Fairytales with a twist

A fairy tale can be called a folk tale or fable. It is a story written a long time ago that often involves royalty and magic. A twisted fairy tale is a traditional fairy tale that has been changed in some way. It might be modernised, told from another point of view or rearranged to create a news story.

When is a fairy tale?

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Fairy tales traditionally start with, “Once upon a time...” and end with, “… and they lived happy ever after.” Like most fictional stories, they start by introducing the main character, the setting and the problem. The body of the story sets out to solve the problem until a high point, called the climax, is reached. They nearly always end on a happy note. Here’s an example you may know.

Once upon a time, on the edge of a great forest, there lived a very poor woodcutter with his wife and two children, Hansel and Gretel. His second wife often ill-treated the children and was forever nagging the woodcutter. The family had little enough to eat, and once there was a great famine in the land, the man could no longer even get them their daily bread. “There is not enough food in the house for us all. There are too many mouths to feed! We must get rid of the two brats,” his wife declared.

The family was desperate. They decided to plan a cunning plan. Mr Woodcutter pleaded that he had been put up to it by his wife, the children’s stepmother. Neighbours said they regularly heard a woman shouting at the children. They weren’t surprised to hear that they had disappeared, and suspected foul play.

Go to: http://theliterarylink.com/gretel.html for the rest of the story or find it in a book. Read it aloud in your class. Listen for the high point, or climax of the story.

Twisted fairy tale

Go back to the Hansel and Gretel story. Skim the story for the 5 W’s and circle the information.

On a separate piece of paper:

Draw a triangle with two lines through it, dividing it into three thirds.

In the top third write the most important information.

In the middle put supporting information and background to the story.

In the bottom third include the least important information.

Most important information

Supporting details and background information

Least important information

Who, What, When, Where

Why, How

Other details

Abandoned children held captive

Twelve-year-old twins Hansel and Gretel narrowly escaped being eaten by Madam Witch in the Netherland Woods last Saturday night. The twins were abandoned in the woods by their father, Joseph Woodcutter. But Mr Woodcutter pleaded that he had been put up to it by his wife, the children’s stepmother. Neighbours said they regularly heard a woman shouting at the children. They weren’t surprised to hear that they had disappeared, and suspected foul play.

After wandering for hours, Hansel and Gretel stumbled upon the gingerbread house owned by Madam Witch. “We were lost we were starving,” said Gretel. “When we saw the cookies we couldn’t help ourselves.”

The children ate their way around the house and then went inside. “They trespassed onto my property and caused willful damage,” shouted the witch from the courtroom stand. “They were asking for it!”

Practise finding the 5 W’s in news stories that are published in your newspaper.

Select your own fairy tale to twist into a news story. Rearrange the important parts of the story into the inverted pyramid format first. Then build the rest of your story.

Stones fell world-first white kiwi

The world’s only white kiwi has become unwell after eating two large stones, and is being cared for by specialist vets at Wellington Zoo.

Manukura the Kiwi was taken to Wellington from Pukaha Mt Bruce wildlife centre on Tuesday after being off its food.

For the full story go to: http://www.times-age.co.nz/news/stones-fell-world-first-white-kiwi/1143141/

Read the whole news story about Manukura the kiwi. Circle the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW in the article.

News stories

When writing a news story, the reporter answers the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, questions at the beginning of the article. You’ll often find this information in the first sentence. They develop the body of the article by answering the WHY and HOW questions, adding interesting facts, quotes and colourful details. The ending contains the least important information. Here’s an example published in the Wairarapa Times-Age.

We can turn any story into the inverted pyramid. The final details are needed to complete the story.

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Notice how the important Who, What, When, and Where information, is found at the top of the story. The inverted pyramid diagram below shows how information in news stories is organised.

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

Who, What, When, Where

Why, How

Other details

A news story is written this way so that if the story needs to be shortened to fit onto a newspaper page, the least important information can be cut off the bottom without affecting the sense of the story.

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