

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 532

CS 511 992

TITLE Fairy Tales around the World. [Lesson Plan].

SPONS AGENCY Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.; MCI WorldCom, Arlington, VA.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE 2002-06-05

NOTE 14p.

AVAILABLE FROM For full text: [http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson\\_index.asp](http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson_index.asp).

PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Childrens Literature; Class Activities; \*Fairy Tales; \*Folk Culture; \*Language Arts; Learning Activities; Lesson Plans; Primary Education; Skill Development; Student Educational Objectives; Units of Study

IDENTIFIERS \*Oral Literature; Standards for the English Language Arts; Venn Diagrams

## ABSTRACT

Fairy tales are stories either created or strongly influenced by oral traditions. Their plots feature stark conflicts between good and evil, with magic and luck determining the usually happy endings. While each culture and geographic region of the world has its own body of folk tales and fairy tales, certain themes and motifs tend to be repeated across many cultures and time periods. Universal human emotions such as love, hate, courage, kindness, and cruelty appear in bold, broad strokes on the canvas of fairy tales. This lesson plan for a unit on fairy tales intended for children in grades K-2: cites subject areas, time required, and skills developed; provides an introduction; poses guiding questions; gives learning objectives; provides teachers with ideas about teaching the lesson; suggests (and delineates) six classroom activities; lists resources; addresses National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) standards alignment; and offers two Venn diagrams. (NKA)

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# Fairy Tales Around the World

## Introduction

Fairy tales are stories either created or strongly influenced by oral traditions. Their plots feature stark conflicts between good and evil, with magic and luck determining the usually happy endings. While each culture and geographic region of the world has its own body of folk tales and fairy tales that it considers "its own," certain themes and motifs tend to be repeated across many cultures and time periods. Universal human emotions such as love, hate, courage, kindness, and cruelty appear in bold, broad strokes on the canvas of fairy tales.

Because of the worldwide ubiquity of fairy tales, their imagery and tropes have had a vast impact on many different forms of literature. The elements and echoes of fairy tales are alive in plays, movies, and books for all ages. Students should read and learn to understand fairy tales so that they can better comprehend the structures of literature as well as for the sake of the wonder, pleasure, and human understanding these stories can provide in their own right.

## Guiding Questions:

What is a fairy tale? What are some special characteristics of fairy tales? What kinds of plots, characters, and settings do we expect to find in these stories? What makes each fairy tale unique? Why are fairy tales so prevalent as a form of storytelling throughout the world? How have illustrations been used to make fairy tales more enjoyable?

## Learning Objectives

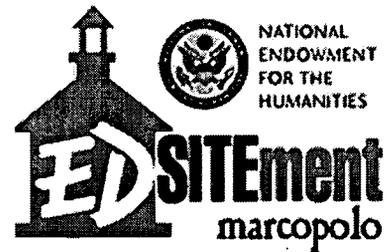
After completing the lessons in this unit, students will be able to:

- Give a simple definition of a fairy tale.
- Identify some typical characteristics of a fairy tale using literary terms such as **character**, **setting**, and **plot**.
- Sort fairy tales into common "tale types" or "versions" and become familiar with multiple versions of several tale types.
- Re-tell, in their own words, a few favorite fairy tales.
- Use illustrations to "tell" a familiar fairy tale.
- Recognize feelings and emotions within fairy tales that are common to universal humanity.

## Preparing to Teach This Lesson

A Note and a Warning about "Original Versions" of Fairy Tales:

They don't exist. As you are selecting fairy tales to share with the students, be wary of getting caught up in a search for an "original version." Most of the European fairy tales in publication today for children are based on the stories collected by the Germans Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in the 19th century. Their collection, *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, contains 277 stories that they transcribed from oral storytellers and re-wrote for publication. Because theirs



GRADES K-2



Little Red Riding Hood  
Woodcut Print from  
[American Memory web site](#)

## Subject Areas

### Art and Culture

Folklore

### Literature and Language Arts

Fiction

World

## Time Required

- Lesson 1: four forty-minute class periods
- Lesson 2: three forty-minute class periods
- Lesson 3: three forty-minute class periods
- Lesson 4: three forty-minute class periods
- Lesson 5: three forty-minute class periods
- Lesson 6: two forty-minute class periods

## Skills

- Listening
- Analyzing written and oral texts for plot, theme, and characterization
- Working collaboratively
- Comparing and contrasting

is the best known and one of the earliest collections of stories taken from oral storytellers, it has the reputation as being the source of the "original version" of the stories most often retold in illustrated books and films.

In fact, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected their stories not from peasants living in the countryside, but from urban middle class women who had heard them from their servants or nurse maids. The Grimm brothers published five editions of the *Kinder und Hausmarchen*, revising each new edition to create more polished literary stories. Besides adding colorful detail, dialogue, and transitions, the Grimms eliminated sexual material and added moral observations to many of the stories in order to make them (as they deemed) more suitable for family reading.

An additional complication relating to origins of fairy tales is the phenomenon of the literary fairy tale—a story based on magical elements and characters written by a single identifiable author. The literary fairy tale came into popularity in France and Italy during the 17th century, where it was a kind of sophisticated parlor game for adults in aristocratic society. Many of the literary tales were influenced by, and in turn, influenced the oral tales. For example, the version of *Beauty and the Beast* that is best known today was created as a literary tale by Mme. Leprince De Beaumont in 1757.

## Suggested Activities

1: Defining the Fairy Tale

2: Identifying Fairy Tale Characteristics

3: Understanding the Concept of Tale Types or Versions

4: Re-telling Fairy Tales

5: Understanding How Illustrations Can "Tell" the Story

6: Recognizing the Commonality of Emotions Expressed in Fairy Tales Throughout the World

### 1: Defining the Fairy Tale

**Teacher preparation:** Choose a wide variety of fairy tales to read aloud and share with the students. Look in your school library's fairy tale section and browse through Dr. D. L. Ashliman's Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts website, available through Internet Public Library. Plan to include stories that exemplify a variety of tale types, such as "Cinderella," "The Fisherman and His Wife," and "Jack and the Beanstalk." (See below for specific suggestions.)

Read *The European Folk Tale* by Max Luthi (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982) in order to gain an understanding of the special characteristics of folk and fairy tales.

### Activity: Introducing and Defining the Fairy Tale

Begin by simply reading some of the above fairy tales to the students so that they can start to develop an intuitive awareness of this type of literature. For the young child, it is probably enough to understand that a fairy tale is an old story that was passed down by word of mouth for many years before finally being written down, and for which an original author is usually unknown.

Ask the students to sing a popular jump rope rhyme or counting out rhyme such as "Eeeny meeny miney

Gathering, classifying, and interpreting written and oral information  
Making inferences and drawing conclusions  
Observing and describing  
Developing vocabulary  
Understanding fairy tales  
Connecting across cultures

### Additional Data

Date Created: 06/05/02

moe." Ask them how they know it-did someone read it to them from a book? Of course not! They learned it from someone who sang it to them. Where did THAT person learn it? From someone ELSE. Does anyone know who the original author of "Eeny meeny miney moe" is? It's the same with most of the fairy tales we know. They were passed along and shared by people just telling them to each other for many, many years and sometimes centuries. Finally, some people began to write them down and make them into books.

Show the students the word "Retold" on the front cover of a fairy tale. Why does it say "retold" instead of just "by"? Was Richard Walker the person who originally made up the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*? No, he just put it in his own words and wrote it down and made illustrations for it. Some fairy tale books "cheat" by NOT including the word "retold."

Have students repeat the definition of a fairy tale at the beginning of each lesson: "Folk tales and fairy tales are old, old stories, passed down by word of mouth for hundreds of years, and nobody knows who the original author was." Help the students to chant this definition in a rhythmic way so it's fun for them!

Every time you read or share a fairy tale with the students, have a child place a pin on a large wall map. Keep a list of each country from where each story comes. By the end of this series of activities, you should have a wall map of the world covered with pins and a long list of countries on a poster. Ask the students what conclusions they would draw from these visual aids. Elicit from the students a recognition that fairy tales are told by many different cultures and countries throughout the world.

#### **RESOURCES:**

##### **Examples of "Cinderella" Tale Type on the Web:**

From the website Dr. D. L. Ashliman's [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#) web site, click on the link to "[Cinderella](#)" tale types. From there, you have many choices of full text versions of "Cinderella" tale types from throughout the world. Some good choices might include:

*Baba Yaga* (Russia)

*The Cinder Maid* (reconstructed from various European sources by Joseph Jacobs)

*Rashin Coatie* (Scotland)

*Conkiajgharuna, the Little Rag Girl* (Georgia)

##### **Examples of "Cinderella" Tale Type in Book Form:**

Knight, Hilary. *Cinderella*. New York: Random House, 1978, 2001.

Pollock, Penny. *The Turkey Girl*. Boston: Little, Brown, c1996.

Steptoe, John, 1950. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, c1987.

Climo, Shirley. *The Korean Cinderella*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

##### **Examples of "Fisherman and His Wife" Tale Type on the Web:**

From the website Dr. D. L. Ashliman's [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#) web site, click on the link to "[Fisherman and His Wife](#)" tale types. From there, you have several choices of full text versions of "Fisherman and His Wife" versions. Some good choices might include:

*The Stonecutter* (Japan)

*Hanns Duden* (Germany)

**Examples of "Fisherman and His Wife" Tale Type in Book Form:**

Wells, Rosemary. *The Fisherman and His Wife*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, c1998.

Polacco, Patricia. *Luba and the Wren*. New York: Philomel Books, c1999.

**Examples of "Jack and the Beanstalk" Tale Type on the Web:**

From the website Dr. D. L. Ashliman's [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#) web site, click on the link "[Jack and the Beanstalk](#)" tale types. From there, you have several choices of full text versions of "Jack and the Beanstalk" versions: One good choices might include:

*Jack and the Beanstalk* as told by Joseph Jacobs

**Examples of "Jack and the Beanstalk" Tale Type in Book Form:**

Beneduce, Ann. *Jack and the Beanstalk*. New York: Philomel Books, c1999.

Walker, Richard. *Jack and the Beanstalk*, New York: Barefoot Books, c1999.

**2: Identifying Fairy Tale Characteristics: Character, Setting, and Plot**

**Teacher Preparation:** Fairy tales usually feature one-dimensional iconic characters and settings such as peasants, witches, royalty, villages, forests, and castles. While fairy tales often pit good characters against evil ones, moral teaching is not necessarily inherent in the stories. Peasants, abandoned children, and simpletons attain wealth and happy marriages as often through sheer luck and the fortuitous intervention of magic as through cleverness or good actions.

**Activity:**

**Characters:**

Brainstorm a list of characters that occur in fairy tales. Make a large chart to keep posted in the classroom. On the left, list each story by title and along the top list the various character types such as king, princess, peasant, youngest sister, cruel older sisters, simpleton, cruel stepmother, giant, and witch. Let students take turns putting checkmarks in the appropriate boxes with each new story you read to them. Make another similar chart for settings and keep track of the settings in each story.

**Settings:**

Show students pictures from books and magazines of a variety of settings including those that are typical of fairy tales (castles, cottages, mountains, rivers, and forests) and those that are not typical of fairy tales (apartment buildings and city streets).

Invite students to make a wand-waving motion when they see pictures typical of fairy tales and a truck-driving motion when they see pictures that are not typical.

**Plot:**

Make a set of cards with magnetic strips on the backs. On the cards, write brief phrases, some describing typical plot elements of fairy tales and others describing plot elements that are not typical.

**Fairy tale plot elements might include:**

Hero (or heroine) heroine has bad luck

Hero (or heroine) must perform impossible tasks

Hero (or heroine) must fight a villain

Hero (or heroine) meets magical helpers

Hero (or heroine) is treated badly

Hero (or heroine) is in danger

Magic spells

Villain is punished

Hero (or heroine) is rewarded with wealth

Hero (or heroine) is rewarded with a happy marriage

Things happen in threes (three battles, three tasks)

**Non-fairy tale plot elements might include:**

Hero (or heroine) always has good luck

Hero (or heroine) is always treated nicely

Hero (or heroine) solves problems without any help

Story is realistic-no magic

No one is punished in the story

Hero (or heroine) is never in danger

Hero (or heroine) does everyday ordinary things

As a class, have students take turns placing cards on magnetic board under headings "Fairy Tale" and "Non-Fairy Tale."

**Small group work:**

Divide students in small groups and distribute easy-to-read fairy tales to each group. Have students work as a team to record the characters, setting, and typical plot elements that they find in their fairy tales. You may wish to do this activity several times, with groups focussing only on character one day, only on setting

another day, and only on plot on a third day.

### 3: Understanding the Concept of Tale Types or Versions

**Teacher Preparation:** One of the most fascinating aspects of the fairy tale is the way in which recognizable plots and story elements reappear in slightly different guises in many different cultures and time periods. For example, the motif of the abused youngest sister achieving wealth and happiness—best known as the "Cinderella" tale type—appears in hundreds of versions from African, Asian, American, and European countries and as far back in written sources as 850 A.D. Browse through Dr. D. L. Ashliman's [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#) web site to get a sense of the variety of tale types and motifs to be found in fairy tales. Browse through *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* edited by Jack Zipes (New York: Norton c2001). This anthology organizes fairy tales by a variety of tale types and motifs.

#### Activity:

After the students are familiar with the typical characters and settings of the fairy tale, introduce the concept of **tale type**. Re-read some the "Cinderella" stories listed above and ask the students what is the same in each story. Use the [Cinderella-Type Tale Venn Diagram](#), provided in pdf format, and as a group fill out similarities and differences between two different versions of the Cinderella tale type.

See the web site [Cinderella Stories](#), which may be reached from the Children's Literature Web Guide, available from the EDSITEMent-reviewed resource [Internet Public Library](#). Help the students to understand that a fairy tale that tells of a good and beautiful younger sister finding wealth and happiness after being treated cruelly by mother or stepmother and older sisters is the "Cinderella" tale type. This tale type has many different versions set in various countries. Help the students to notice that many of these versions feature a shoe, a doll, or a beautiful dress.

Then read a different tale type, such as Beauty and the Beast, The Foolish Friend, or Eat Me When I'm Fatter (see Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts, available from [Dr. Ashliman's homepage](#). Dr. Ashliman's page is a link on the Children's Literature Web Guide, available through the EDSITEMent-reviewed resource [Internet Public Library](#).)

Expose students to at least three different tale types with at least two versions of each type. Add another large wall chart to the classroom with several tale types and space for recording stories under each type. Have students draw small illustrations on the chart to go along with each tale type. As students become comfortable with tale types, allow them to work in small groups with two stories per group. Have each group fill out the [Two Tale Types Venn Diagram](#), provided in pdf format, showing similarities and differences between fairy tales of two contrasting tale types, such as Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk. Be sure to first model this as a whole group activity first.

Divide students into small groups and provide each group with a new version of one of the familiar tale types. Dr. D. L. Ashliman's [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#) web site provides multiple examples for most of the tale types listed. Ask students to read the story and identify the tale type. Have them record plot and character elements that identify the story as a certain tale type. Use a T-chart to do this. (See example.)

<b>EXAMPLE:</b>	
Story Title (teacher provides):	Tale Type, Plot, and Character Elements: (students write):

### 4: Re-telling Fairy Tales

#### Activity Number 1-Using Graphic Organizers to Re-Tell Plots:

Read "Lambikin," which is one of the "Eat Me When I'm Fatter" fairy tales (accessible from Dr. D. L. Ashliman's Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts) web site, available through the EDSITement-reviewed resource Internet Public Library. Lead the whole class in filling out the Retelling the Plot of "Lambikin" graphic organizer, provided in pdf format, as they re-tell the story from memory. (See example). Note that the organizer provides labeled boxes for each step of the plot where students can fill in the appropriate details.

### **Retelling the Plot of "Lambikin"**

EXAMPLE:

**Box 1:** Once upon a time: (students fill in the rest)

**Box 2:** Lambikin meets first animal:

**Box 3:** Lambikin meets second animal:

**Box 4:** Lambikin meets third animal:

**Box 5:** Lambikin arrives:

**Box 6:** Lambikin starts home:

**Box 7:** Lambikin meets first animal:

**Box 8:** Lambikin meets second animal:

**Box 9:** Lambikin meets third animal:

**Box 10:** Lambikin arrives:

Read aloud a version of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" (accessible from Dr. Ashliman's web site. Divide students into small groups and have them fill out the Retelling the Plot of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" graphic organizer, provided in pdf format.

### **Retelling the Plot of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff"**

Box 1: Once upon a time... (students fill in the rest)

Box 2: The first billy goat...

Box 3: The second billy goat...

Box 4: The third billy goat...

Box 5: And the three billy goats lived...

### **Activity Number Two-Using illustrations to re-tell fairy tales:**

After reading and discussing a variety of fairy tales, have the students explore some web sites that feature illustrations of well-known fairy tales, such as *The Cinderella Project*\* or *The Red Riding Hood Project*.\*\* Be sure to read aloud at least one version of each fairy tale before taking the students to the web site. As a

group, view illustrations from the *Cinderella Project* web site. Then have the students decide which of two different illustrators' work they prefer. The final step is to have the students select three illustrations that represent the three significant parts of the story, print them out, and re-tell the entire story using the selected illustrations as focal points.

Having completed the whole-group activity, you can then move on to giving the students an opportunity to do the same task as pairs or as individuals. Have the students use a different web site with many illustrations, such as the *Red Riding Hood Project*. Have students pick three-four key illustrations, copy them to a disk or folder, then retell the story in their own words using their selected illustrations as focal points.

\* **Cinderella illustrations**-Go to the EDSITEment-reviewed resource [Internet Public Library](#), then Children's Literature Web Guide, then Stories on the Web, then Folklore Myth and Legend and finally [The Cinderella Project](#).

\*\* **For Red Riding Hood illustrations**-Go to the EDSITEment-reviewed resource [Internet Public Library](#), then Children's Literature Web Guide, then Stories on the Web, then Folklore Myth and Legend and finally [Little Red Riding Hood Project](#).

## 5: Understanding How Illustrations Can "Tell" the Story

Web sites that provide access to many different illustrations can also be used to help students to see how illustrations can help to "tell" the story. Read aloud a version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* without showing the students any pictures. Then have the students choose three scenes to illustrate by hand. After the students have completed their illustrations, show them the web site [Jack in the Beanstalk Project](#).

\*\*\*Ask students to identify the illustrations within several different versions that most closely match their own illustration. For example, if a child chooses the moment when Jack is cutting down the beanstalk as the subject of his or her own hand-drawn illustration, have the child find the same scene in the illustrated versions on the web site. Invite the students to list details of clothing, color, setting, and expression that differentiate one web site illustration from another.

\*\*\*For Jack and the Beanstalk illustrations, go to [Cinderella Project](#), and from there go to the [Jack and the Beanstalk archives](#).

## 6: Recognizing the Commonality of Emotions Expressed in Fairy Tales Throughout the World

### Activity:

Write down a list of emotions and ask students to share memories of experiences they have had with these feelings:

- love
- hate
- fear
- loneliness
- sadness
- joy
- surprise

Distribute paper to the students with a grid of 12 squares on the paper. (Four rows of 3 squares). The words from the above list should be written in the squares, one per square. This leaves some empty squares for the

students to add more words if they wish. Ask the students to make a small drawing illustrating each word. They may add more words and drawings to the empty squares if they wish.

In small groups, have the students re-read some of the fairy tales already read aloud as a large group or, for more able students, read some new fairy tales. Ask each child to place a check mark inside a "feeling" box whenever they encounter that feeling in the story. Have the students gather as a whole group and report back to the larger group some of the feelings they found in their stories.

## Selected EDSITement Web Sites

Internet Public Library (<http://www.ipl.org/>)

- Children's Literature Web Guide (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/>)
- Dr. D. L. Ashliman's Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts web site (<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>)
- The Cinderella Project (<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~engdept/cinderella/cinderella.html>)
- The Little Red Riding Hood Project (<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~engdept/lrrh/lrrhhome.htm>)
- The Jack and the Beanstalk Project (<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~engdept/jack/jackhome.html>)

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## Other Information

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## Standards Alignment

1. NCTE/IRA-1

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. more

2. NCTE/IRA-10

Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

3. NCTE/IRA-2

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. more

4. NCTE/IRA-3

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. more

5. NCTE/IRA-4

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. more

6. NCTE/IRA-5

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. [more](#)

7. [NCTE/IRA-6](#)

Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts. [more](#)

8. [NCTE/IRA-7](#)

Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. [more](#)

9. [NCTE/IRA-8](#)

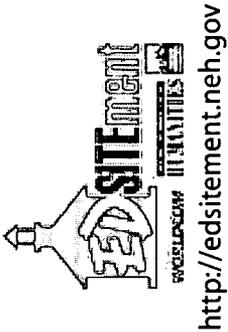
Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. [more](#)

10. [NCTE/IRA-9](#)

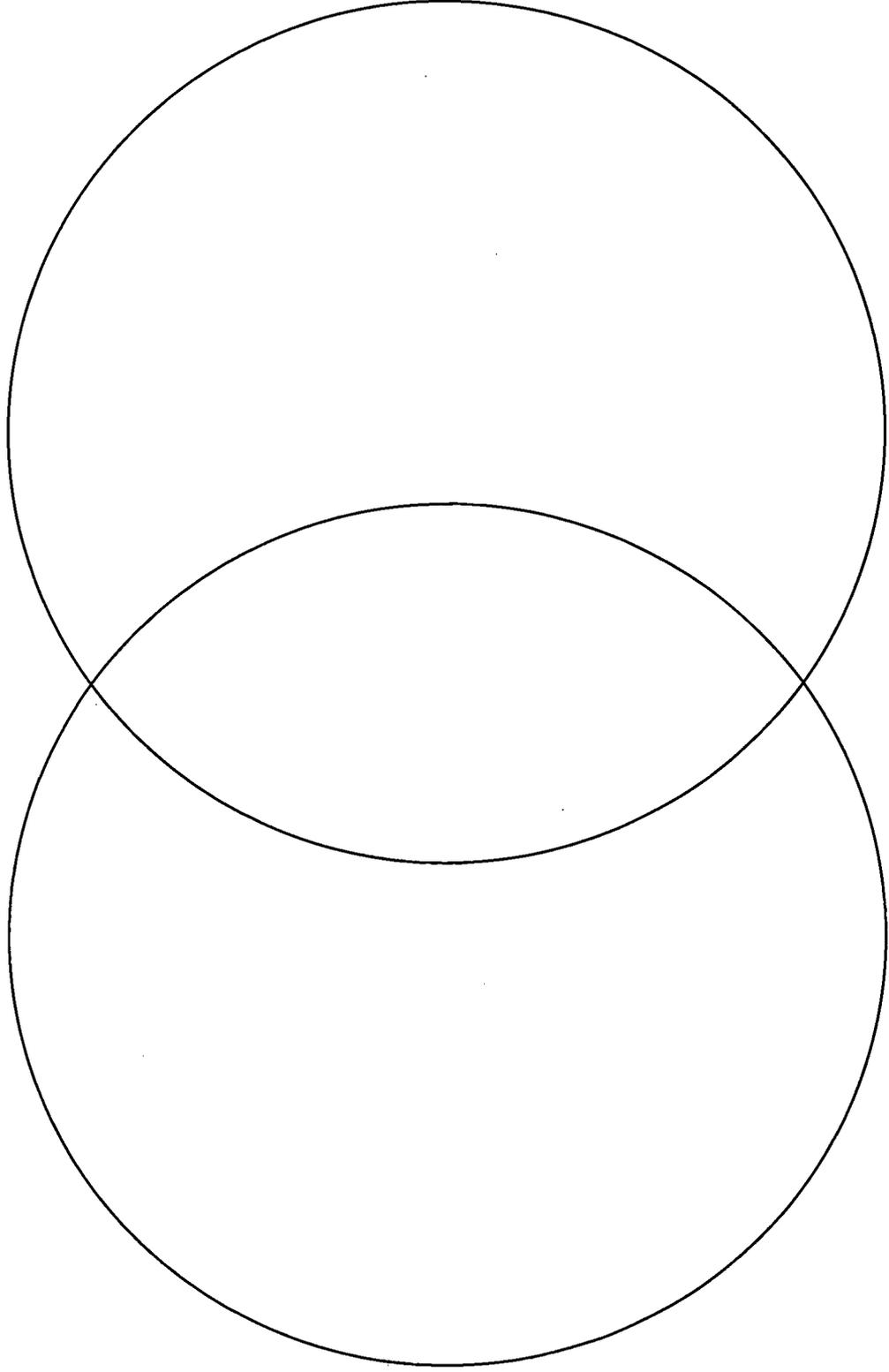
Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

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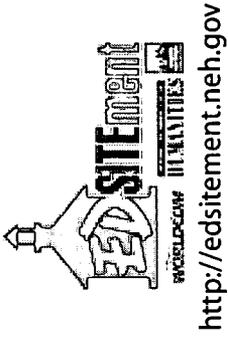


# Cinderella Venn Diagram

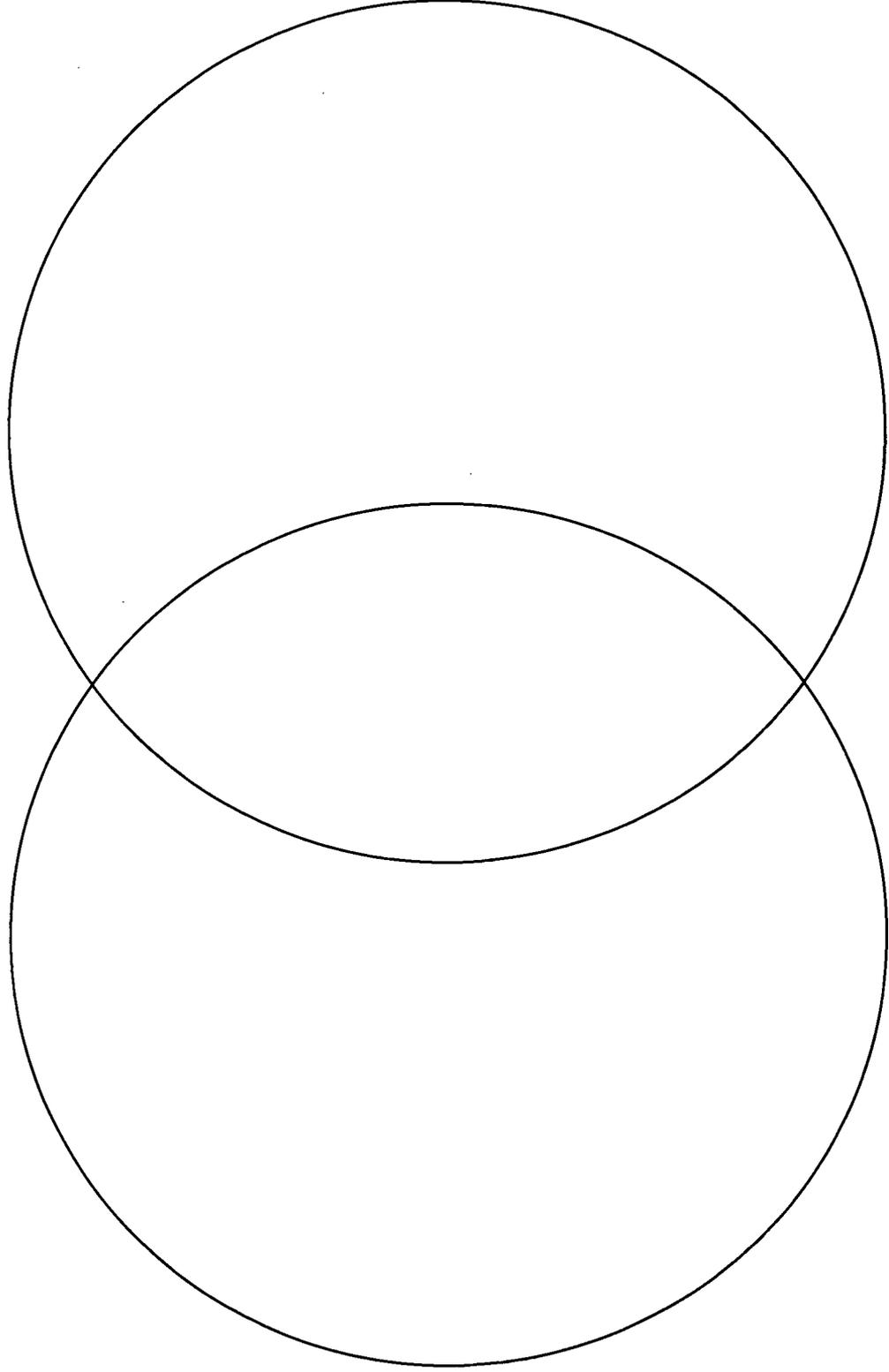


CINDERELLA                      OTHER CINDERELLA-LIKE TALES

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Two Tales Venn Diagram



TALE TYPE 1

TALE TYPE 2



*U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
National Library of Education (NLE)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*



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