

FRACTURED FAIRY TALES

STUDY GUIDE

Welcome to GreatWorks' FRACTURED FAIRY TALES. In this show, the cast of five actors will take well-known stories and introduce new characters, ideas, and references that make the stories fresh and funny for audiences of all ages.

But first, let's understand some basics. First of all - what is a "fairy tale"?

A fairytale usually takes place a place that is far, far away or a long time ago. The main character(s) go on a journey where he/she is tested; they have some sort of magical help along the way; good triumphs over evil; there is a transformation or reward at the end. The characters and the journey are often metaphors for people and challenges that are universal.

CHALLENGE ONE - DEFINE & DECODE "THE JOURNEY"

Have your students name their favorite fairy tale, and then have them define "the journey" of the central character(s). Sometimes the journey is a circle - in HC Andersen's, *The Fisherman and his Wife* they use the Flounder's magic powers to climb the ladder of riches and power, but wind up back in their old hovel at the end. What was the author of the story saying about people by making that choice?

People who study literature for a living generally agree that there are five major character-types in traditional fairy tales:

1. The Honest Fool - the central character who isn't very bright, but still outsmarts everyone else because they have crazy amounts of luck.
2. The Meddling Fairy - a sprite or magical being whose mischief drives the story forward.
3. The Charming Prince - the young, handsome ruler who can be counted on to put everything right
4. The Beautiful Damsel - a girl who is good of heart, unusually pretty, and because of her guilelessness, falls victim to evil forces
5. The Evil Crone - an old woman who are bitter or jealous of others, and cause mayhem because of it



CHALLENGE TWO - WHERE DO THEY FIT?

Have your students choose one of the following fairy tales and identify the character type of each of the major characters, and describe why they think the characters are that type.

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| 1. Jack and the Beanstalk | 4. The Little Mermaid | 7. Goldilocks & the 3 Bears |
| 2. Cinderella | 5. Little Red Riding Hood | 8. Henny Penny |
| 3. Sleeping Beauty | 6. Hansel & Gretel | |
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So why is this show called Fractured Fairy Tales? Because the writers and actors on these stories decided to take stories that most people know and make them new by adding contemporary references and twists that clearly don't belong in the original story. Sometimes those are major plot twists, and sometimes they're just little jokes that bring modern reference points to old stories. All of that plays into what psychologists recognize as one of the major types of humor - the Humor of the Unexpected.

CHALLENGE THREE - FRACTURE YOUR OWN!

Have your students add their own twists and turns and dashes of bizarre humor. Voila! You have just created your very own fractured fairy tale. Here are some ways you can do that:

Put the story into verse or a rap

Tell it from a different point of view. For instance, did you ever think how the witch felt having two bratty kids nibbling on her newly decorated gingerbread house?

Take a character from the story and tell another story concerning that character. For instance, tell a story about the woodcutter in "Little Red Riding Hood" or the cow, Milky White, that was traded in "Jack and the Beanstalk."

Write a different ending. Perhaps, Jack didn't get away from the giant - what happened then? Or, you could tell what happened after the story ended.

Make the main character a different type of person or even change the person into an animal.

Add new characters to tell the story.

Have well-known fairy tale characters meet

Or, go completely strange-o, and do a combination of the above!