



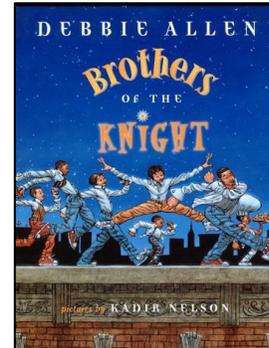
MODERN FAIRY TALES: WRITING AND EXPANDING GENDER

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVELS: 3 – 5

LENGTH OF TIME: 2 class periods of 45 minutes

GOALS

- To look at and analyze the ways that traditional fairy tales reinforce gender stereotypes.
- To expand students capacity to think beyond gender norms and stereotypes through discussion and writing.



OBJECTIVES

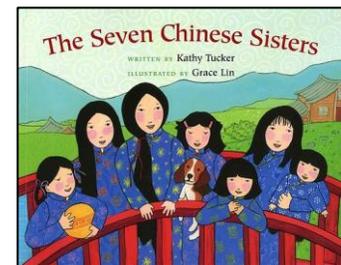
- Students will compare and contrast traditional fairy tales with more contemporary narratives.
- Students will write modern fairy tales that explore a diversity of genders and roles.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4.B: Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate and expression on successive readings. Also SL 3.4, 5.4.
- CCSS: SL 4.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. Also SL 3.1, 5.1.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9: Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g. the quest) in stories, myths and traditional literature from different cultures. Also 3.9, 5.9.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details and clear event sequences. Also 3.3, 5.3.

EDUCATORS' NOTES

This activity provides an engaging process for students to develop critical thinking skills about gender stereotypes and norms. It also gives them the opportunity to create a modern, gender diverse story to share with their classmates. This lesson provides an opportunity to talk about the gender binary with your students. It can also help them develop insight to expand gender through their writing. You may want to look at the Welcoming Schools handout [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#) prior to teaching this lesson to help you define words such as gender and non-binary for your students.



MATERIALS

- Have available examples of traditional and modern fairy tales. Some modern examples include: *Interstellar Cinderella* by Deborah Underwood, *The Seven Chinese Sisters* by Kathy Tucker and Grace Lin or *Brothers of the Knight* by Debbie Allen and Kadir Nelson.



MODERN FAIRY TALES

- Either read to the class or have your students read independently or in pairs an example of a modern fairy tale.
- Ask your students what differences they are noticing between traditional fairy tales that they have heard and modern fairy tales. You may want to write these down on an anchor chart for your students.
- Terms you may want to introduce when discussing gender and gender stereotypes.
 - Ask your students if they know what the word binary means. Then ask them what they think non-binary means.
 - Another way you can talk about this with your students is to use the term gender expansive.
- Ask students to write their own gender expansive fairy tale in which the main character is portrayed in a gender expansive role.
 - Students can rewrite a traditional tale or make up their own original story.
 - Students can also use pronouns in their story such as they/them/theirs or use no pronouns and only use the character's name.
- Depending on how much time you want to devote to this lesson, students could either do a quick write and then share their writing in small groups or take their story through the entire writing process and publish it for sharing.
- Let your students know that you will be looking for gender expansiveness beyond traditional binary storytelling in at least one character.

OPTIONAL VIDEO FOR INSPIRATION

- Show you students the music video, [“I Am Me” by Willow Smith](#).
- Do not tell your students the artist's name or gender pronouns prior to showing the video.
- This is an opportunity to teach your students not to assume gender identity based on Willow's gender expression.
- After the video:
 - Ask, “Does anyone know who this is?”
 - Let your students know that this is Willow Smith. She is the daughter of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith. Willow uses the pronouns she/her/hers. She has an older sibling, Jaden Smith -- actor, singer and cultural icon.



EXTENSION

- Coordinate opportunities for students to read and discuss their own written fairy tales with children from the younger grades.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Ongoing teacher observation on whether or not students feel comfortable making choices outside gender norms.
- Ongoing teacher observation and class discussions on whether or not gender-based teasing is recognized more often, becomes less frequent or is eliminated.

ADDITIONAL FAIRYTALES

- *The Different Dragon*. Jennifer Bryan.
- *Kate and the Beanstalk*. Mary Pope Osborne.
- *Maiden Voyage*. Jaimee Poipoi and Adam Reynolds.
- *Ninja Red Riding Hood*. Corey Rosen Schwartz.
- *Prince Cinders*. Babette Cole.
- *Princess Princess Ever After*. Katie O'Neill.
- *The Paper Bag Princess* or *La Princesa vestida con una bolsa de papel*. Robert Munsch.
- *Promised Land*. Adam Reynolds and Chaz Harris.

Additional Resources from Welcoming Schools

- [Lessons to Understand Gender](#)
- [Books that Look at Gender and Support Transgender and Non-Binary Students](#)
- [Resources for Gender Inclusive Schools](#)
- [Be Prepared For Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#)
- [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#)
- [Welcoming Schools Professional Development Training](#)

Credit: Developed by Emmy Howe. nationalseedproject.org.