and shared the pictures, then repeated the process with The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka (1989), which is told from the wolf's point of view.

In small groups (two or three students per group) students discussed how the stories were the same and how they differed, and recorded their responses in Venn diagrams. Students who have not had previous experience with Venn diagrams may find it easier to do this process together, on a chalkboard or overhead projector. Venn diagrams consist of two circles, drawn so they overlap in the middle. Characteristics of one tale are written in one circle and those of the other tale are written in the other circle. Characteristics shared by both tales are written in the middle, where the two circles overlap.

While students worked, I circulated around the room. Their conversations and Venn diagrams provided informal methods of evaluation of both their understanding of the comparison process and the two stories they were comparing. After students finished their comparisons, we regrouped to discuss their findings. It was interesting to see the variety of connections students made. While they differed in their understanding of text and awareness of similarities and differences, each student was able to interact with text and make connections at his/her own

level of understanding.

Students often made connections to other texts and materials. One student discussed a third version of The Three Little Pigs (Bishop, 1989) which was similar to the traditional version I read to the class, but included extra events. This same student told me about a rap version he saw on MTV. Two other students discussed the "truth" of The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (Scieszka, 1989):

J. "Do you think that [the True Story] is true?"

D. "Yes. I'm on the wolf's side."

J. "I think the wolf's innocent."

Students also recognized the importance of examining the illustrations in detail. The pictures often add to the understanding of the story. One student pointed out that while the text in this third version of The Three Little Pigs (Bishop, 1989) was very similar to the first book I shared, the pictures added details that led to a different interpretation of some events.

Comparing Traditional and Nontraditional Roles

Ask students to list the role of the prince and princess in traditional tales, such as Cinderella, Snow White, and The Sleeping Beauty. Then read outloud (or have students read on their own) one or more of the following:

The Paperbag Princess by Robert Munsch

Petronella by Jay Williams

Princess Smartypants by Babette Cole

Discuss the similarities and differences between the characters in the traditional tales and those in the modern tales, or ask students to write their findings in their literature logs (Moss, 1982; Routman, 1991).

Comparison Charts

Venn diagrams, charts, and other graphic organizers make comparisons visual so it is easy to see similarities and differences. While I have included discussion on some charts, you may find others that better meet your needs. Create your own, and encourage your students to do the same.

While Venn diagrams work for comparing two fairy tales, comparison charts are better for comparisons involving three or more tales. On a chalkboard, overhead projector, or chart, draw lines going across and down to form columns and rows. Along the top, write the title and author of each fairy tale being compared in a box. Down the left hand side, fill in each box with a comparison category. You can choose the categories, or ask students for suggestions. For example, categories when comparing Cinderella tales could include qualities of the main character, identity and qualities of the troublemakers, and magical helpers (Routman, 1991; Worthy & Bloodgood, 1992-1993).

Fill in the chart together, or have students copy the chart onto paper and complete it in small groups. If students work in groups, reconvene for a whole class discussion when everyone is finished. Differences in individual charts brought up in the discussion once again illustrate to students the interactive nature of reading, the importance of background knowledge along with text, and that many responses are possible rather than one right answer.

One benefit of recording comparison charts on paper rather than the chalkboard is that students can return to them later. This allows them to recall what has already been done, find new similarities and differences, and add new categories to the chart. Students who reflect on (think about) their reading and writing experiences gain a greater understanding and make more connections than those who do not.

Storymaps

Storymaps can also be used to record information and compare fairy tales. Storymaps build on students' knowledge of story structure and increase their understanding of story elements. Demonstrate storymapping to the whole class after reading a familiar tale aloud. Use a chalkboard, overhead projector, or chart to display a blank story map. Here is one example:

Story Map for _____

Characters:

Setting:

Problem:

What happens (events):

1

2

3

4

What results/ending:

Discuss the various story elements and fill in each section with details from the fairy tale. Repeat the activity with additional tales, asking students to supply the information. Students can complete storymaps without assistance, either on their own or in small groups, after gaining experience. Then have students compare related fairy tales by storymapping the tales and examining the storymaps for similarities and differences (Bailey & Ginnetti, 1991).

Adapting Fairy Tales

All of these comparisons lead to a discussion on ways authors change or adapt fairy tales. Some variations result from cultural differences while others reflect

conscious manipulations of a traditional story by the author. After students have read and compared many tales, ask them to find how versions of tales vary, particularly traditional tales and their modern equivalents. Encourage them to refer back to their literature logs, charts, and storymaps as they search for examples. You may need to remind students to look for general variations rather than details from specific tales. Ways to change tales include:

- add characters

- modify characters (occupations, gender, reverse roles)

- rewrite the story from a different point of view

- change the ending or add a sequel

- change the narrator

- rewrite the story as a joke, poem, novel, or song

- adapt the style (ex. old fashioned to modern language)

- change the setting (time and place)

- change the main events

- change or add details in the plot

- keep the main events but change the plot

- create new illustrations

Once students have identified the variety of ways to change fairy tales, they can create their own transformation of a familiar tale. To do this, students choose a fairy tale, decide how to change it (one or two ideas from the list above is enough), and begin writing. Demonstrate how to transform a tale by doing it with the whole class first.

This familiarizes students with the process and prepares students to complete their own transformations, either individually or in small groups (Bailey & Ginnetti, 1991; Sipe, 1993; Worthy & Bloodgood, 1992-1993).

Writing Original Tales

Have students create their own, original fairy tales. Review characteristics of fairy tales and story structure. Encourage students to plan their writing before they begin. One way is through storymapping. As students fill in a blank storymap, they make decisions about characters, setting, and plot development. Students then use their storymaps to write their fairy tales (Bearse, 1992; Routman, 1991).

Sharing Student Tales

Once students have completed writing, revising, and editing their fairy tales (both transformations of traditional tales and original works), sharing them with others is important. Methods of sharing include publishing each fairy tale as a book, compiling a class book of fairy tales, displaying fairy tales on a bulletin board, or reading stories outloud to the class. Students may choose different ways to share their fairy tales. The important thing is to provide them with an opportunity to share their creativity and effort.

Evaluation

Opportunities for informal evaluation exist throughout the unit. Observation is the key. Watch what your students do. See if they use activities and strategies introduced to the whole class on their own. Circulate as they work in small groups. Uninvolved students often begin participating after a few words of clarification or encouragement.

Use students' written work to determine how they are making connections. Literature logs, Venn diagrams, comparison charts, and storymaps provide clues into their thinking processes. A quick glance will often tell you whether or not they understand how to use the various charts to make comparisons.

Examine completed fairy tales. Students often draw, consciously or unconsciously, from tales they have read and heard previously when writing original tales. Look for fairy tale elements and story structure. Look to see which elements students change in transformations of traditional tales. Were the changes consistent throughout the story? Students often show their level of involvement with fairy tales through their writing.

Conclusion

Fairy tales are meaningful to children, build on their knowledge of story structure, and are readily available.

Reading and comparing tales provides students with the opportunity to make connections between literature and their own lives. The activities and fairy tales included in this handbook represent a small selection of what is currently available, but do provide a starting place for teachers who wish to incorporate fairy tales into their curriculum and encourage students to make connections. It is my hope that the ideas presented here have been useful.

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