Using Variants of Red Riding Hood to Build Critical Reading Skills

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Little Red Riding Hood basket in hand.
The Wolf's in the woods,
he's made his own plans.
Your going to Grandma's with a basket of treats
and you don't see his shadow as it slithers and creeps.
Now, he's cut through the forest to get there ahead.
He's outrun and out-foxed you,
and soon he'll be fed.
For he's lean and he's mean.
He’s fierce and he's keen.
He’s a hunter, a stalker, and a killing machine.

-- Sunnie Bunnie ZZ Storytellers; Copp, Linda n.d. Web. 4 May 2010

Overview

For my curriculum I wanted to pick a genre that would delight my pupils, stimulate their imagination and bring up memories from their own childhood. As children, some of our fondest memoires are those of sitting on a loved ones lap listening attentively as they wove the tales of the brave, cowardly, undaunted, and scary from a variety of ancient Fairy Tales. Fairy Tales are much more than just stories, they are teachings that have been handed down from generation to generation from which people learn about both the dark and bright sides of life. Children benefit from listening and reading these tales. They provide them with a common framework for communicating the belief that good will prevail and a reason to dream and hope that everything will turn out alright in the end. However, even though most of us have heard these tales over and over, we know little about their origins.

In this unit, I wanted my students to have an understanding of the age of Fairy Tales and for
them to understand that for every Fairy Tale with which they were familiar there probably is a variant of that same tale. Based upon this line of thinking, I developed the idea to use different variants of Red Riding Hood to educate my children in the important critical reading skills cited by the state standards.

It is crucial for fourth grade students to actively engage in a text when reading fiction or non-fiction. Great readers inherently use higher-level critical thinking skills easily allowing them to conjure mental pictures and engage in conversations in their minds. It is utilizing these thinking skills that helps them stay engaged in the text. Advanced readers unconsciously use predicting, inferring, comparing, and contrasting skills when they are reading from a variety of genres. However, too many children in elementary classrooms lack the knowledge or the skills needed to employ these critical higher-level skills when reading a text. It is these same children that fail to achieve success when taking state standardized tests. These children need to be targeted and taught how advanced readers analyze a text. Focusing on a genre that is familiar to these children will facilitate the learning process of teaching them to see the differences in the variants. Another critical aspect to teaching these skills is the stages of children’s development.

Using Fairy Tales as the content to teach these thinking skills takes into account these developmental stages. In his book, *Fairy Tales and the Acts of Subversion*, Zipes observes that from age five to ten years old the child’s view of the world is affirmed by fairy tales (in their traditional variants). Fairy Tales estrange the reader from the restrictions of reality from the onset and makes the repressed unfamiliar familiar once again. This unit is constructed for fourth graders in need of developing their higher-level critical thinking skills. The unit’s design takes advantage of using the variants of Little Red Hood to effectively facilitate the learning objectives. They encompass reading, writing, and performing. Lessons will focus on speaking listening’ and viewing sills.

**Rationale**

The Fairy Tale, Red Riding Hood, has been in existence for centuries. This story represents a tale that has withstood the test of time and been told repeatedly to generations of children growing up. Imagine living in France during the Middle Ages when it was commonplace for people to tell their stories orally. To the French people back then, the story of “‘The Grandmother’s Tale”, by Paul Delarue, (Delaurue,1956 )was actually the origin of the tale of Red Riding Hood that mothers tell to their children today.

Of course, in those times, the story line was somewhat different. Our villain, the wolf was actually a werewolf and there existed other characters that changed the ending of the story as we know it today. Originally, using the werewolf as the antagonist was probably due in large part to the fact that during the 15th to 17th centuries men with werewolf traits were tried for killing, devouring, and performing incestuous acts on children. (Windling, 2004) This may also explain why the wolf evolved into such an evil character in so many other stories and generally adopted a terrible reputation.
Published in the Greenwood Encyclopedia, Sandra Beckett notes that French folklorist Paul Delarue, first wrote down this tale in 1951 (Beckett, 2008, pp 583-584). Another theme running through the different variants from Paul Delarue and Charles Perrault was Red Riding Hood’s personal dilemma of which path she would take to Grandmother’s house; the path of pins or needles. Why would the path Red Riding Hood chooses be so important to the meaning of the story and the lesson being learned? The Fairy Tale, *Red Riding Hood*, teaches us that young girls should take heed of strangers and her path of choice symbolizes either a path to maidenhood or a faster path to sexual maturity. In an article written by Terry Windling, he explains the symbolism of the two paths. (Windling, 2004) The use of pins as a metaphoric representation of maidenhood can be explained by information gathered in a study by Yvonne Verdier of the resident traditions in remote parts of France. She discovered that girls were sent to spend one winter with a local seamstress to mark a girl’s change from child to young woman. The girls would spend time gathering pins for the purpose of throwing them into a fountain that prescribed by tradition guaranteed the girls a sweetheart. (Windling, 2004)

As for the metaphoric representation of needles as the faster road to sexual maturity, prostitutes were known to wear needles on their sleeves during this same time period. Looking at the traditions of the time period helps to explain the divergent paths and what they represented in Red Riding Hood. Although the discussion of the path of needles and pins is not appropriate for the classroom, it is directly alluded to in Shelly Duvall’s *Faerie Tale Theater* version of Little Red Riding Hood, which includes the threading of a needle in the opening scene.

Charles Perrault lived during the 17th century when matchmaking between families was extremely popular. It was not uncommon for a man’s wedding day to be the first time he laid his eyes on his bride. Perrault wrote his stories for the upper class during the reign of Louis XIV. His main character reflected the times by wearing a red hat made out of velvet or satin, a clear sign of the upper class. Perrault also added the moral at the end of the story.

One hundred years later, in 1812 the Grimms published their version of *Little Red Riding Hood* and named it “Little Red Cap”. Grimms’ major story revision was having the mother warn Red Cap before she takes her journey to see her Grandma. They furthered altered the ending by adding the woodsman who rescues Grandma and Little Red Cap by cutting the wolf’s belly open and filling it with stones insuring his demise. Later, blending the tales of Perrault and The Brothers Grimm, it was changed again and called Little Red Riding Hood. In this version the tale was adapted to be suitable for children and today all audiences continue to get pleasure from reading these versions.

Generations and generations of readers have continued to enjoy and absorb the morals of fairy tales. As a child, I have wonderful memories of listening to my mother reading Little Red Riding Hood and I, in turn, read these classical tales to my children. Why have fairy tales remained so popular throughout the years? Jack Zipes believes that children are attracted to these tales because they are survival stories with hope. They alert us to dangerous situations, instruct us, guide us, give us counsel, and reveal what might happen if we take advantage of helpful instruments or agents, or what happens if we don’t. (Zipes, *Fairy Tales Stick* p27) They embed themselves in our brains and become a part of our soul. Even though this tale has been changed
many times throughout the decades, it has held fast to its universal message; helping all girls
today outwit the wolf in their life.

Bruno Bettelheim writes in his book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, that the fairy tale teaches the
child that there *will* be a need to struggle against severe difficulties throughout life, and by
meeting them head on, one masters all obstacles. Fairy tales often confront the child with the
truth that people age and die, but do so in a form that the child can remain removed from, and
assimilate the ideas and deal with them symbolically and grow safely into maturity. (Bettelheim, 1976)

**Goals**

The students in my fourth grade classroom are bright and able to pick up a text written at
a fourth grade level and read it with little or no mistakes. When the same children are asked
questions that require exploring the literary elements of the text they seem to struggle. I believe
that taking a popular fairy tale and using three distinct variants of it will provide the instructional
material stepping stone needed to educate and build the critical thinking skills my fourth graders
require.

I selected “Little Red Cap” as one variant. As a second variant I choose a more modern
day version of this fairy tale, called “the Wolf’s Story”. It is told from the wolf’s perspective and
narrated by him. For the third and final variant I chose from the Philadelphia School District
Curriculum, the play, “Little Red Writing Hood.” I intend to use these stories to develop the skills
of comparing and contrasting and sequential order in stories. An important skill that all students
need to improve their comprehension of the passage is identifying the sequence of events. It
helps students understand events and time relationships presented in a selection. My goal is to
spark the students’ interest to explore the literary elements contained in all three stories and the
common threads running through them. At the same time the students will uncover that there are
major differences in the sequence of the variants.

As educators we know that skillful use of comparing and contrasting stories yields
greater understanding of what is being taught. Comparing/contrasting is an important skill that
students will continue to use for the rest of their lives; whether purchasing a car, house, or
deciding what college is best suited for them. (Gower & Sapier, 2008) The next phase of my lesson
would involve students working in cooperative learning groups to put on a puppet show from
either story demonstrating the correct sequence of events in their script. As part of the lesson
design to further engage the students I had them choose their own cooperative learning groups.
Lev Vygotsky’s theory of proximal development validates that when children work in
cooperative groups the results are higher achievement and greater productivity. They become
more caring, supportive, and committed to the relationship, which in turn helps to build, their
self-esteem. (Doolittle, 1995)

The students’ skits would use animated voices and actions to create a puppet show acting
out “Little Red Writing Hood”, “Little Red Cap” or The Wolf’s story, and at the same time
engaging the audience’s listening skills. Role-playing significantly improves comprehension of
the story and enhances the students retelling ability. It also generates interaction between the
teller and the listener. To develop their writing skills the children would choose two stories to compare and contrast.

I intend this study of differences in fairy tales to serve as the catalyst for each child to explore their own creativity in generating their very own version of Little Red Riding Hood. At the conclusion of the unit the students will share their fairy tales in cooperative groups by performing them orally for the class.

**Objectives**

- The student will recognize two different genres, a fairy tale and a play based on a fairy tale.
- The student will be able to compare/contrast three different variants of Red Riding Hood.
- The students will be able to fill out a Venn diagram listing the similarities and differences between two variants of Little Red Riding Hood.
- The student will identify the distinguishing features of a fable and a play.
- The student will be able to identify ways in which the sequence of events in a literary text affects the outcome.
- The student will be able to develop a fairy tale using the writing process.
- The students would be able to fill out a graphic organizer listing the sequence of events that happened in Little Red Writing Hood, Little Red Cap and a choice of variants.
- The students would be able to use their graphic organizers to rewrite the script for Little Red Cap, Little Red Writing Hood, or the Wolf’s Story by using the correct sequencing.
- The students would work in cooperative learning groups to put on a puppet show from either story showing the correct sequence of events in their skits.

**Strategies**

This unit is designed to strengthen students speaking, listening and viewing skills. Originally, Fairy Tales were always spoken not read requiring good listening skills on the part of the listener to insure an understanding of all the story elements. It was important to incorporate listening in my lessons. I will implement this unit in a fourth grade classroom. The ages range from 9-11 years of age. Students in fourth grade have experience working independently and are successful working collaboratively with other children. However, they still appear to have a problem of listening to teacher directed activities.

Classroom activities will include direct instruction, small group instruction and independent learning activities. The instructional design for this unit was developed to include a mixture of teacher-directed and child-directed activities to promote learning. The lessons will also incorporate and utilize technology. Using technology as a tool for research encourages the children to take an active role in their learning. Using technology addresses the needs of the 21st
century learner. Students live and engage in a world integrated with digital technology so it is critical to include this technology as part of the instructional design of the unit. These additional skills are needed for the students to successfully navigate their future.

1. Graphic Organizers

Building the children’s background knowledge of Fairy Tales is crucial for them to become better listeners. I will use a KWL chart to identify the information they already have about the genre, Fairy Tales. A KWL chart is a graphic organizer that helps the teacher gauge what the student already knows about the topic. The W stands for what the student wants to learn about the subject and the L stands for what the children have learned. This chart can be revisited at the end of the lesson to see what knowledge the children have retained. (See attachment) We will explore a pre-determined list of Fairy Tales and the children will utilize the computer to discover what country the tale originated. Each child will report out to the class their findings.

2. Scaffolding Instruction

It is essential to build supports for the learner by scaffolding instruction so the learner moves forth from what they can do independently, to what they need to do. Lev Vygotskey, who developed the theory of “proximal development, “believed as the children learn the zone moves suggesting the mastery of some tasks and the development of other tasks that children can learn with help. (Doolittle, 1998)

In order to scaffold instruction the children will use a variety of graphic organizers for comparing and contrasting and sequencing. Graphic organizers aid visual learners by organizing material, chunking piles of words into smaller pieces of information, and helping in memorization of the material.

3. Cooperative Learning

For part of the unit students will work in cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning is the process of students working together in small groups to solve problems. Lev Vygotskey’s research indicates that working in cooperative learning groups will enhance a students academic experience, help with their oral communication, build their self esteem, and increases retention of the material. This can be accomplished through their interactions with other children and adults. (Doolittle, 1998) The children are grouped heterogeneously both by ability and personal characteristics insuring all the students can depend on each other’s academic strengths. Cooperative learning’s success is a result of positive interdependence, face to face interaction, individual accountability, and group self-monitoring.

4. Differentiated Instruction

My class consists of a variety of different individuals with varying learning needs. An important focus of the instructional design is the use of differentiated instruction insuring effective learning transfer by accommodating all learning modalities. I created lessons geared to auditory, kinesthetic, and visual learners. Fairy Tales work especially well when dealing with multiple intelligences in children. The characters from Little Red Riding Hood create a strong
sensory picture in the children’s minds and enable them to integrate their experience and knowledge of the tale when animating their voices to sound like the characters they are portraying.

5. Assessments

Ongoing assessments are essential in discovering whether the learning objectives are being met. Teacher and school district made rubrics will grade assignments. Exit cards can be utilized on a daily basis to find out what the children have learned after the lesson. Teacher observations and oral presentations are another means of assessing my students understanding of the objectives.

**Classroom Activities**

*Lesson 1: Identifying Genre and exploring Fairy Tales*

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- Complete a KWL chart listing the characteristics of the genre of a Fairy Tale.
- Complete KWL chart listing the characteristics of the genre of a play.
- Students research from a list of classic Fairy Tales when and where they were originated.

**Materials: KWL Chart**


**Procedures:**

Critical Thinking Question: What do you already know about the genre of a Fairy Tales?

Teacher starts first lesson with a KWL format. Using an overhead projector and a copy of a KWL transparency the Teacher asks students what they remember from their experience with Fairy Tales and what are the common attributes that they contain. Teacher records answers on the K (Know) and what you want to know (W).
Teacher engages students in a large group discussion on the age of Fairy Tales and where they originate? Students are grouped in cooperative groups of 3 to go to the computer to research the following questions.

Websites are listed on the board:


B. www.telegraph.co.uk/.../Fairy-tales-have-ancient-origin.html

C. www.surlalunefairytales.com/introduction/earliesttales.html

Questions

1. How old is your Fairy Tale?

2. What country did this Fairy Tale originate from?

3. Who is the author of the Fairy Tale?

After researching the three questions posed the students regroup as a class and report out to the rest of the large group their findings.

Assessment

Exit Card- Students fill out an exit card answering the question “What new information did you learn about the genre of Fairy Tales?"

Lesson 2: Red Writing Hood (A play based on Fairy Tales)

- Objective: The student identifies the distinguishing features of a fable and a play.
- The student identifies ways in which the sequence of events in a literary text affects the outcome.

Materials: Copies of a sequencing graphic organizer that includes 12 circles or squares to encompass the whole series of events in the play.

The Play, Little Red Writing Hood, from the Trophies Reading Book, Theme 4.
Vocabulary Words- script, desperately, injustice, triumphantly, repentant, acceptable, discards, circumstances.

Procedures:

Session One:
Critical Thinking Questions:
- How is a play different from a Fairy Tale?
- After previewing the play, Little Red Writing Hood, what appears to be the same from a Fairy Tale?
- How does it look different from a Fairy Tale?

The teacher begins the lesson by reviewing the KWL chart that the class worked on previously
- What do we already know about Fairy Tales? The teacher introduces the genre of a play and asks the students what do they know about this genre? Teacher will lead a discussion of the differences between genres.

The vocabulary from Little Red Writing Hood is introduced to the class. The students are given a paper with the words and definitions. This helps the students with the pronunciation of the words as they read their parts in the play.

Students are given a sequencing chart and are instructed to write down the sequence of events as they happen in the play. Teacher assists students by informing them that every time Red changes the script, there is a change in the sequence of events. As the children read their parts, they are instructed to put their thumb up in the air when the script is changed. At this point each student stops and writes down the next event in the order that it happened in the play.

Session Two: Teacher and Students review the sequencing chart from Little Red Writing Hood, by viewing a sequencing transparency, and filling in the correct sequence of events in the play. At this time students can check their own sequencing chart to make sure their events are in the correct order.
Lesson 3: Listening for sequence of Events in Little Red Cap

Objective: The students complete a graphic organizer listing the sequence of events that happened in Little Red Cap.

Materials: A tape of the story of Little Red Cap and the accompanying written version. Students use a sequencing graphic organizer to write down the events of the Fairy Tale. A sequencing graphic organizer is a template where the students fill out what happens first, second, third, fourth etc… in a story

Procedures:
Critical Thinking Question: As you listen to the tape, write down the sequence of events. How does the series of events differ from the Play” Little Red Writing Hood”?

1. Session One: Students are given a copy of “Little Red Cap” from the book The Great Fairy Tale Tradition by Jack Zipes. The students listen to a teacher made pre-recorded tape of the story. Students record the sequence of events on their graphic organizer as they listen to the tape.
2. Session Two: Teacher and students review graphic organizer for the correct sequence of events.

Lesson Four: Comparing and Contrasting Variants

Objective: The student compares and contrasts Little Red Writing Hood to Little Red Cap in writing an essay.

The students fill out a Venn diagram listing the similarities and differences between two variants of Little Red Riding Hood.

Materials: Students use a sequencing graphic organizer and a Venn diagram

Procedures:
1. Session One:
Critical Thinking Question: Think of ways that the sequence of events, characters, problem and solution differed from the play, "Little Red Writing Hood “and the Fairy Tale,” Little Red Cap”.
As a class using their sequencing graphic organizers the students are led by the teacher in completing a Venn diagram on the overhead projector on how the two stories are similar yet different.

2. Session Two: Students utilize their Venn diagrams as a prewriting sheet in assisting them to write an essay about two differences and two similarities about the play and the Fairy Tale.

Extension Activity: Students work in pairs choosing another variant from the list below and fill out a Venn diagram of the similarities of the differences compared to either “Little Red Cap” or Little “Red Writing Hood”
1. Lon Po Po
2. Pretty Salma
3. Little Red Cowboy Hat
4. Little Red Riding Hood (A Newfangled Prairie Tale)
5. The Wolf’s Story

Lesson Five: Learning through Performing
Objective: In cooperative groups the students write a short skit from either Little Red Cap or Little Red Writing Hood in the correct sequence of events portrayed in the original story. The students work in cooperative learning groups to put on a puppet show from either story showing the correct sequence of events in their skits. Students embody the characters by using their voices and bodily movements to express the character in Fairy Tales.

Materials: Children utilize stick puppets, and a teacher created rubric to create their written skits and performances.
Procedure: Students form cooperative groups of three or four individuals. The children work in groups writing a skit using the correct sequence of events that mirrors either Little Red Writing Hood or Little Red Cap. The children perform their skit in front of the class.

Assessment: A teacher created rubric is used to evaluate the group’s skits and performance. (See Attached)

Annotated Bibliography, Citations and Resources

Students’ Resources:

Bruno Bettelheim in his book explains why developmentally children need Fairy Tales and how it helps them deal with their world.

Cohen, T., & Forward, I. (2005). The Wolf’s Story. Cambridge, MA.: Candlewick Pr. This story was used for the students to compare and contrast.


Teacher Resources


www.learning-theories.com/vygotskys-social-learning-theory.html References

The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood (pp. 53-62). Irving, Texas: Spring Publications. This reading helped me understand the development of a child and how children that are going through " latency stage" as quoted by Freud benefit from Fairy Tales.


Der Stuuf, R. V. (2002). Scaffolding as a teaching strategy. Adolescent Learning and
Development, 0500A, 1-64. (This article helped me to understand scaffold instruction.


Windling, T. (2004, August 10). The Path Of Needles or Pins. Realms of Fantasy, 1, 1-113. This article helped explain the difference between the two paths of which Red Riding Hood has a choice.

Zipes, J. (1993). The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood, Second Edition (2 ed.). New York: Routledge. This book helped me to understand the history of the Fairy Tale and why it has been so popular for 300 years. It also addresses the myths of how Little Red Riding Hood was recreated for the upper class children by Perrault.


Zipes, J. (2001). The Great Fairy Tale Tradition. New York: Norton. I used this book to access Little Red Cap and made a copy of the story so the students could use for their sequencing chart.


Appendences

Appendix I: KWL chart

Appendix II: Rubric

Standards: These are the Pennsylvania State standards that are aligned to the core curriculum.

- **R4.A.1.3.1:** Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text
- **R4.A.1.5.1:** Summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole.
- **R4.B.3.3.1:** Identify, explain, and/or interpret text organization, including sequence, question/answer, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, or problem/solution.

- **R4.B.1.2.1:** Identify, explain, interpret, compare, and/or describe connections between texts.

- **1.4.4.A:** Write poems, multi-paragraph stories. Include detailed descriptions of people, places, and things. Include literary elements. Begin to use literary devices.

- **1.6.4.B:** Demonstrate awareness of audience using appropriate volume and clarity in formal speaking presentations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They all have happy endings</th>
<th>How long have they existed?</th>
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<tr>
<td>They all have an antagonist.</td>
<td>What countries are the classic Fairy Tales from?</td>
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<td>They are told to children</td>
<td>What are some of the oldest Fairy Tales?</td>
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<td>Animals and magical things are in the story.</td>
<td>What was the purpose of a Fairy Tale?</td>
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<td>They are make believe.</td>
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### Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sequential order</th>
<th>Cooperating with Group Members</th>
<th>Script writing</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>All Events were in the order that they happened in the play Red Writing Hood or Little Red Cap</td>
<td>Members cooperate with each other. They work together writing the script and deciding the parts they will play.</td>
<td>The script will be written with great sentence structure, grammar, and spelling.</td>
<td>The performance is animated, creative with loud clear voices. The puppets are used in an effortless way.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Most events are in the order that they happened in the play Little Red Writing Hood or Little Red Cap</td>
<td>Members do not contribute equally to writing the script and performing parts.</td>
<td>The script is written needing better sentence structure and there are some misspellings.</td>
<td>The performance contains little animation, creativity with voices that are harder to understand. Some puppets were used in an inappropriate manner.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>The events of the play Red Writing Hood or Little Red Cap are out of order and don’t make sense.</td>
<td>Members do not get along with each other. It is evident that certain members do all the work and the parts are distributed</td>
<td>The script is written with major errors in sentence structure and spelling. It is hard to read.</td>
<td>The performance contains no animation; creativity and voices are hard to hear. Puppets are used inappropriately</td>
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