

Cinderella Takes Over the Classroom: Using Dramatic Structure and Drama to Teach Story Elements to Improve Reading and Writing

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Introduction

I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit. - John Steinbeck

In learning you will teach and in teaching you will learn. - Phil Collins

I love my job. Teaching is awesome. I am fortunate to be a third grade teacher to some of the greatest students who are hardworking and truly love to learn. My children come from many, many diverse backgrounds, but we are able to learn so much from one another. This unit is to help foster that sharing and build a community of learners.

West Park Place Elementary School is a small suburban school in the Christina School District. We have about 400 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. We are located in close proximity to the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware. West Park is a diverse school, hosting the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, Delaware Autistic Program and REACH –Realistic Educational Alternatives for Children with Disabilities. According to the annual report generated by the Christina School District, about a third of our students are English as a Second Language Learners (ESL): representing about 25 different countries. About 45 percent of our population are free/reduced lunch students. Our demographics are 20% African American, 26% Asian, 46% Caucasian and 4% Hispanic. I am a third grade, self-contained teacher and therefore teach all subjects: math, reading, writing, science and social studies. A typical school year provides me with 22 students, a third of which are usually active or recently dismissed ESL.

A strength of our students is attendance and a desire to learn. Additionally, West Park is a mile from the University of Delaware, so we have many resources available. At times, we have many college students doing placements, tutoring and student teaching. Again, based on the data from Christina School District annual report, the teachers at West Park are predominately Highly Effective and Highly Qualified and have many years of experience with most of the educators having obtained at least a Master's degree. As a

staff, we work in Professional Learning Communities to analyze data and provide appropriate instruction for our students.

The areas of struggle for West Park are no different than any other typical school. The most obvious concern is lack of funding. A third of our students and their families are ELS: with many parents not able to speak English at all. As a result, we have low parental involvement. Additionally, many families are reeling from the current economic situation. Many of our families are of low socio-economic status.

Rationale

My search to understand why students do not see connections between different content studies, why they compartmentalize what they learn, has spurred the creation of this unit. Many times, after introducing a lesson and discussing the assignment's expectations, I will pass out work to my students. Inevitably, a student will bring the assignment up and tell me "I don't get it". Puzzled, I always inquire "what are you having trouble with?". Blankly, they respond, "I don't know what to do" or "I don't know what the answer is". Then I show them the story written above the questions they are trying to answer, and tell them they will find the answers there- directly or indirectly. Without fail, the look of awe comes over their face and in their most shocked voice they ask, "You mean I have to *read* this?" Even though this happens on a weekly, if not daily basis, I am always perplexed by this reaction. It is as if I have asked them to sprout wings and fly around the classroom. Reading seems like an impossible request to many of my third grade students.

From my own personal observations, I have noted that, many of our West Park students arrive in third grade below level; not meeting standards in reading, writing and math. The students struggle with comprehension skills and higher order thinking skills. Many of the new third graders are unable to write correct sentences or construct a simple paragraph. This inability to write is especially evident, but not limited to, the ESL learners. I am seeking out ways to help students better understand what they are reading. I want to get them to work collaboratively to build a community of learners in which they feel free to take chances and stretch themselves and one another. I want to encourage my students to be risk takers and participate in class discussions and activities, and I feel that creative drama will help accomplish this goal. Students who may be reluctant readers or writers will be able to find their strengths discussing and acting out the stories we have read together. By engaging their bodies, the connection to reading becomes more visceral, and all improve. Every level of ability (or language) will have an opportunity to find success and add to our learning.

Through teaching story elements and introducing drama/dramatic structure and storytelling, one can improve comprehension for all students. Offering a productive struggle of learning to relate stories through actions, stretches children's thinking and exploration of human actions/reactions as they relate to the stories and of readings

encountered during the year. By acting, the students are made cognizant what emotions look like and how they are manifested. For example, what does angry look like? Sound like? What actions may a character display when feeling angry? What words does the author use to convey these emotions? Such an increase in awareness will translate into their writing: adding details and descriptions to show emotions and actions that help the reader discover the story's tone and purpose. Using dramatic structure, students will be able to compare and contrast fairy tales and explore their components. Building an understanding of how stories grow and flow, they will be able to create their own stories.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) make this unit important. It is equally important to make students college and career ready. The new state test (Smarter Balance) will require skills that have not been tested before (i.e. grammar). The student will have to produce writing responses for the Smarter Balance Test, as was required when we administered Delaware State Testing Program. With children arriving at my doorstep with fewer and fewer skills, coupled with the state and federal government requiring more and more from these students, I have a tough road ahead. I need to develop lessons that will address reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. These skills are innate to the understanding of stories. They will make students connect with reading. This storytelling unit will address all those essential areas.

This unit will be appropriate for any elementary grade, but is designed for third grade. The students will participate in three main activities. First, we will read and discuss (compare/contrast, identify dramatic structure and story elements, summarize...) a selection of Cinderella stories from around the world (see fairy tale summaries). Then we will identify the dramatic structure and story elements within these tales. Finally, using all the information learned, the children will produce their own modern-day version of a Cinderella tale.

The unit fits perfectly into my curriculum in all subject areas. It addresses almost all the reading and writing standards and the speaking and listening standards. Research also suggests that learning social studies, history and science through the arts reaps rewards of connecting what is learned to what is "known". Within this unit, I will cover many of the Common Core Standards that are essential for student success, but I will focus on three main standards. I will select one standard from reading, writing and speaking/listening:

- Reading Literature 3.2: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson or morale and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
- Writing 3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Speaking and Listening 3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Background Information/Content

Creativity and imagination are probably two of the most important aspects of education. Merryl Goldberg, a professor of Visual and Performing Arts at California State University San Marcos and noted author, contends these aspects can be fostered through drama taught within the classroom through fairy tales. Story telling is a natural way to engage students in applying language.¹ The arts provide many methods for gaining literacy skills while also fostering imaginative, creative and critical thinking skills.² Children are able to make sense of stories through applying their own experiences to the story they are exploring. The arts provide humankind with modes for reflecting on, expressing and documenting experiences, as well as providing a body of knowledge from which to draw upon.³ Keeping the arts separate from the other subjects limits their [arts] potential as a methodology for teaching and learning in general.⁴

Learning social studies and history through the arts prepares students to be social scientists and humanitarians.⁵ Students are more likely to become interested in the subject matter that involves their entire selves-body, mind and emotion. Students tend to ask more questions because they are curious and want to seek solutions. For science, the arts can lend complexity and inspire further questioning, making explorations better through the arts. When students draw, for example, they learn to observe closely. Another teacher may use drums and music to study sound waves and vibrations. The arts may contribute to a more informed view of general intelligence and abilities of students.⁶ Traditional testing has failed as a sole source and measurement of students' abilities. Not only do the arts help inform teachers about students' intelligences, learning styles and personalities, but they offer a route to success that can heighten students' own sense of their abilities and self esteem.⁷ In a diverse classroom, capitalizing on student strengths allows for all students to feel accepted and values in the classroom.

Story Telling and the Arts Build Strong Content Skills

Story telling may be the oldest form of education. Nearly all children are in control of oral language by age five; yet many of these same children fail to learn to read and write after twelve years of formal education. The implication for classroom instruction is obvious; success follows when students are encouraged to employ the same strategies they used to develop oral language skills.⁸ Some of those skills are being curious, asking questions, being engaged and repeating attempts to learn and grow. Utilizing the arts in the classroom is compelling.

The arts address all learning styles: visual, kinesthetic, spatial and auditory learning. The arts offer a freedom for Second Language Learners that build self esteem and encourages a collaborative and intergroup harmony.⁹ The arts improve literacy skills and creative/critical thinking. Oral language is a precursor to reading and writing.¹⁰ Several studies have shown that drama is useful in oral language development, reading and writing. John Warren Stewig, Fisher and Tate and others have found that creative drama enhances reading, the study of literature, oral language, vocabulary development, listening ability, and creative writing.¹¹ Through drama, potential for developing problem-solving skills exists. Children can be encouraged to hypothesize, test possible solutions and alternatives and, perhaps, even re-define problems.¹² In such active involvement comes the connection to learning.

Building Community and a Multicultural Classroom

Perhaps the most compelling reason why the arts, as languages of learning, are fundamental to classroom life is that they give rise to many voices.¹³ Goldberg and Phillips state, "The arts can nurture a sense of belonging, of community; or, they can foster a sense of being apart, of being an individual. The arts also provide a vehicle for individuals, communities, and cultures to explore their own world and journey to new ones, thus enriching their understanding of the various peoples and cultures that exist on our planet" (1992). This is significant to building a community of learners because each individual is important but must also see how they fit into the larger picture. All have something to share and all have something that must be learned.

Merryl Goldberg lists that the goals of a multicultural education are as follows: to provide educational equality, to empower students and their caretakers, value cultural pluralism, promote intercultural/interethnic/intergroup harmony in schools and communities, develop an expanded multicultural knowledge base and support students, teachers and staff.¹⁴ Using the arts within classroom instruction helps to accomplish all these goals. The arts require both creators and audience, forcing larger perspectives in children. The children realize that they and their peers make one diverse community.

By utilizing dramatic structure, acting with fairy tales to identify story elements, and creative writing, students have the potential to develop language and communication abilities, problem solving skills and creativity. Drama promotes positive self esteem, social awareness, empathy, a clarification of values and attributes, and an understanding of theatre.¹⁵ By connecting the children, their ethnic or cultural heritage, and the geographic location of the stories, the teacher helps to unify the group while focusing on the individual children within it.¹⁶ The students create their own stories from their experience, culture and backgrounds.

Gloria Blatt gives guidelines for improving classroom instruction in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing, not only valuable to my ESL learners but also to

achieving the Common Core State Standards. She suggests that spoken language must serve as the basis for all reading and writing, which must be fun and engaging to the students. All classroom activities must be valid, holistic and realistic. True communication must be the emphasis of instruction. No better way to learn to communicate than to practice activities focusing on role playing, storytelling and discussion. Background knowledge is critical. Acting epitomizes these experiences. Students must have ample opportunities to engage in personal experiences. Finally, teachers are merely a coach for the behavior expected. Their job is to create a positive learning environment for all.¹⁷ When creativity takes center stage in a classroom, members of the learning community can be transformed and inspired to develop many wonderful ideas, inventions, and solutions.¹⁸ Dramatic instruction thrives on such skills.

Dramatic Structure

Students learn that conflict is the basis for all drama. We must strike a balance between the pitying of, and jealousy for, another. A huge part of the unit teaches dramatic structure. Every story contains certain parts. Understanding these parts and being able to identify them within a story helps students with their comprehension and writing. The components of dramatic structure are as follows:

- introduction- colorful introduction of characters, descriptions
- inciting incident- what starts the conflict moving
- rising action- most of the drama, 70-80% of story, the events building up to crisis
- crisis- the point at which something must happen or change
- climax- how the crisis is solved
- resolution- restores or completion of the problem; set the stage for a new beginning

These story elements can be identified within dramatic structure. The *characters* and *setting* are presented in the introduction. The *plot* unfolds within the inciting incident to the crisis. The crisis reveals the *problem* and the *solution* is completed in the climax and resolution.

Components of Fairy Tales

Gloria Blatt states that the rhythmic, predictable language of fairy tales gives the young child a comfortable feeling when listening to stories. They are told with vivid words that create images.¹⁹ Fairy tales were to teach children normative behavior: how to behave at home and in public. Over 900 versions of Cinderella that have been studied in Europe and Asia alone. Even though these stories originate from all over the globe, they possess certain commonalities. The characters are generically named: the king, the step-mother and the oldest daughter. In this way, we are able to identify with the characters. They

generally have the separation of a child from a care giver. The child is abused, neglected or rejected in some way. The child, usually a girl, is expected to do hard work or perform some impossible task. The conflict usually derives from jealousy of one character of another. There is always a protagonist, and an antagonist. We hope for the evil characters to get their just desserts in the end. In many stories, people or creatures with "magical " or benevolent powers help the main characters. The male characters are smart, handsome, adventurous, and lucky. Heroines are beautiful, obedient and sacrifice for others. The female character usually follow a "rags to riches" model. Cinderella has all of these components, and so a few versions were chosen for the unit.

Students as Playwrights

By the end of the unit, the children will become playwrights. Brian Woolland states that, when pupils are thinking and behaving creatively in the classroom, one is likely to see them questioning and challenging, making connections and seeing relationships, envisaging what might be, exploring ideas and keeping options open and reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.²⁰ What more could a teacher possibly want from a student?

We will be focusing on dialogue in this unit. Dialogue serves many roles. First, what a character says and how they say it, gives us insights to thoughts and states of mind. Dialogue tells us how they are feeling and what motivates them. Not only for those speaking, but also other characters in the story. Dialogue provides hints or information about various situations. We become privy to what will happen in the future or what has transpired elsewhere or at an earlier time. Through dialogue, characters can show opposing views and be set against one another, causing the conflict within the story.

Fairy Tale Summaries

I selected Cinderella because there are a multitude of different versions. We will only compare/contrast three or four versions. Being an ESL school, bringing in multicultural views will be critical to maintain a high level of interest. I have selected the following versions: Yeh-Shen A Cinderella Story from China, Sootface An Ojibwa Cinderella Story, Rough Faced Girl and possibly, Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter: An African Tale, or a version from the middle east such as Cinderella: An Islamic Tale. The versions selected may be altered to address the cultures present in the current class being taught.

It is interesting to note that the locations of the three fairy tales selected are diverse. The first story, an Algonquin tale, is from the New England and Eastern region of the United States. The second story is from Chippewa Indians known as Ojibwe. They are from the Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota region along the United States and Canadian border. The final Cinderella tale is from China. However, the tales are extremely similar. This demonstrates the value of storytelling. It is a part of the human condition.

Stories are utilized and shared to create meaning throughout the world. Stories help us to understand one another and ourselves.

The Rough Face Girl: An Algonquin Cinderella Story

The Rough Face Girl is an Algonquin version of Cinderella written by Rafe Martin. It is part of a much longer traditional story, taking place in a village on the shores of Lake Ontario. In the village, there is a huge wigwam belonging to the Invisible Being. He is said to be wealthy, handsome and powerful. Every girl in the village wishes to be his wife. The Invisible Being has a sister. She states that “only the one who can see him can marry him”.

In the village an old man has three daughters. The two older girls are selfish and mean and force their youngest sister to do all the chores. She is forced to sit close to the fire to keep it burning. As a result, she is burned and scarred from the sparks and flames. They begin calling her Rough-Face Girl.

The older sisters go to their father and ask for new dresses, jewelry and moccasins to look their finest, as they attempt to try to marry the Invisible Being. Even though the father has little, he does his best to accommodate the girls. They set off through the village. All the villagers look at them and say that they will be able to marry the Invisible Being, making the girls even more conceited.

The sisters arrive to the wigwam where the Invisible Being’s sister is waiting. She inquires why they have come. The mean sisters say they wish to marry her brother. The Being’s sister asks them questions about what her brother looks like. She asks of what his bow is made and of what the runner of his sled is made. Of course, the mean sisters can not answer and are sent home.

The following day, the Rough-Face Girl goes to her father to ask for some beads and buckskin to make a dress and moccasins. She wants to go visit the Invisible Being to see if he will marry her. Unfortunately, the father has little to give her as he has given everything to the older, unkind girls. She receives a few broken shells and some old worn-out buckskin moccasins from her father. Grateful for what she is given, the Rough Face Girl uses reeds and birch bark to make a dress and leggings. She molds the old moccasins to fit properly, but they are still too large for her. As she departs to see the Invisible Being, the villagers come out of their wigwams and ridicule her. They say she will never marry the Invisible Being. The Rough Face Girl believes in herself. So she ignores the people and continues on her journey. As she walks, she sees the beauty of the Earth around her.

Finally, the Rough Face Girl approaches the sister of the Invisible Being. She is a wise woman and she sees all the way into Rough Face Girls' heart. She asks the Rough

Face Girl why she has come. When the Rough Face Girl answers, the sister asks if she has seen her brother. Rough Face Girl replies that she has. She has seen him in the beauty of the Earth. When she is asked what his bow was made of, she is able to answer that it is the curve of the rainbow. She also knows that the runner of his sled is made from the stars of the Milky Way.

The sister takes the Rough Face Girl to the Invisible Being's wigwam. When he sees her, he says that she is beautiful. The sister gives the Rough Face Girl the finest buckskin robe and tells her to bathe in the lake. When she does all her scars disappear. Her hair grows black and long once again. She looks beautiful to everyone now, just as she has to the Invisible Being. They marry and live happily ever after.

Sootface: An Ojibwa Cinderella Story

This story from the Ojibwa tribe is retold by Robert D. San Souci, about a man who is left to raise three daughters on his own after the death of his wife. The two older sisters are lazy and ill-tempered, but pretty. They make their younger sister do all the work. The sisters beat her and taunt her. They smear her face with ashes and call her Sootface. The father asks about the youngest daughter, but the mean sisters tell lies about her falling or not listening to their warnings. Sootface is too afraid to go against her evil sisters. She continues to work. Sootface's sister take the best skins to make their clothes and moccasins. Sootface is left with scraps. The villagers point and laugh at her.

There was a great warrior who lives across the lake with his sister. This man is a medicine man who is able to make himself invisible. He is a great hunter and the villagers admire all the game the sister skins and dries for her brother. One day the invisible warrior tells his sister to go to the village and tell them that he will marry the woman that can see him. The woman must be able to tell what his bow and strings are made from. After hearing the message, the woman from the village come to visit the wigwam one by one. They dress in their finest clothes. None of them are able to see him and they are sent home.

Sootface's oldest sister is to go see the warrior. She is unsuccessful in seeing him. The middle sister goes to see the warrior. She also is not successful. The next day, Sootface decides to go see the warrior. She asks her selfish sisters if she could borrow their beautiful clothes, necklaces and moccasins, but they refuse her. She asks them to braid her hair and make her pretty, as she had done for them, but again they refuse to help. She is upset but determined, so she goes into the forest and asks the trees for help. She makes some clothes from what the trees had given her. She made a necklace of flowers. When she is ready, her sisters mock her. They tell her she will shame them going to the hunter and his sister looking that way. She ignores them and is on her way. Then the evil sisters call upon the other villagers to taunt and laugh at her. Sootface continues on without ever looking back.

The warrior's sister greets Sootface. Sootface sees a handsome man walking toward her. The sister asks if she knows him, and can see him. Sootface is able to see and describe him. The sister hugs her, as she is to be her new sister.

The sister takes her into the wigwam and cleans and dresses her. She combs her hair and makes her beautiful. She looks into Sootface's eyes and renames her Dawn-Light from the joy that shines from her eyes. Dawn-Light and the warrior are married and everyone is happy; except for the two sisters who now have to do all the cooking and cleaning.

Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China

This Cinderella tale from China retold by Ai-Ling Louie, dates back to the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) This story is about a cave chief of southern China, Wu, who has two wives. Each marriage produces a baby girl. One of the wives gets sick and dies and Wu dies shortly after. The orphan girl is named Yeh-Shen who has to grow up in her stepmother's house. Yeh-Shen is beautiful and smart with every good quality. Her stepmother is jealous of her, because her own daughter has none of these characteristics. As a result, Yeh-Shen is given all the worse and most difficult chores. Yeh-Shen's only friend is a fish that she loved.

Every day Yeh-Shen visits the golden-eyed fish. It puts its head on the edge of the pond and waits for Yeh-Shen. Even though she is barely given enough food for herself, Yeh-Shen always brings something to share with the fish. The fish grows to be very large indeed. One day the stepmother discovers the fish that Yeh-Shen has been hiding from her and she is terribly angry. She goes to the pond to find the fish. The wise fish hid itself. The stepmother devises a plan to trick the fish. She has Yeh-Shen leave her cloak at home one day. She quickly puts on Yeh-Shen's cloak and goes to the pond. The fish, seeing the familiar cloak, comes to the surface thinking it was Yeh-Shen. The stepmother stabs and kills the fish and takes it home for dinner.

Later that evening when Yeh-Shen goes to the pond, she discovers her fish is gone. She begins to cry. As her tears fall into the pond, she hears a voice. She looks up to see an old man. He tells her what the stepmother has done. He also tells her that the bones of her fish are powerful. She must kneel in front of them and tell her heart's desire and it will be granted, as long as she does not waste the gift.

Time passes and the Spring Festival comes. This is a time each year when people meet and marry. Yeh-Shen hopes to go, but the stepmother has other plans. She is intent on finding a husband for her daughter. She keeps Yeh-Shen busy with preparations for her daughter. Everything is ready and the stepmother and daughter leave for the festival. Yeh-Shen is told to remain home to make sure no one steals fruit from their trees.

When the others have left, Yeh-Shen goes to the fish bones. She tells how she longs to go to the festival, but does not have a gown. The fish provides the most elegant and beautiful slippers, cloak and for her. She is told not to lose the golden slipper, and she promises not to.

When Yeh-Shen arrives at the festival, everyone notices her and wonders who she might be. The step-sister tells her mother that she looks very much like Yeh-Shen. When Yeh-Shen hears this, she runs away, leaving her slipper behind. When she returns home, the bones are silent now, as she has lost the slipper.

A villager returns the slipper to the king. He is intrigued by who owns the slipper. He initiates a search for the owner and sets the slipper up in a pavilion. The king and his men watch from nearby as women come to try and slip their foot in. All day people come and try to no avail. The king waits until late into the night. Finally, Yeh-Shen arrives.

Yeh-Shen wants to get the shoe back to the fish bones so that her friend can once again talk with her. Only when she is sure that the slipper is hers, does she pick it up. The king is about to throw her in prison for being a thief when he sees her face. Then king's men follow her home. The king asks her to put the shoes on and her ragged clothes turn into the feathered cloak and beautiful gown once again. The king knows he has found his true love and they are married.

The stepmother and step-sister were not allowed by the king to come to the palace with Yeh-Shen because they had been so cruel to her. They were forced to stay in the cave where one day they were crushed by falling stones.

Objectives

This unit's objectives are threefold and address each of the listed standards. First, I want to teach story elements directly to my students, just as required in years past. However, now I want to teach the story elements through dramatic and creative arts; focusing on the dramatic structure of story telling. Children are to work collaboratively to build an understanding of how the story parts come together because the story elements are connected and depend on one another. Changing one element, changes the story. Through drama, all students are able to participate and contribute. Activities such as miming, or playing charades to pay attention to what people look like or how they act when they are engaged in an activity help discover how choices made by a character drives the problem/solution within the story. Comic strips without writing offer opportunities and complete the comics with writing based on what the students perceive to be happening. Examining a character in different settings and with varying problems

provides experiences for the students to determine the message and key details from the text.

After exploring story elements, we will read and compare Cinderella stories from different cultures. The teacher must pick versions that the students will relate to culturally. After reading and discussing the versions, students should determine many similarities. This should drive home the point of storytelling as a method of building community and having shared experiences. Looking at differences within the tales will demonstrate items that hold importance culturally. An example is how often fish appear in stories from China. Why are fish so prevalent? What is the significance of the fish in that culture?

Finally, as a culminating exercise to the unit, the children will utilize their skills to write their own version of a Cinderella tale. The students must first visualize the story and then convey what they see using descriptive words. Working in small groups to produce a script, with proper dramatic structure, students will perform for the class. Some may want to act it out with scenery and costumes. Others may wish to use puppets. I want to incorporate a twist for them and ask them to consider changing the gender of the main character. Effectively, changing the tale to Cinderfella. Such explorations would also examine gender expectations.

Enduring Understanding

Engaging in physical activity creates permanent memories and foundations for learning. An example would be riding a bike. Everyone knows that once you learn how to ride a bike, you will never forget. Through acting and drama, a similar results should be achieved as it pertains to reading, writing and comprehension.

Students will understand that:

- All stories have the same basic elements: character, setting, problem and resolution.
- Comparing/contrasting fairy tales shows how the same story can be manipulated by different authors and cultures.
- Through creative drama/dramatic structure and the use of oral language, we are able to explore and problem solve to better understand a character, setting or problem in a story.
- Applying what we have learned through creative drama and reading will improve our writing

Essential Questions

What are story elements/dramatic structure and how do they help us understand a story?
How do different cultures affect story telling?
How does creative story telling improve our writing?

How does story telling help us to better connect to the world and ourselves?

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities should be paced at a rate differentiated for the group being taught. Some classes may take a day or two per story. For this year, it is anticipated that the stories will take about three days each.

Lesson One- The Rough Face Girl by Rafe Martin

The class will take a day or two read and discuss the story The Rough Face Girl. After reading the story, the children will identify the story elements and record their ideas on a class chart. They will record the title, characters (good and evil), problem, and solution on sticky notes and place on a classroom chart. The students may also determine important words/phrases and fantasy or magical components of the fairytale for later when they must write their own. (See sample chart below)

Fairy Tale	Characters	Good	Evil	Setting	Problem	Solution	Fantasy
Rough Face Sootface Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter Yeh- Shen							

Following a strong understanding of the story parts, the students will work an additional day in groups of four to make dioramas for character, setting, plot and solution of Rough Face Girl. Each child in the group will take one element to make a triangular diorama that will be attached to the others. Each student must write about their diorama section which should end up retelling the story. These can be written on index cards and hung from the bottom of the diorama. All four triangular dioramas will be connected into one story retell to be shared among the class.

To make the triangle in which to build the diorama, take a square piece of construction paper and fold in half, corner to corner, on the diagonal. Repeat the folding the opposite direction so the square looks like it has an X folded into it. Cut on one of the folds to the middle of the paper. Take the two points created by the cut and fold inward creating a triangle. Staple them to secure ends. When all four triangles are complete from each group, connect them to create a square. These may be set on a table or hung to display

by hole punching the top. If they are hung, the index cards will dangle from the bottom of each triangle.

Lesson Two- Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter by John Steptoe

The class will read and discuss the second Cinderella fairy tale. Again, we will add to our class chart by placing the story elements on sticky notes and adding them onto the class chart. Discussion connecting story elements to dramatic structure will be introduced.

Following the review of story elements, the students will work in small groups (or individually if desire) to label the introduction, inciting incident, rising action, crisis, climax, and resolution of Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter. The group (or individual) will make a ten frame comic strip or story board with each part identified. These will be shared with the class. Discussion will be held and the story boards will serve as the assessment of understanding story elements/dramatic structure.

Additionally, the students will have to complete a Venn diagram (included at end of unit) comparing Rough Face Girl and Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter. These two tales have many similarities, so we will focus on identifying differences. This diagram will serve as a secondary assessment for this lesson, showing the students the similarities among cultures and how people seek meaning through stories.

Lesson Three- Sootface: An Ojibwa Cinderella Story by Robert D. San Souci

Again, the class will read and discuss the story. The class will identify and add story elements to the class chart. The students will complete a three circle Venn diagram (included at end of unit) compare and contrast the three stories. We will share and discuss our findings.

The class will work together to make tableaux of the dramatic structure components for Sootface. A tableau is a view or sight that looks like a picture. They show an event in literature created on stage by a group of people who do not speak or move. The children will set up freeze frame pictures of themselves, paying special attention to facial expressions, body language and placement of themselves in their tableaux. Each tableau must work in tangent with the next to retell, or summarize, the fairy tale. Through using their facial expressions and bodies, the students will have to be cognizant of small details and be more exact and deliberate in their retelling.

Lesson Four- Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella story from China by Ai-Ling Louie

For our final fairy tale, we will repeat all the activities that were done with the others: read, discuss, identify story elements, and place those on the sticky notes to our chart.

For this story, the children will be assessed on their ability to determine the dramatic structure of Yeh-Shen independently. They will be asked to complete a worksheet to identify the six parts of dramatic structure. (worksheet included at end of unit)

The children will work as a class to retell the Yeh-Shen story by acting it out in small groups of three to five students, each group taking one of the six parts to act. They must include all the story elements and the dramatic structure components, as they identify them within their small groups. These reenactments will be performed for the whole class. The CCSS rubric for speaking may be used for assessment.

Lesson Five- Writing Their Own Version

For the culminating event of the unit, the children will have to write their own version of a Cinderella tale. They will have a few different story planning pages from which to choose to begin their planning (one sample included at end unit). Again, they will work in small groups to write and produce a fairy tale. Once rough drafts have been produced, the students will peer edit (editing checklist included at end of unit). The teacher will offer suggestions for a final script revision. Students will have time to create puppets, small sets, costumes and the like to perform their fairy tales for the class.

At the end of the unit, each group will have a day's class time to present its fairy tale for the class. A goal would be to be able to present fairy tales to other third grade classes or younger grades. Depending on the students, writing may begin after the first version of the fairy tale is read and discussed. Students could be working on the writing during the writing block as they are reading the various versions of the tales in reading class.

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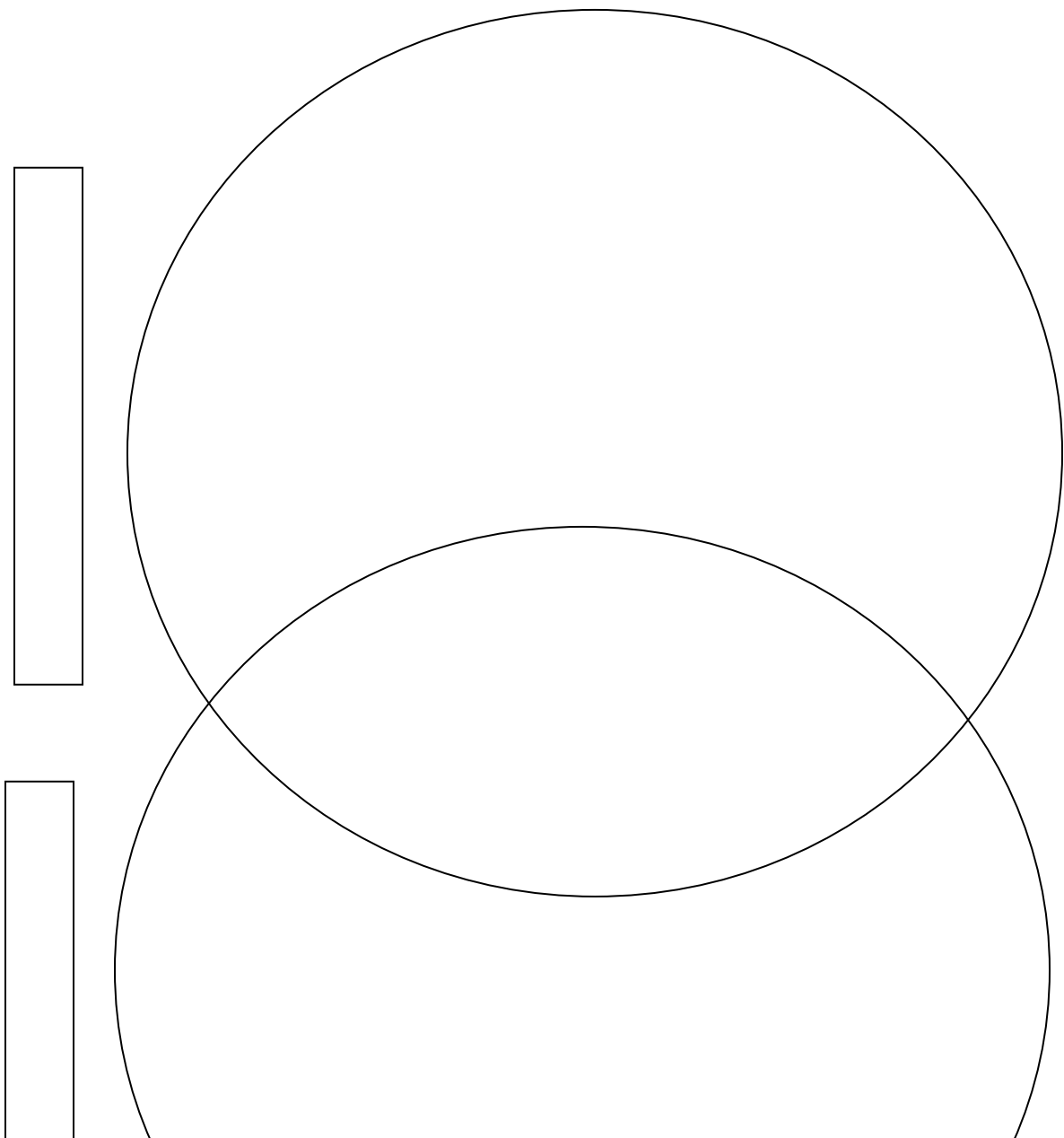
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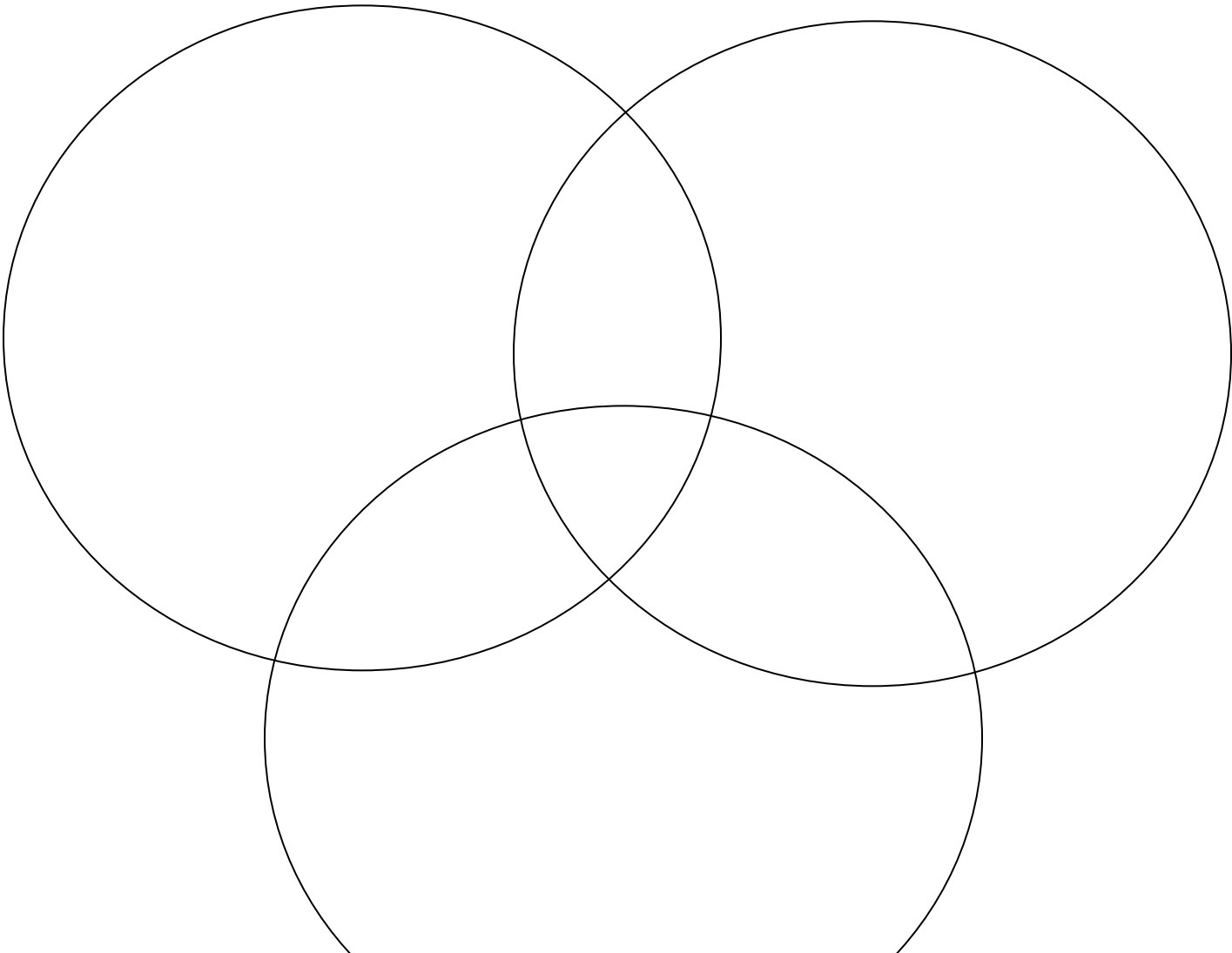
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Cinderella Fairy Tale

Answer the following questions with as much detail as possible. Use information from the story.

1. What is included in the *introduction* of this story?

2. What do you think is the *inciting incident*?

3. Explain the *rising action*.

4. What is the *crisis* of the story?

5. Retell the *climax* of the story.

6. What was the story's resolution?

FAIRY TALE STORY PLANNER

Use this form to plan your story.

SETTING

Where and when does this story take place? Name and describe the place where your story happens.

CHARACTERS





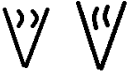





Who are your characters? Write brief descriptions of each character.

CONFLICT

What is the action in the story? What gives the story a beginning, middle, and end?

CONCLUSION

How will the story end?

Mark	Explanation	Examples
	Begin a new paragraph. Indent a new paragraph	 The space shuttle landed safely after its five day voyage. It glided to a smooth, perfect halt.
	Add letters, words, or sentences	best My ^ friend eats lunch with e me evry day ^
	Add a comma.	Carlton my Siamese cat ^ ^ has a mind of his own.
	Add quotation marks.	∩ Where do you want us to put the piano? ∩ asked the gasping movers.
	Add a period	Don't forget to put a period at the end of every statement ○
	Take words out of sentences, and punctuation marks. Correct spelling.	We looked at and ^e admired ^e the model airaplanes.
	Change a capital letter to a small letter.	We are studying about the Louisiana Purchase in H istory class.
	Change a small letter to a capital letter.	The Nile river in africa is [≡] [≡] the longest river in the world.
	Reverse letters or words	To complet ^{comple} the task successfully, you must follow carefully ^{carefully} the steps. .

¹ Meryl Goldberg, *Arts and Learning: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings*, 61.

²Ibid. 83.

³Ibid.10.

⁴Ibid. 5.

⁵Ibid. 93.

⁶Ibid.17.

⁷Ibid. 177.

⁸ Gloria Blatt, *Once Upon a Folktale: Capturing the Folktale Process with Children*, 13.

⁹ Meryl Goldberg, *Arts and Learning: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings*, 15.

¹⁰ Ruth Heinig, *Creative Drama for the Classroom Teacher*, 6.

¹¹Ibid. 6.

¹²Ibid. 7.

¹³ Meryl Goldberg, *Arts and Learning: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings*, 11.

¹⁴Ibid. 13.

¹⁵ Ruth Heinig, *Creative Drama for the Classroom Teacher. (New Jersey. Prentice-Hall, 1993)*, 5.

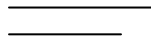
¹⁶ Gloria Blatt, *Once Upon a Folktale: Capturing the Folktale Process with Children*, 82

¹⁷Ibid. 14

¹⁸ Meryl Goldberg. *Arts and Learning: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings*, 55.

¹⁹ Gloria Blatt, *Once Upon a Folktale: Capturing the Folktale Process with Children*, 111.

²⁰ Brian Woolland, *Pupils as Playwrights: Drama, Literacy and Playwriting*, 3.



Curriculum Unit
Title

Cinderella Takes Over the Classroom: Using Dramatic Structure to Teach Story Elements to Improve Reading and Writing

Author

Julie V. McCann

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

- All stories have the same basic elements: character, setting, problem and solution
- Comparing/contrasting the parallels between fairy tales by different authors and cultures
- Through creative drama/dramatic structure and the use of oral language, we are able to explore and problem solve to better understand character, setting or the problem in a story
- Applying what we have learned through creative drama and reading will improve our writing

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

- What are story elements/dramatic structure and how do they help us understand a story?
- How do different cultures affect story telling?
- How does creative story telling improve writing?
- How does story telling help us to better connect to the world and ourselves?

CONCEPT A

What are story elements/dramatic structure?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

- What are the parts of a story? Are they related?
- What is dramatic structure? Are they related to story elements?

CONCEPT B

What do we learn by comparing/contrasting tales?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How do different authors and cultures affect story elements/dramatic structure?

CONCEPT C

How does creative story telling improve writing?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

- How do stories work?
- How does creative story telling improve writing?

VOCABULARY A

character, setting, problem solution, plot, events, fairy tale, introduction, inciting incident, rising action, crisis, climax, resolution

VOCABULARY B

compare, contrast, analysis, synthesis, theme, lesson, moral

VOCABULARY C

protagonist, antagonist, playwright, dialogue, script

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

The Rough Face Girl by Rafe Martin, Sootface by Robert D San Souci, Yeh-Shen by Ai-Ling Louie, Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter, class story elements chart, diorama explanation, tableau explanation, handouts/worksheets