

Coming of Age in Never-land

Transformation in Multi-Cultural Fairy Tales

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Overview

This curriculum unit has been designed to teach seventh grade students in the School District of Philadelphia the theme of “transformation” via variants of the fairy tale, “Cinderella”. Primarily, this unit consists of the layout for a central project, and lessons addressing several main texts, accompanied by appropriate activities, lessons, and strategies. This unit is not only intended to teach the usage of theme and narrative structure but also incorporates several of the state specified standards that work in conjunction as part of Philadelphia’s Literacy Core Curriculum. An asset to using this unit is that it has been created for middle school students keeping in mind the adolescent condition. It demonstrates along the way a close attention to parallels between the dynamics of transformation and the roles it plays in both in the lives of adolescents and the characters in the chosen selection of fairy tales.

My plan is that through using this unit, I might help students to think about transformation in the context of a frame narrative, then to transcribe the idea into a meta-cognitive reflection. I plan to intermittently set students up to draw parallels using writing techniques and reflective discussion.

Rationale

The reason I chose to write this unit is because of my interest in child development, literacy education, and the naturally captivating essence of the fairy tale. The following topics more thoroughly address my rationale.

Why Fairy Tales?

The fairy tales that I plan to use for this unit will allow students to look beneath the surface of something well known, and find a deeper meaning or worth within it. This skill, labeled by the Philadelphia Core Curriculum as the “interpretation” of a text, is required of students to have mastered as they move through the seventh grade. I believe

that fairy tales are necessary to teach this skill because by using variants of the same tale type; or versions, students may see beyond the superficial elements of the fairy tale and deeper into their common themes. Also, by teaching the students about storytelling and how to be storytellers, I hope to harness the ritual's naturally engaging quality.

Tale Type 510

For this unit, I chose to explore variants of tale type 510, also more commonly known in America as "Cinderella." I chose this tale type because I believe it best exemplifies the theme of "transformation". This tale type number defines the formula of ingredients that classifies a variant as being part of a larger common thread. Around the world are found many different variations of the Cinderella tale.

Although there are over nine hundred versions of the Cinderella tale around the world, the variants of this tale type that I have chosen for this unit are Ashenputtel, The Algonquin Cinderella, and Yeh-Shen. I chose these versions of the tale in part because they are attached to the Core Curriculum, but also because they accurately exemplify the theme of transformation, highlighting it in various ways. They are ideal for the kind of comparison and contrast I would like to use them for.

The most commonly known version of this tale type is the one adapted by Disney's film "Cinderella"; Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon". This version features the well-known fairy godmother, pumpkin style coach, and glass slipper. As Carolina Fernandez-Rodriguez notes in the Greenwood Encyclopedia, Perrault's version differs in various ways from The Brothers Grimm version.

"Aschenputtel," the Grimm's version of the tale, features a young girl who is tormented by her sisters and asks her father to bring her back a hazel twig from his journey into town. Her mother dies in the beginning of the tale, and when she plants this hazel twig and waters it with her tears, she finds that the spirit of her mother takes the form of a tree. The birds in the tree become instrumental in saving Cinderella from the cruel mistreatment of the stepmother, and endowing her with a beautiful dress and shoes to wear to the ball. Further, she visits the ball three times and wins the prince's heart. Each time she leaves, he is baffled, but the third time he spreads pitch on the stairs so that she will lose her golden shoe bestowed by the birds. She does, and this is the means by which he tracks her down. This version, as with others fairy tales documented by the Brothers Grimm, spares the reader no measure of violent occurrences in contrast to Perrault's more censored and morally centered version. Among other things, the cruel sisters chop their toes off in an effort to fit the golden slipper, in vain, of course, and end up being punished by the vengeful birds, which peck out their eyes.

The theme of transformation manifests in this version specifically of course when Aschenputtel adorns a beautiful dress and attends the ball, masquerading as someone she had never been, or, as we will eventually determine, someone she has *always* been. She is given the chance to show her true self in the place that it most counted, to obtain the prince and live happily ever after. The change was an unveiling, a way to shed the

oppression that was forced upon her by less deserving others. This version of transformation is a primary basis that I will explore with the students and will ask them to relate to a time when they feel they could finally shed a more commonly known version of themselves in order to be seen as who they truly feel they are.

Yeh-Shen has roots in being among the oldest versions of the tale, originally first appearing as “Ye’ Xian” in China around 850 CE., but eventually was recorded first in this version by Tuan Cheng-shi in an ancient Chinese manuscript during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618- 906). The text the students will be reading is entitled “Yeh-Shen” and is retold by Ai-Ling Louie.

The story of Ye-Shen sticks to the basic frame of the tale, as we well know it, differing mainly in that our heroine befriends a large fish, which acts as her magical salvation. She develops a companionship with the fish, and the stepmother, finding this out, kills the fish to spite Yeh-Shen. The spirit of the fish then resides in its bones, and bestows her with the blessings she needs to succeed in attending the ball.

Transformation in this tale for Yeh-Shen comes after losing a close friend. She comes to be rewarded for the kindness she showed the fish while it was alive, and without knowing it, it took her to new places and brought her into a life of prosperity. I would like to illustrate this point for students in an effort to get them thinking about inner-personal transformations. The relationships that children are having with their peers and parents are serving new and different purposes, and as they lose and obtain new relationships, I think it is important to allow students the chance to reflect on these changes they themselves are going through.

The Algonquin Cinderella, documented by M.R. Cox in the Holt, Rinehart and Winston Anthology, “Elements of Literature, First Course”, shares a version of tale type 510 that is probably the most different form the other two I will share with the students. The tale originates from the Micmac Native American tribes, which originally span from parts of Canada down to North Carolina, and out as west as the Great lakes and the Rocky Mountains. The summary of the story is best told by the Anthology, which offers this at the start of the tale in the Annotated Teacher’s edition.

“In a Micmac village, a being known as the Invisible One plans to marry the first woman who can see him. Each evening, his sister tests a different village girl, but no one can answer her questions about his appearance. Like other women of the village, two daughters of an old widower try but fail to see the Invisible One. Their younger sister, Oochigeaskw- badly scarred from her oldest sister’s abuse and shabbily dressed- also tries. She can see the Invisible One, and she answers his sister’s questions correctly. Transformed into a beauty by a bath by the Invisible One’s sister, Oochigeaskw becomes the wife of the Invisible One.” (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2003, TE p. 608)

This tale is an interesting variant of tale type 510 because it actually illustrates a dysfunctional family mirrored by a nurturing and inner reliant one. The sisters of the tale are opposites, and the main character is abused at first, then transformed by the other. With the students I teach, I will seize the opportunity to discuss with them the theme of

transformation in this tale as it relates to the company they keep, and transformative repercussions peer interaction can have.

Why Transformation?

I believe that attention to the study of adolescent child development is important to reaching the goals I set for my students. I try to meet them where they are, and deliberately facilitate reflective thinking as much as possible. Many of my students are going through their own transformations, externally and internally, as the expectations for them change and their identities are shifting from children to young adults. Just like many of the characters we will be studying in the tales of this unit, adolescents are faced with transformative tasks, such as initiations or rites of passage into adulthood.

Vivian Seltzer, in her book entitled “Peer-Impact Diagnosis and Therapy: A Handbook for Successful Practice with Adolescents”, has developed a theory of adolescence called “dynamic functional interaction”, where she describes in a framework the developmental tasks adolescents face. (Seltzer, 2009, p. 10) She explains that this age group over time transitions from parental reliance to a frenzied occupation with their peers. This need to compare with other adolescents is a developmental task. As professor Mary Hufford would phrase it, “ in an effort to assess their part in the world beyond their family”. This takes place during the first stage of this transition time, where early adolescents are subject to a kind of “frameworklessness.”

“In early adolescence, immediately after puberty, a condition that I term *frameworklessness* surfaces. It is the result of psychological distancing from parents which adolescents’ new physical, emotional, and cognitive condition stimulates. They wish to think on their own – individuate. But, having abdicated guideposts of past times, they are left without familiar reference points, which creates a sense of helplessness and a lack of framework in which to exist comfortably.”

When considering this time where adolescents are faced with creating some sort of new framework, it becomes important to note Edith Cobb’s discussion on world making. She says that there is a natural desire to create a world with laws and structure as a process for filling in the gap between the self and the object of desire. Her theory closely relates to the mind of the average adolescent because they are incessantly crafting and testing elements of personality, interests, and looks, creating a world for themselves that aligns with their own personal realities in an effort to “fit in”, yet ultimately gain their own individuality.

I have written this unit assuming that my students are indeed caught in this time between childhood and maturity where they lack a framework or context to ground their meta-cognitive observations upon. I have also gathered that my students are liable to exhibit these world-making behaviors that could serve as a bridge to their sought after individuation. With these things in mind, using fairy tales as a means to foster self-

reflection will allow my students to gain that frame or context that is missing, while activating prior knowledge that can serve as a point of reference.

To supply the frame will be to supply tale type 510, or, as we most commonly know it, “Cinderella”. By taking this tale type and allowing my students to explore different variants of the same structure by comparing and contrasting the differences between characters within the tales, I will be inherently tapping into my students’ pre-disposition to perform this ritual.

I can say that from experience, my students have found this comparative analysis of commonly known tales very engaging. When I tried this dynamic with my seventh graders this past year, I used the text “The Twelve Labors of Hercules” in contrast to “Hercules”, the Disney film adaption. As we watched the film, a majority of my students engaged in asking enthusiastic questions and making observations that highlighted the similarities and differences between the text version and the film. At the end of the lesson, one student even asked if I could prepare that style of lesson more often.

Once I supply my students with a frame, I plan to use storytelling as a means to shift the skill into a meta-cognitive exercise. By allowing students to create autobiographically based fairy tales to share regarding a time of transformation, I hope to give them a platform to share reflections of a time that was experienced in real life. My students then have the opportunity to become world-makers, to modify actions, decisions, qualities or dispositions, in the context of their own frame with defined parameters.

This discussion becomes helpful to understand that adolescents are in a position of transition; a transformation of their own, and studying the this theme through fairy tales will give them the frame needed to ponder alternate versions of a reality.

The Role of Storytelling

According to Lancy’s “Cultural Routines in Child’s Development”, the one variable that is present universally in the upbringing of children is the existence of routines that facilitate an enculturation process into that society. One of those routines in our culture that plays a large influence on a child’s success with literacy skills, she says, is the bedtime story. Although statistically, my students mostly do not fall into the socio-economic class Lancy designates the bedtime storytellers; the middle class, my students are largely influenced by a dominating African culture in the community that traditionally practices storytelling which can act as a means to pass on culture, legends and lessons. As the oral tradition does not require a written literacy, I hope to work towards bridging the gap between the spoken and written versions of storytelling with this unit.

While a significant portion of my students may be influenced by a more traditional oral culture at home, more of my students are also exposed to storytelling in various other, more mainstream manifestations, such as rap lyrics, television, and tabloids. Whether African culture or pop culture, storytelling can transpose you to

another place, with the potential for an engagement factor that is rivaled by few other phenomena.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writes about what he calls a “flow experience”, or a specific time in the mind where one is completely engaged in what you are doing, without regard to time or other influences. I believe that his model for the flow experience closely applies to the experience of storytelling. He maps out about eight different criteria for distinguishing one of these experiences. Among them is that when engaged in this flow activity there is an intrinsic reward and there is a disappearance of self-consciousness. There is also a high level of focus in a limited area, and there are clear and reasonable goals. When listening to or enacting a story, all of these ingredients have the potential to be active; we enjoy the story as entertainment, we lose a sense of ourselves in time and space and become part of the story. The focus is on the speaker, and the goal we have set for ourselves is to reach the ending or the resolve. The power of storytelling is an engaging, or “flow experience” that I hope will work toward engaging my students in the unit I have developed.

The way I plan to utilize this power is through a storyboard project, where students will create a pod cast accompanied by a PowerPoint slideshow that allows them to become amateur storytellers themselves. Over the course of three weeks, I plan to educate students about the purpose of storytelling, the different cultures that practice storytelling, how to properly write a story, and also how to be a good storyteller.

Objectives:

This unit is intended for students in Grade 7 or 8, operating on a block scheduling system. These students rotate classes with a thirty-minute lunch period in between and one period a day of “Expressive Arts”; a rotating elective type class.

Students will be able to unify works of literature under a common theme by writing a constructed response using examples of text the theme is found in.

They will compare and contrast the ways the theme of transformation has been represented through various versions of fairy tales.

Students will also identify and use the terms internal and external transformation.

They will relate to ideas of transformation by writing personal narratives about autobiographical incidents.

Students will utilize and showcase elements of good storytelling, narrative writing and their understanding of the theme of transformation by writing a story and sharing it via a Power Point slide show and Pod Cast.

Strategies:

Students will participate in such strategies as group work, discussion, writing workshops, and “think-alouds”. I will practice with students “How-To” frameworks for writing assignments and active reading. We will also be conducting a fair amount of discussion, and questioning will be an essential strategy.

I plan to explore the usage of media and technology for the focal project. Students will practice creating pod casts and Power Points to share their stories.

Classroom Activities:

To preface this section, it is important to note that this unit was designed with a strong emphasis on procedural routine, as I have found it to be the best strategy to prevent management issues and ensure understanding with this age group. In order to reduce the risk of misbehaviors as a result of directional vagueness or misunderstanding, the teacher might model each activity in repetition at first so that students become educated upon the flow of the routine. In the unit timeline, it may be observed that I have rotated the following activities accordingly, so that each day will be different, but the routines should be familiar.

Anecdotal Writing:

All students have something to bring to the table, but not every student knows how to articulate it whether orally or in written form. By breaking down the writing process formulaically, students can contribute by following directions while creating a written product. Students will be given the opportunity to explore autobiographical or anecdote writing in order to relate themselves to the stories of transformation as we read.

Procedure:

I will introduce students to this activity by allowing them to brainstorm using a word web about the experiences they've had that come to mind when considering the topic. Example: I will draw a circle on the board and place a topic or phrase inside it (ex. disobeying your parents). Then, I'll instruct the students to think of a time when he or she has had this happen, or heard a story about it, or seen a TV show that has to do with the topic. For each of these sub-headings, students will draw a branch out of the inner circle and describe it in as few words as possible. (3 minutes)

Students will then be told to make a choice about one of those things that he or she can speak the most about and use it to fill in a "Somebody Wanted But So" graphic organizer. (ex. Bart steals videogame)

Somebody	Wanted	But	So
Bart Simpson	A video game	He was not allowed to have it.	He stole it from the department store and got caught.

This activity can be used as a pre-reading discussion springboard or an exit slip that can act as a summarization of the story.

Fill In the Blank:

Students will use predictive skills to “fill in the blanks”. I will introduce a narrative and students will have the opportunity to write the beginning, middle or end of the piece before reading the traditional version. This will allow them to also see the dynamic of a variant structure.

Procedure:

I’ll divide class into three teams of pairs. Then, I’ll distribute the beginning of the story on one page to the first team of pairs. To the second team, I’ll give the middle of the story on another page. To the third I’ll give the end. Each pair will have their own copies of the beginning, middle or the end. I’ll then direct the students to read aloud to his or her partner.

I’ll ask students to then discuss in pairs what they thought might have happened in the sections of the story that were missing. I’ll instruct them to think about the questions posted on the board:

What could have happened to lead us into this situation?

What could have happened afterward?

Now, I’ll instruct the students to divide the missing chunks among each partner. For example, if your team has the middle of the story, one of you will take the beginning and the other will take the end. I’ll tell them to predict what might have happened, or what will happen before or after the part of the story they read. They will write their own version of the story on their own piece of paper.

Once students have filled in the blanks, so to speak, each pair may designate a speaker to share their versions of the story the way they think it might have gone aloud to the class. After sharing the versions, I’ll read aloud the real entire story to the class.

Story Board Project:

Objective: Students will utilize and showcase elements of good storytelling, narrative writing and their understanding of the theme of transformation by writing a story and sharing it via a Power Point slide show and Pod Cast.

Step One - Developing a Pod Cast Script

This stage in the project will essentially be the written draft of the story that the students will tell over the pod cast. As a pre-writing brainstorm, students will be instructed to perform the anecdotal writing strategy in response to the topic of transformation.

I plan to give the students this prompt: “Describe a time when you or someone you know has gone through a major change or transformation.” After students have written

about this experience, I will ask them to share aloud to the class. This will serve as an activation of prior knowledge and basis for reflection that students may use when deciding what they would like their story to be about.

After reading *Ashenputtel* and watching the *Ashpet* film, I will ask students to think back to the writing they did on their own before reading the story.

“Has the way you have thought about transformation changed? What kinds of transformation are there? Can your environment change and you still remain the same? Can we change although our environments stay the same? Can you relate to the character of *Ashenputtel*? Why or why not?”

After discussing these topics with the students, I will ask them again to think of an instance that they have heard about or that has happened to them where someone or something has gone through a transformation. It could be a caterpillar morphing into a butterfly; it could be moving to a new house, or the death of a pet.

“Which of these instances do you think might make for a good story? If you were to write your own fairy tale about someone that went through a transformation, what would it be about?”

I will ask students to brainstorm on paper for about five minutes, and then in pairs, I will ask students to discuss the answers to these questions. Once they are through, we will regroup as a class. Each partner will share the other’s ideas with the class.

At this point, I will ask the students to spend about ten minutes in a free write. The only rule about this activity is that I should not see the student’s pencil down on the desk or sitting still for the whole time. I will explain to the students that even if they are having a hard time writing, by writing something, anything on paper, you can generate those creative juices to flow faster than if you sit and stare at the paper. This will also help to prevent students from becoming distracted or using the time given inappropriately.

After this activity, students should have a good set of resources to help them get started on a rough draft for their own autobiographical “fairy tales.” The requirements for the rough draft will be that students should have based the story around an instance of transformation, there should exist characters, a plot consisting of a rising action, a climax and a resolution. I will also supply students with a specific rubric for their writing (see appendix).

Step Two- Teacher-Student Conferences

In order to ensure that students are making steady progress on the assignment, rough drafts of the story will be collected a day or two before our time in the computer lab. Once providing written comments on the rough drafts, and corrections are made, I will invite some students to begin recording their pod casts in the computer lab.

For this phase of the assignment, students will receive another rubric which will explain the requirements for the audio file. Students are to exhibit an attempt to practice the techniques of a good storyteller, which involves expression of the voice, pauses and tone. Not only will the pod cast exhibit the student's writing, but will serve as a performance piece as well.

In order to smoothly ensure that students are capable of creating a functional pod cast, I hope to work in collaboration with the computer sciences teacher who will have already taught the students how to use the Garage Band application in our school computer lab. If this is not an option, I would recommend setting aside a class day in the computer lab to educate the students on how to make a pod cast with very specific requirements for the finished product.

While students are creating the pod casts in the computer lab, I will take some time to conference with students who are struggling to develop their ideas. Over the course of some time, most students should have a pod cast file of themselves reading aloud the story they have written. I will supply at least one scheduled day per week to spend a portion of class time as a group in the computer lab.

Step Three – PowerPoint Slide-Show

This last phase of the project will be geared toward the advanced students in the class while also allowing some leeway for more challenged students to catch up on the pod cast production process.

Students will be required to create a slideshow of PowerPoint slides that will accompany their pod casts in the final presentation of their work. This slideshow may be created in the fashion of a storybook, with captions accompanying photographs or illustrations, or just as captions. Students will need to do research to find images that suit the story they are sharing, and will be required to submit a bibliography of the sources from which they found the images as a final slide in the PowerPoint.

This phase of the assignment will also have a rubric that sets for clear expectations of the final product, which will include references for the images, clear and timed captions, and creativity.

Final Presentations – Peer Evaluation

On the final due date for the completed projects, students will show the class their creation using the classroom projector. Student projects will be exhibited and the class will be given a scoring rubric to grade the work of their peers. Among rating each work from one to five in effectiveness for the scoring categories, students will have the opportunity to write comments and reactions to the stories shared. These evaluations will be factored into the final project grade. This stage of the project will allow students to entertain and be entertained as they view each other's work.

Once students have filled out a chart, I will ask for volunteers to share their responses, and record them on the chart upon the board. Once students have volunteered, I'll incorporate the responses into various discussion questions, including:

1. What makes a good story?
2. How does a storyteller make the story interesting?
3. What stories have you heard and told growing up?

After discussing the responses, I will explain to students that this discussion introduces us to a new unit on fairytales. Then, I'll introduce the objective of the lesson on the board.

I will share with students the story, "The Eagles who thought they were Chickens", told by Oba William King in written and video form. Here you can access the YouTube version: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_TTKs5aX2I

Students will then pair off in groups to perform a "Think, Pair Share" about what they think the story represents. Students will work together to fill in the storyboard graphic organizer with a focus on determining the moral or theme of the story. (5 Minutes)

I'll then warn students to wrap it up, and then regroup the class. Begin the discussion by filling out the graphic organizer together with volunteers on the board.

Ask students to identify a time when they observed a transformation. Explain that transformation is a theme that will be discussed and analyzed throughout the unit, because it is an important and pivotal element of many folk and fairy tales.

Assessment:

Each student will complete a storyboard graphic organizer (see appendix), which will evaluate the student's ability to identify and apply the various elements of a story, and can also serve to evaluate comprehension of the story.

Introduce storyboard project: Have students think about their own storyboards for creating their own version of a fairy tale. They should have the beginning middle and end.

Unit Timeline

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Warm Up	Daily Edit	Anecdote Writing:	Daily Edit	Anecdote Writing	Daily Edit
Week 1	Lesson 1 Introduce unit on Fairy Tales and storytelling. Vocabulary Power Point	Lesson 2 – Introduce storyboard project Mini-Lesson “How to be a good storyteller” Begin to read Ashenputtel –	Lesson 3 – Continue Reading Ashenputtel - Lesson on theme of transformation.	Lesson 4 – Finish Ashenputtel Story Map Discuss role of transformation in story Think Pair Share	Lesson 5 – Quiz on fairy tales and Ashenputtel. Watch Tom Davenport’s “Ashpet”.
Home work	Define words on word wall.	Reading Comprehension:	Grammar worksheet	Reading Comprehension:	Storyboard Project
Warm Up	Anecdote Writing	Daily Edit	Anecdote Writing	Daily Edit	Anecdote Writing
Week 2	Lesson 6 - Lesson on “History of Storytelling around the world” Anansi Comic Strip	Lesson 7 – Mini Lesson on “Rites of Passage” Begin to read “The Algonquin Cinderella”	Lesson 8 – Finish “The Algonquin Cinderella”	Lesson 9 – Storyboard project - Record Podcasts in Computer Lab	Lesson 10 – Quiz on Algonquin Cinderella and Storytelling
Home work	Rough Draft Pod Cast Script Due	Reading Comprehension:	Grammar worksheet		Storyboard Project
Warm Up	Daily Edit	Anecdote Writing	Daily Edit	Anecdote Writing	Daily Edit
Week 3	Lesson 11 – Mini Lesson on Proverbs and Riddles Begin to read “Yeh Shen”	Lesson 12 – Finish “Yeh Shen”	Lesson 13 – Comp. Lab - Create Slide show to accompany Pod Cast	Lesson 14 – Final touches to Storyboard Project	Lesson 15 – Storyboard Project Presentations
Home work	Find a riddle to share with the class.	Rough Draft Story Board Slides Due	Grammar worksheet	Reading Comprehension:	

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Appendix:

Tale ---->

**Function/Dramatis
Personae V**

Ashenputtel

**The Algonquin
Cinderella**

Yeh Shen

**Protagonist (name, gender,
station in life)**

Father

Mother

Stepmother

Siblings

Settings

**Forms of Persecution of
Protagonist**

**Magical or Marvelous
Helpers**

**Other Magical or Marvelous
Props (Plants, etc.)**

Festive Event

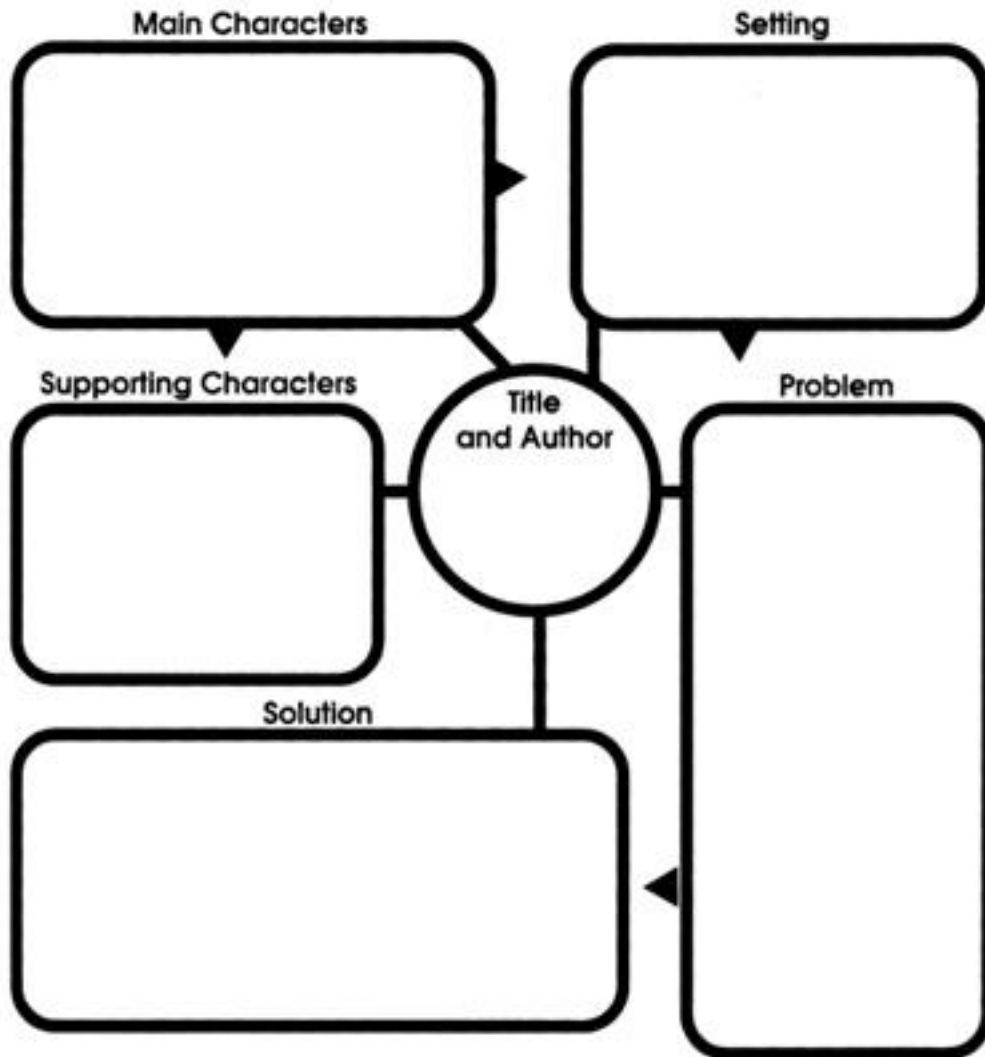
Magical clothing

Test of identity

Punishment of villains

Transformation\Outcomes

Story Map



State Standards:

1.1.7: Learning to Read Independently

1.1.7.F: Explain meaning of unknown words from knowledge of vocabulary and context clues across various subject areas

1.1.7.G: Demonstrate after reading an understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction including public documents.

1.3.7: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

1.3.7.B: Compare and contrast literary elements by an author including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, and tone.

1.3.7.F: Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

1.4.7: Types of Writing

1.4.7.B: Write multi-paragraph informational pieces (e.g., letters, descriptions, reports, instructions, essays, articles, interviews).

1.5.7: Quality of Writing

1.5.7.A: Write with a sharp, distinct focus.

1.5.7.F: Edit writing using the conventions of language.