

## Let's Work Together Teaching Guide

Dear Teacher,

Children and adults love to read folk and fairy tales. That's because these stories appeal to our imagination and serve as a moral compass through the lessons they teach. In addition, they link readers to past generations and to cultures around the world. Certain folk and fairy tales appear again and again in different cultures, such as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks, and creation stories. Filled with fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, witches, giants, and talking animals, rocks, and plants, these tales take us on a fantastic journey where forces of good and evil battle to save the protagonist and his world. With the wealth of fairy and folk tales available, offer students choices so they invest in their reading, thinking, discussion, and writing.

Laura Robb

### START WITH YOURSELF:

Think about how you can help students understand the form or structure of this genre. Find a favorite folk or fairy tale to read aloud and then think aloud to help students understand these elements:

**Protagonist:** Can be royalty, a creature or animal, or an ordinary person.

**Problem and Tasks:** The problem the protagonist faces and what he/she must do to solve it.

**Good vs. Evil:** Two forces that battle one another and affect the protagonist.

**Magic Numbers Three and Seven:** Events happen in groups of three or seven.

**Supernatural Happenings:** Non-living things and animals talk and feel emotions.

**Happy Ending:** Folk and fairy tales usually end happily.

**Lessons:** Unstated big ideas the story illustrates.

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## Folk and Fairy Tales

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## MOVE TO STUDENTS:

The goal is to encourage students to read and discuss many books with a partner and/or small group. Volume matters and the more students read, the greater their progress. It's also important for students to discuss their folktales. Invite them to choose one or two questions from the list below and always require that they use text evidence to support their thinking. Notice that the following questions reinforce folk/fairy tale structure and also move beyond it.

- Who is the protagonist and what is the big problem he/she faces?
- Do you see evidence of magic numbers three or seven? Explain.
- Were there supernatural elements? How do they contribute to the theme and/or ending?
- What lessons does this tale teach?
- How do the adventures, the magic, and other characters change the life of the protagonist?
- Explain a challenging decision the protagonist made. What influenced the decision? How did the decision change his/her life and affect the outcome?
- What do the forces of good and evil represent or symbolize?
- Describe the clash and struggle between good and evil. Who wins and why?
- Is the protagonist heroic? Explain why or why not.

## NOTEBOOK WRITING:

### Invite Students to Dive into Deeper Thinking

Using your read aloud, you and your students can develop the characteristics of a hero/heroine. Here's what third grade students suggested:

- Takes big risks to help others.
- Thinks of others first.
- Has great courage.
- Doesn't fear danger.
- Uses his/her mind to figure out what to do.

Eighth graders had a similar list, but added this thought:

- There has to be an opportunity to do something great, and you take it.

Now students have standards for deciding whether the protagonist is heroic. Show them how the Yes/No Strategy works with your read aloud. Here are notes fourth graders gave me for *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

## TEACHING TIP

Check out dozens of folk and fairy tale books from your school's media center and your class library. Organize books in three tubs:

**First tub:** easy-to-read books

**Second tub:** close to and on grade level books

**Third tub:** above grade level books

Send groups of students to specific tubs to choose books, but be flexible. If a student who reads well wants to read an easier book, that's fine. If a developing reader who has made lots of progress wants to read a more challenging book, let him/her try it. Explain that rereading can support understanding. Check in with the student frequently to assess progress and offer encouragement and support.

## Was the protagonist a hero/heroine?

YES, Jack was heroic.	NO, Jack wasn't heroic.
He was brave to climb the beanstalk. He didn't know what was at the top.	Jack trades the cow for five magic beans. He and his mom are poor and have nothing now.
He's smart and tricks the ogre's wife into feeding and hiding him and steals a bag of gold.	
The second time Jack climbs the beanstalk, he steals the hen that lays golden eggs.	
The third time, the gold harp wakes the ogre who chases Jack down the beanstalk.	
Jack's clever and asks his mom for an ax. Jack cuts down the beanstalk and the ogre breaks his neck and dies.	
Jack saves other children from being eaten by the ogre and takes care of his mom.	
<b>*YES is the only position to defend.</b>	

Now, invite students to discuss their folk/fairy tale with a partner to decide whether their protagonist was heroic. Then, in their notebooks, students head a page with their name, date, the title and author of their folk/fairy tale, and the yes/no question. Students can then fold the page in half and head the left side "YES" and the right side "NO." After filling in the columns, students should decide if their notes show they can only take one position or if they have a choice because their lists offer reasons for both sides.

## SHARE THE PEN WITH STUDENTS

For younger students and any who have not written a paragraph that argues for a position, model how you transform notes into a paragraph. I write the paragraph on chart paper so it becomes a resource for students when they write on their own. Start by giving the opening sentence, which should include the title, the protagonist's name, and the position students want to take. Here's the sentence I gave third graders: "Jack, the protagonist of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, is a hero." Then, have students take a point from the Yes/No Strategy list, put it into a sentence, and share it. Write your students' sentences on the chart.

## MOVE STUDENTS TO INDEPENDENT WRITING

You might have to do shared writing more than once; it depends on the reading, thinking, and writing experience of your students. Collaborate until you feel students can be successful on their own.

### TEACHING TIP

Share the pen with students in kindergarten and first grade so they observe and experience the writing process. By doing this, you nurture their analytical thinking and provide them with a mental model of planning by taking notes and then using those notes to write clear sentences and develop a paragraph.

## for Engaging Students with Folk and Fairy Tales

- Purchase or check out of the library folk and fairy tale readers' theater scripts and have students perform several.
- Invite students to plan and write an original folk tale.
- Have students do a sixty-second elevator pitch about a favorite tale for the class. Students should state why they loved it in one or two sentences.
- Invite students to transform a folk tale into a play and perform it.
- Have students read several of the same folk or fairy tale from different countries and compare and contrast how they are alike and different.
- Introduce students to fractured folk and fairy tales; read and study some.
- Have students plan and write a fractured tale, using a folk or fairy tale they've read and enjoyed.
- Have students create a website that features their favorite fairy tales. They can include comments by classmates.
- Invite students to make a book trailer for a favorite fairy or folk tale.

TEACHER'S NOTES: