

A new look at Cinderella

In this unit students offer a new perspective on a traditional tale through improvisation and reader's theatre and make links with learning in English and Human Society and its Environment.

They will:

- sustain and build belief in roles
- use elements of drama to create effects
- show the development of movement and language skills
- form opinions about drama and through drama
- enhance their literacy skills and explore issues of gender equity.

Drama forms

- improvisation
- reader's theatre.

Resources Books

- Munsch, Robert N.(1980). *The Paperbag Princess*. Scholastic Publications Ltd.

Other

- hats, scarves, and cloaks
- percussion instruments
- music as selected by the teacher and students.

Learning activities

Getting started

- Students research traditional fairy tales and examine gender stereotypes found in these. They read *Cinderella*, and explore the male and female roles in the story. List with students the characters and describe their attributes, personalities and status. In groups students hot-seat some of the characters as represented in the traditional tale. Students find out more about their lives and their attitudes. What would they like to change about their lives?
- Read *The Paperbag Princess* and other stories which challenge stereotypes. In small groups or pairs, students interview some of the characters from these stories. They create depictions based on the images in these stories and improvise action to bring the images to life. Freeze the action. Discuss what happens. How are their lives and attitudes different from the traditional characters in the Cinderella story?
- In groups students discuss ways to change the male and female roles in Cinderella to challenge stereotypes.

• Taking on roles in situations • Developing drama • Performing

- With the students decide on new ways to represent the traditional characters. Make a class list of the characters and their new attributes. Divide the story into scenes and give one scene to each group to rewrite using the new characters. *Who is involved in the scene? What is happening? Where? When? Why?*
- With help from teacher, groups write their scenes as reader's theatre scripts, indicating names of characters and dialogue to be spoken. Hot-seat the characters to explore further ideas for dialogue.
- Add text for narrators to describe action between dialogue in some scenes. Develop with students additional narration to link the scenes.
- Groups explore ways to represent the roles in their scenes e.g. a student may take on a particular part, several students may share a particular part, other students may assist with sound effects in certain scenes etc. Allocate roles within each group. Include narrators.
- Experiment with ideas and techniques. Improvise with students ways to most effectively use voices to communicate the roles. Students record on audio tape for discussion. Explore with students ways to build tension through the use of pausing. Experiment with contrast of voice types, degrees of volume and sound and silence to build the piece further. Make final decisions and rehearse.



- Each group performs the reader's theatre piece for rest of class in a semi-circle at front of drama space in designated order. Discuss the reading and suggest ways to further develop the performance e.g. use music to underscore and enhance mood, use percussion instruments for additional sound effects such as clock striking, crowd entering, mice running, add simple costumes and props to enhance roles etc.
- Students build the suggestions into a piece and rehearse as a whole sequence several times. Perform for other classes.

Responding

- Discuss the performance. *Which voice techniques and sound effects were particularly effective? Why? How convincing were the roles? Were the situations clear? Where were the moments of focus?*
- *What was the mood of the piece? Where was contrast used? Where was the tension felt? How could the performance be improved?*
- Write about the experience. *Describe your role. How well did you sustain it? What helped you to do this? Write about your group. How did you develop your ideas? How has this drama work helped you to develop your reading, writing, talking and listening skills? What do you think about the gender issues explored? What else have you learned through this drama work?*
- Students form opinions about their own work and the performance in general. *What worked well, do you think? What could be improved?*

Assessment of students

- Teacher observation of students' drama work and their process of working.
- Analysis by the teacher of students' oral and written comments, drawings and other responses to their drama work.
- Consideration of the following questions about students' learning in drama:
 - ♦ How well are they able to sustain and build belief in roles? How convincing are they? Are the voices used effectively to communicate role?
 - ♦ What evidence is there that students are using elements of drama to create effects as they work with others to develop drama? How effectively are they working together?
 - ♦ What evidence is there that students are developing movement and language skills? Which particular skills were developed in this unit? How well were students able to use voice, gesture and different types of movement to communicate their ideas? Which movement and language skills need further development?
- What opinions about drama are students forming? What other learning in drama is evident as they observe and respond to their drama and the drama of others?
- Consideration of the following question about other learning:
 - ♦ How has the drama work contributed to the students' literacy skills and understanding of gender equity issues? How have reading, writing, listening and talking skills been enhanced?

Extension activities

- Use the reader's theatre script as a source for movement work. Retell each scene in movement only. Select a contemporary piece of music to accompany the work.
- Develop movement work around new versions of other traditional tales. Explore ways of expressing character through movement only.
- Develop storytelling techniques by having students take on the role of characters not explored in traditional tales but possibly associated with them in some way e.g. the Prince's butler, Red Riding Hood's teacher, the Giant's wife. Students tell the traditional tale from this new perspective, adding insights into the story and characters.
- With the teacher's assistance students develop small-group improvisations involving characters from traditional tales who have never met before. Have them introduce themselves and talk about their lives and recent events.
- Teacher-in-role chairs a panel of experts (students-in-role) who will advise characters from traditional tales on ways to solve personal problems. Have the rest of the class write letters in role as characters from traditional tales seeking help.