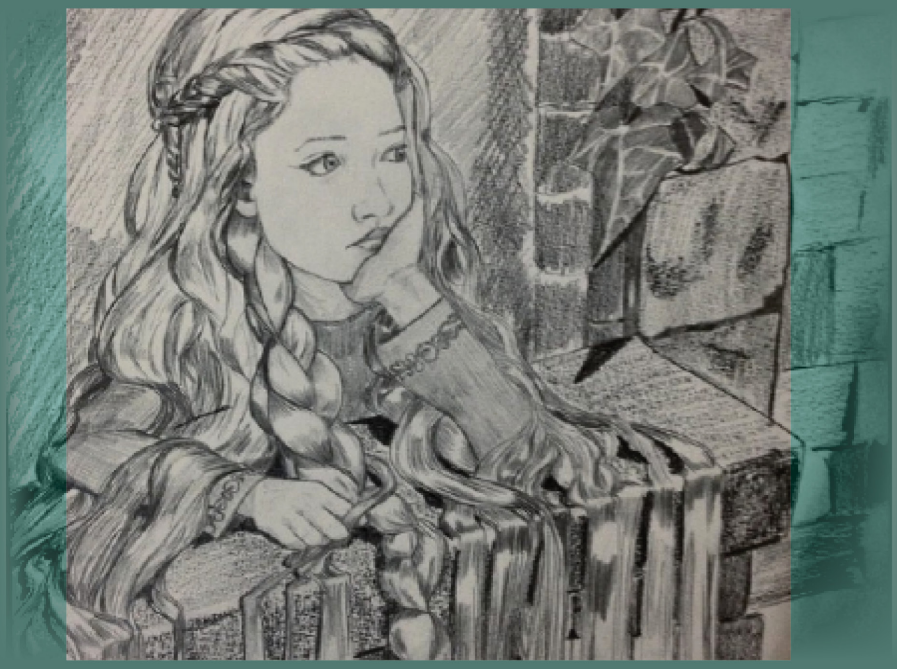
Re-writing Fairytales: a student work ebook



Lessons and exercises based on developing knowledge of and skills in creating modern fairytales that challenge reader expectations using fairytale elements such as key ideas, motifs, 'the hero's journey', archetypal characters and situations, themes and narrative voice as well as intertextuality and binaries

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First published 2017 by

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Cataloguing data

Author: Shelley McNamara

ISBN: 978-1-925624-24-3

Title: *Re-writing Fairytales: a student work ebook*

Publisher: Shelley McNamara

Editor: Shelley McNamara

Proofreader: Jessica Nelson

Cover image: 'Repunzel' by Paul Heppell from Birds in Suits

www.birdsinsuits.com.au

Cover design: Toby Andrews www.lilypad.com.au

Typeset in Adobe Garamund Pro and Tekton Pro Cond

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Part 2: Communicating ideas in fairytales

In this part, we are going to look at ways writers communicate ideas that are found in fairytales through writing engaging sentences.

Writing engaging sentences

The key part of writing successful stories is to ensure you write engaging sentences. They are the building blocks required to bring a whole story together. As you work on writing parts of fairytales throughout this work ebook, it is a good idea to look at the way you use your sentences for dramatic effect.

Let's have a look at a couple of paragraphs to see how you can experiment with sentences to really capture the attention of your audience.

The extracts below are imagined internal monologues from Hans Christian Anderson's *The Ugly Duckling*. You may remember that this story is about a mother duck abandoning her 'ugly duckling' who is really a swan because he does not fit in. The fairytale is about overcoming the obstacle of childhood fears of abandonment through rediscovering the self. The first paragraph is written from the mother's perspective.

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As you read each paragraph, see if you can identify the different types of sentences used to illustrate the internal state of mind of the characters.

Mother's perspective

What is this beast I see before me? It's not real. It doesn't look like any of my other ducks. It can't be mine. Surely, it's not mine. It's ugly. Just ugly. Too ugly for my family. Mrs Quack Duck said so. She said, 'Get rid of it! Cast it out. Send it on its way.' But it's my duck. What should I do? I took one more look at it. Its black wings frightened me. It has to go. It just has to.

What did you notice about the length and type of sentences used?

What tone is used and what does this tell you about the internal state of mind of the mother duck? Discuss with a partner. Jot your ideas below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you notice how short the sentences are? The mother seems to be is a state of distress about how different her 'son' is. Her thoughts come quickly, which is shown through the quick succession of ideas in the short sentences. The mother's tone is defensive as she defends her decision to abandon her 'son'. She even calls her son an 'it'! The mother is also offended that she could have such an 'ugly' duckling. The number of questions she asks shows us that she is wondering why this happened to her and what she can do about it.

Now, let's have a look at a paragraph written from the ugly duckling's perspective.

Oh woe is me! My feathers are as black as soot, while my brothers and sisters are as white as milk. I have started to drift away from the flock, sensing they would prefer it that way. I look up to the sky and see the magnificent birds flying and I long to join them. Oh how I feel a pang in my heart as I glide along the lake, wondering where I belong. Ever since I was born, my lonely days have been growing and growing, and now it is unbearable. What can I do? I am what I am. It is time to leave, time to find my flock and leave the past behind.

What did you notice about the length and type of these sentences compared to the mother's perspective?

What does this tell you about the internal state of mind of the ugly duckling? Write your ideas below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

You may have noticed that there are a variety of sentence types as well as sentence lengths. However, the main types of sentences are long and more measured than the mother's sentences. This tells us that the ugly duckling is reflecting on what is happening to him why he is different, what he longs for and what to do about it. The confusion and pain the ugly duckling experiences is shown through the questions he asks himself and the exclamation. The tone is shown through statements such as 'Oh woe is me!' Phrases such as 'pinge in my heart' show the ugly duckling's longing to belong.

Experimenting with sentences

You would have noticed that the sentences in the extracts above are varied in terms of length and type. Using a variety of sentence types and lengths creates a dramatic effect because it shows the reader a great deal about the internal landscape of the character and the situation. This is an important thing to remember as you experiment with writing the fairytale genre in this work ebook (and any other writing, for that matter).

What you may not know is that every sentence is made up of at least one **clause** for it to make sense. Clauses contain a single and complete idea in a sentence. They are the building blocks of sentences, just like bricks are the building blocks of a building. Punctuation holds the clauses together, just like the mortar of a building that keeps the bricks together.

Understanding clauses

A clause must contain a verb or a verb group and it usually has a subject and an object. You may remember a verb being described as a doing word, but it is much more than that. Verbs are also thinking, saying, feeling, listening and being words.

A basic clause is called an independent clause as it makes sense on its own. The basic form of a clause is as follows:

Subject, verb and object

Let's have a look at an example.

The wolf ate the first little pig.

Subject (noun) **verb** **object**

The subject of the sentence tells us 'who' or 'what' the sentence is about. The verb tells us what the subject does. The object of the verb helps us to understand more about the verb.

Sometimes the verb is not just a single word but a group of words. For example:

Rapunzel longed to climb down the tower.

The verb group 'longed to climb down' describes what Rapunzel does long to climb down the tower.

Task 2.1: Understanding clauses

Time: 15 mins

a Identify the subject, verb and object in the following clauses:

Snow White knocked on the door.

_____

The frog sat on his lilypad.

_____

The princess wiped the frog slime from her mouth.

_____

The frog jumped into the pond.

_____

The fox kissed the princess.

_____

Task 2.2: Brainstorming characters

Time: 10 mins

a Imagine a character from an existing fairytale or an imagined fairytale is in extreme distress. Like the mother from 'The Ugly Duckling' story, this character is thinking quickly about a distressing situation. In the exercise, you are going to write a short extract from the perspective of this character.

However, before you begin writing, brainstorm the following:

- the situation that is causing distress

- what the character thinks about the situation

- what the character is going to do about the situation

Task 2.3: Using short simple sentences

Time: 15 mins

a Using short, simple sentences, write a short extract from the perspective of your imagined character from an existing fairytale or an imagined fairytale, who is in extreme distress. This character is thinking quickly about a distressing situation.