

Historical English Literature
Oral Story Telling - Fairy Tales



Teacher's Guide
HAN Deeltijd English – 2017-2018

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Teacher's guide:

In this guide we provide a step-by-step plan to teach this lesson. Worksheets and booklets are available in the student package.

Learning objectives for this lesson

- Students will become acquainted with oral storytelling and the oral origin of different types of stories.
- Students will realise that many stories as they know them today, may have changed over time and are different from the original story.
- Students will come to realise that themes and symbols are part of every story.
- Students will create their own ending to an originally oral story; a fairy tale.
- Students will discover that historical English literature may not be as boring as it sounds and can still be relevant today.

Student level

This lesson is designed for VWO third year (A2 ERK level).

With adaptations this lesson can be made suitable for HAVO third or fourth year and VMBO third or fourth year.

Teaching methods

- Assignments are orally passed through class by the teacher or are created and handed out on paper by the teacher.
- In this lesson students will mostly work on group assignments.

Materials

- Smart board with internet connection and sound system
- Whiteboard with markers and eraser
- Student booklets and pens
- Devices for students

➤ **Introduction (pre-reading)**

Total time allotted: 15 minutes

Explain to your students that they are not going to use their books today. Students need a device/laptop for the while and post reading parts of the lesson, and they need a pen/pencil and the booklets to make notes.

Exercise 1:

Time allotted: 7 minutes

The goal of this exercise is to show how stories can change over time and after many generations, as a result of oral storytelling.

Create 2 or 3 groups in class and have them sit in a row/circle/semi-circle. The teacher hands out or whispers a (few) sentence(s) in the ear of the first student and he/she has to whisper it to the next person, etc. At the end listen to what the last person of the group tells us and see how much of the sentence is still the same as the original sentence. Each person in the row/circle can represent a generation (stories were passed from generation to generation).

At the end ask the class what they have noticed about this exercise; hopefully they themselves come to the conclusion that oral stories change over time.

Text to be handed out or whispered:

'Grandmother! What great teeth you have got.' And the wicked wolf cried: *'The better to eat you up now!'*

Exercise 2:

Worksheet 1:

Time allotted: 8 minutes

The goal of this exercise is to find out how much students already know about oral stories and folk tales. They might know more than they realise themselves.

In preparation laminate worksheet 1 six times and cut them up along the lines so you have separate pieces of laminated paper with a type of folk tale, descriptions of folk tales and examples of folk tales with a picture on the back. Put these in six different envelopes.

Now divide the class into six groups; the groups of students have to try and find the right description and example that goes with the different types of folk tales. Do this exercise inductive, to find out what they know already about folk tales.

➤ **While reading**

Total time allotted: 25 minutes

Explanation:

Time allotted: 5 minutes

Explain shortly how stories have a theme and that often symbols are used in stories to add multiple layers of meaning to the story.

Theme = An underlying message or the big idea of a story.

Examples:

Harry Potter → Friendship, family, loyalty & courage.

Super hero stories → With great power comes great responsibility.

It → Facing your fears, friendship, working together.

Symbolism = The representation of one thing for another using a person, object, or idea.

Examples:



Each of the 6 groups now gets a different fairy tale, provided in a booklet; 'Snow White', 'Jack and the Beanstalk', 'Hansel and Gretel', 'Pinocchio', 'The Emperor's New Clothes' and 'Rumpelstiltskin'.

Exercise 3: Booklet

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Students have to find at least one theme and 2 symbols that are used in their designated fairy tale. Each group will get a version of the fairy tale chosen by the teacher, but they can look up other versions online. Students are allowed to use a device to find information about their fairy tale. Their findings have to be written down in the booklet.

Below are examples of expected answers about themes and symbols for each of the six fairy tales:

▪ **Themes and symbolism in Snow White**

Themes:

Coming-of-age/transformation – Little Snow White is on the path to self-discovery; her mother is dead and father neglectful. Their absence allows Snow White, to develop her own identity without any parental interference.

Vanity – Snow White is tempted 3 times; first with a pretty lace, then a comb, and last of course, an apple. The pretty laces would make her look more beautiful, as would using a comb. Both of these incidents point to an ongoing interest in her own beauty. The Queen has the same type of problem. This narcissistic behavior is the underlying theme. However Snow White overcomes this by helping out the seven dwarfs.

True love – Of the prince for Snow White, even though she is supposedly dead.

Friendship – Between Snow White and the seven dwarfs.

Beauty/appearances – It is not just the outside that counts. What makes Snow White more beautiful than the evil queen? Is it just her looks, or is it the inside that counts as well?

Jealousy – The queen is jealous of Snow White's beauty and this causes her to do many bad things. But in the end this jealousy doesn't help the queen to get what she wants. Possibly the queen could have used better ways to manage her feelings of jealousy, that wouldn't have hurt herself or others.

Trustworthiness – It can be nice and interesting to meet new people, but don't be too trustworthy because a stranger can mean danger.

Symbols:

The three colors: black, white and red – The colors white, red and black are presented at the beginning of the story (skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, hair as black as ebony). They provide a direct indication that Snow White is a "coming of age" story. White represents innocence (birth), red represents life and passion, while black represents death. The story of Snow White starts out with Snow White being a young girl in the original versions, and a rather naive young woman in the Disney version (the white phase). She undergoes maturity through the story (the red phase), and experiences death in her sleep-like state (the black phase).

The magic mirror or looking glass – Since ancient times, mirrors have been used for divination, magic and repelling evil. They also have been feared for their power to steal the soul. A mirror symbolizes the threshold between consciousness and the unconscious, and by looking into it, one may look towards the depths of the unconscious. The image that a mirror produces is symbolic and can be made sense of in both the unconscious and the conscious worlds. It reflects the truth, a truth that the queen can never accept if the answer hurts her ego. All of the kingdom's riches and expensive clothing are available, but that is not enough, it can never be enough to fill her emptiness.

The evil step-mother – She represents Snow White's shadow. She symbolizes the collective forces aligned against the individual spiritual evolution. So metaphorically speaking the wicked queen is both the inner and outer force of evil. The absence of the birth mother makes it possible for storytellers to introduce the role of the evil stepmother. The evil stepmother is a common element of many fairy tales: Snow White, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel. The lack of a mother at all is also common, because if a mother were present, the series of events would not unfold as they do in stories where there is no maternal influence.

The number three – The rule of three is often used in fairy tales to indicate a task or action cannot enter reality until it is repeated three times. If some sort of event only occurred twice, it was considered unfinished, only the third time succeeds in the fairy realm. For example, the queen travels to the dwarf's cottage three times and tries to murder Snow White each time. Motifs such as the "rule of three," help to understand the minds of the ancients and the literary techniques they used to embody abstract ideas.

The number seven – It usually symbolizes security and safety. The number seven was used many times in the Bible for signifying perfection. It is one of the most significant numbers in Christianity in the sense that "God created the world in seven days", or rather he created the world in six days and on the seventh he rested. The Seven dwarfs can be related to perfection as they represent the seven chakras, which help the soul (Snow White in this case) achieve perfection,

by being her mentors for a time. Even Snows White's young age of seven originates from the astrological belief motif of seven-year cycles.

The poisoned apple – The apple is connected with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, the apple is a symbol of sin and evil. In this case, the apple itself has been poisoned in order to murder Snow White. The evil queen offers Snow White the apple in much the same way as the serpent did to Eve.

Snow White's death – Snow White "dies" and comes back to life. This certainly parallels the death and resurrection of Jesus from the Bible.

▪ **Themes and symbolism in Jack and the Beanstalk**

Themes:

Bravery – Be courageous when faced by a problem.

Coming of age – The interesting thing about the story of Jack is that it can be read as Jack's quest to maturity. There are two different angles of looking at Jack. The first one is that Jack evolves from an immature person into a mature, confident person. From the moment that he sells the cow the struggle to grow up and maturity begins. By beating the giant he really becomes a man.

The opposite however, is that throughout the tale Jack remains spoiled and immature. Only by deception and stealing he is able to provide for himself and his mother.

Stealing – Do not steal other's possessions. Although Jack lived a happy life after stealing he had to commit a sin for it. The only way to be free of the consequences of stealing was by killing.

Morality and greed – The common interpretation that this tale hides a moral lesson concerning greed belies the fact of Jack's total lack of remorse and his mother's approval of murder and theft. If this is a moral tale just trying to instill honesty, why are there no consequences for his greedy actions? Taken literally the fairy tale becomes a dialogue that preaches that the greed and murder can occur without consequences, which surely could not be a morality tale for children. He steals the ogre's precious gold three times without being caught and his mother notices nothing wrong or immoral while Jack's continued greed eventually leads to murder and then then live "happily ever after."

Struggle for a better life – Trading a cow for beans seems like a bad choice, but following instinct can turn out to be a great idea. Risking his life Jack climbs the stalk 3 times to gain more riches, in the end providing well for his mother and himself.

Symbols:

Going to the market – In some versions, the story tells about the cow Milky-White (or Old Bess) that isn't able to produce milk and must be sold. Going to the market is his first encounter with the world which represents the end of infancy for Jack. Jack has to leave home to sell the cow so he can provide for his mother and for himself. His childhood is over, he is considered an adult.

Beans – The beans and the resulting beanstalk place the story in the realm of peasants and the lower classes. Beans are a common food, available to the masses. Usually not eaten by the wealthy. The lower classes would be able to identify a bean and perhaps nourish dreams of their own beanstalk into the heavens when hearing this story. They are also a symbol of growth, as a seed precedes all growth and sustenance. In this case it symbolises Jack's growth in the story.

Beanstalk – The beanstalk symbolizes the climb on the social ladder.

Giants/the ogre – The giants in fairy tales are beings who supposedly aren't very clever. They make up for that through physical presence and are often violent of nature. They are often used as symbols for obstacles. The Orge also represents a foul creature who captures and eats children. This makes Jack seem a hero because he defeats the monster. It is a personification of Jack's shadow self which he must conquer before obtaining any treasure, which is a very clever metaphor for self-improvement by ridding oneself of the negative emotions of greed, hatred, as personified by the monster.

The number three – Jack visits the giant's house three times. As mentioned before, the rule of three is a writing/story telling technique that is often used. It is an effective way of engaging the reader. Fairy tales were told from person to person. This technique, called 'the rule of three' or 'the power of three' is used in fairy tales and folk tales to make it more memorable and works as a useful device to recall the elements of the story.

The golden egg – Typically, the egg is a beginning of some sort, and the universe or some primordial being comes into existence by "hatching" from the egg. The golden egg also represents fortune.

▪ **Themes and symbolism in Hansel and Gretel:**

Themes:

Appearances may be deceiving – Throughout the story there are signs of things not being as they seem. The gingerbread house was made of candy, while an evil witch lives inside. The step-mother, who one would think would be loving to the children, wants to leave them so she can have more food for herself.

Cunningness and cleverness – Hansel overheard his parents talking about leaving them in the woods, so he grabs some stones and puts them in his pockets. He then periodically stops and places them on the ground behind him so he can find his way home. Gretel is told to get into the oven, but she says she won't fit, she then convinces the witch to get in and locks her inside.

Justice and Judgement – Gretel figures out that the witch wants to eat them, so she decides to use a chicken bone instead of Hansel's finger to check how fat he is and she decides that they have to kill the witch.

The parents make the decision to let the children die, so they can eat.

Trickery – Hansel and Gretel use trickery to outwit the evil witch and escape. First, Hansel uses a bone to trick the old woman into thinking he has not gotten fat enough to cook yet. Finally, Gretel also uses trickery to overcome the old woman. She pretends to be stupid and not to understand the woman's instructions. This leads the old woman to open the oven door and lean inside in an attempt to show Gretel how it is done, providing the opportunity for Gretel to shove her captor inside. The witch herself used trickery to get the children to enter her house.

Symbols:

Witch – Traditionally in fairy tales witches represented the dark or shadow side of ourselves: aspects that we have repressed.

Forest – Is a place of mystery, adventure and danger. It symbolises the darker, uncivilised regions of the human consciousness. On the other hand it can offer refuge and protection. When Hansel and Gretel's parents decide to abandon them because they can no longer feed them, it is very symbolic that the children are abandoned in the forest. They are thrust deep into the woods and left alone. Essentially, this signifies a sort of rite of passage to adulthood, where they are

forced to face the shadowy aspects of themselves and human nature, which can be dark and terrifying. After they are abandoned in the woods, they succumb to the darkness which lies hidden in the subconscious. This is represented by shadows which grow and overwhelm the senses.

Hunger – Hunger is the most basic of instincts and drives the actions of all living things. Hansel and Gretel's parents forsake their children because of hunger. It is a primordial need that can overpower all sense of reason and humanity. When the children discover that the breadcrumb trail is gone because the animals of the forest have eaten the crumbs, Gretel comments that "The creatures of the forest are hungry too." And of course, it is hunger that drives the children to the old woman's house in the woods.

Cannibalism – This is the ultimate symbol of the dark, primordial state. It represents the animal instinct taking complete control of one's psyche, where hunger overpowers all human reason.

White stones – They represent innocence. Ancient Greeks used them at anonymous voting and the meaning was: not guilty. Analytical psychologists interpret them as children's denial to be changed. They went into the woods to be transformed but white pebbles help them to come back. When they lost access to them (step-mother locked the door), there is no way back anymore.

Birds – There are numerous mentions of the birds in the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel. Birds eat the crumbs to prevent kids returning home for the second time and a bird leads them to the witch's hut. A bird's bone is an important element helping the kids surviving a few days in captivity. Finally a bird (it is a duck in some and a swan in other versions) helped Gretel and Hansel to get home. Birds can symbolize freedom, prophecy, joy, immortality and human spirit. This story has all of these. Needless to add; birds have white color (if the color is mentioned) to emphasize their spiritual mission.

▪ **Themes and symbolism in Pinocchio**

Themes:

Transformation – Pinocchio transforms from a puppet into a person. It is a way of growing up. He endures the consequences of his 'bad behavior': lazy and disobedient to parents and 'grows' into a real boy by being improving his attitude.

Family – An old woodcarver, a rambunctious cat, a flirtatious fish, and a walking, talking puppet. They're not your typical family, but we wouldn't have it any other way. This makeshift family goes on to endure plenty of struggles and one regrettable daytrip to the belly of a whale, but they stick together through thick and thin.

The tensions between peer pressure and respect for elderly advice – The advice of "those who know better than Pinocchio", which originates from Geppetto and the Blue Fairy, is at odds with the guidance of Pinocchio's peers (i.e. Lampwick, the Cat and the Fox).

Manipulation – It shouldn't be surprising that Pinocchio is easily manipulated. The kid is really sixteen hours old. Thinking about it that way actually explains a lot. But thanks to the help of his cricket friend Jiminy and the love of his father Geppetto, however, Pinocchio manages to get himself back on the right path, though he remains as oblivious as ever.

Second chances – Unconditional parental love and loyalty. Despite the hardships and suffering that Pinocchio's disobedience and broken promises inflict

upon the Blue Fairy and Geppetto, the two always soften after a dose of tough love, showing their unconditional love and loyalty to Pinocchio.

Symbols:

Geppetto – The father and the 'creator'.

Blue Fairy – She is the divine messenger.

Jiminy Cricket – Represents Pinocchio's conscious.

Pleasure Island – A metaphor for the "profane life" characterized by ignorance, the search for instant gratification and the satisfaction of one's lowest impulses.

Donkey – Represents stubbornness.

School – Represents knowledge and wisdom.

Whale – Used to be a symbol of evil.

Dual nature – Our material self and our real self. Of course Pinocchio's material self is a wooden puppet. The material self is the self that you've come to know and love completely with all its sensations, habits, likes, dislikes, thoughts, habits and attitudes. But there's more to us than this body; our real self, the way we behave and our judgement of right and wrong.

Growing nose – The Blue Fairy tells Pinocchio that lies keep "growing and growing," but this is the same for morality in general. It might start with small stuff, like skipping school and smoking cigars, but one day you'll wake up in the belly of whale wondering about the decisions you've made.

▪ **Themes and symbolism in The Emperor's New Clothes**

Themes:

Criticising the ruling class - It shows the corruption of the ruling class; in this case the emperor and the minister. Reflecting the evil features of the government in the time the tale was written. The emperor's actions and attitude demonstrate his incapability to rule his kingdom.

Vanity – The emperor's vanity leads him away from what he really should be doing; ruling his kingdom.

The power of majority – It reveals how easily people believe in pretense, but also, conversely, how easily they can be snapped out of such nonsense. It's the psychology of the 'mob' or the majority: nobody wants to be the lone voice crying in the wilderness, puncturing the bubble.

Symbols:

The emperor and the minister – They represent the government, the people ruling the country and they symbolise people who just think about themselves and not about others or the country.

Swindlers – They are the symbol for people who abuse the tragedy or vanity of others for their own benefit.

Cloth – Represents wealth and power. The material has the amazing power to be invisible for anyone who is stupid or incompetent, separating the smart from the stupid and the talented from the incapable.

Child – The child in the story represents innocence. The innocent can see the truth and point it out, helping themselves and/or others.

▪ Themes and symbolism in Rumpelstiltskin

Themes:

Power – The power the three men have over the miller's daughter. They use their power and don't consider the consequences for her.

Greed – The king wants more gold. Rumpelstiltskin wants more as well, first in the form of jewelry and then the miller's daughter's first born child.

Man's vanity – The dangers of overconfidence, of over-reaching yourself. Certainly the three male characters in the story – the miller, the king, and Rumpelstiltskin – are too cocky for their own good, in many ways. They are so arrogant and conceited. The miller exaggerates the abilities of his daughter. The king, being the monarch, thinks he can command anyone to perform his oddest whim and the little goblin undermines his own scheme by cockily dancing about yelling his own name within earshot of the queen's servants.

Desperation – When you're desperate enough you'll do anything that will keep you alive. Like the miller's daughter who agrees to give her first born child to Rumpelstiltskin.

Symbols:

Gold - Often a symbol representing grain in folklore since grain and gold not only have the same golden color, but were both seen as being extremely precious.

The transformation of straw into gold - Symbolically dead land is turned into prosperous land that will keep people from starvation. A good harvest was literally a matter of life and death for people in the pre-industrial world and as Rumpelstiltskin illustrates, people were willing to do almost anything to keep from starvation. In Rumpelstiltskin, there are two examples of a child being sacrificed to bring gold – symbolic of grain – into the kingdom. The miller sacrificed his daughter to the king so she could spin straw into gold for the kingdom. That same daughter later pledges the life of her first child to Rumpelstiltskin in exchange for Rumpelstiltskin's help turning the straw into gold. Both times, turning straw into gold was the reason behind the sacrifices of children and this shows how desperate people were for a good harvest.

Satan/Devil – When Rumpelstiltskin is dancing around the fire it looks like he's worshipping someone or something. Maybe Hell or Satan.

Naming – It used to be that superstitious people felt that unnamed evil and creatures were more powerful and dangerous than the evils that were named. The thought was that naming evil would make it lose its power.

The number three – The patterning of three is very important in many fairy tales: there are three bears, three bowls of porridge, and three beds in the 'Goldilocks' story, for instance. In 'Rumpelstiltskin', the miller's daughter is locked up and commanded to spin straw into gold three times before she marries the king; once she is queen, she has three days to guess the name of her odd little helper. This is a good narrative technique, of course, and repetition is very important in primal stories such as fairy tales.

Exercise 4:

Booklet

Time allotted: 10 minutes

After each group has found a theme and at least 2 symbols for their fairy tale, the students share what they found with the rest of the class. Check if some themes and/or symbols in the different fairy tales are the same to make students aware of the fact that the same themes and symbols can reoccur in different stories.

➤ **Post reading**

Total time allotted: 10 minutes

Exercise 5: Booklet

To show students how we will never know if the fairy tales as we know them are the stories as they started out, we can show students one of the following videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WG3_gnKSDh4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3uVQIhSYfY>

Explain that when stories change over time, the themes and symbols in the story in most cases stay the same.

Now each group has to come up with an alternative ending to their fairy tale and write this down in their booklet. Be creative!! When finished we will share these 'new' stories. The cartoon added to each fairy tale in the booklets also hints in the direction of an alternative ending, which can be used for inspiration.

This task may not be finished in this particular lesson, but can be continued in the next lesson.