

Using Fables and Fairytales in the Classroom as an Idea-Generating Tool

Do your students ever get bogged down by trying to think of an idea? Starting with a known story—a fable, a fairytale, or even a favorite picture or chapter book—can help take the pressure off, freeing kids to be creative and have fun with their writing.

Start by reading adapted fables and fairytales, or allowing your students time to look through a selection of adapted fables and fairytales independently. Alternatively, you can even start with the original versions of the fables and fairytales and then move on to the modern versions with their unique twists.

Here is a list of possible selections to include, in addition to *Hare and Tortoise Race Across Israel*:

1. *Goldilocks and Just One Bear* by Leigh Hodgkinson
2. *The Three Ninja Pigs* by Corey Rosen Schwartz
3. *The Three Little Pigs and the Somewhat Bad Wolf* by Mark Teague
4. *Goatilocks and the Three Bears* by Erica Perl
5. *Ninja Red Riding Hood* by Corey Rosen Schwartz
6. *Snow White and the 77 Dwarfs* by David Cali
7. *Cactus Soup* by Eric Kimmel
8. *The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing* by Helen Lester
9. *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka
10. *Trust me, Jack's Beanstalk Stinks* by Eric Braun
11. *Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs* by Mo Willems

These stories illustrate four different ways of changing a known story.

1. Change the characters.

Why stop with the three little pigs? How about the three little germs? The three little aliens? The three little panda bears? And sure, Goldilocks and the Three Bears is fun. But maybe Goldilocks and the Three Marshmallows would be even sweeter.

2. Change the setting.

Where else could Hare and Tortoise race? Across the school? Antarctica? The universe? And speaking of Antarctica...what if the Three Little Pigs lived there? Would they be building igloos? How would their story be different?

3. Change the numbers

Goldilocks has enough trouble with three bears. What if she had 33 bears to contend with? Or 333? Or what if the tables were turned? Three Goldilocks and one bear?

4. Change the point of view

What if Hare tells the story of his big race with Tortoise? Will he come off as a bragger who can't pull off a win? Or will there be a different explanation? Maybe Hare says he just let Tortoise win to be nice....or maybe Tortoise dropped a banana peel, which Hare tripped on...the possibilities are endless!

Your students may also enjoy mixing and matching fairy tales and fables to create a crazy mash-up. Is Snow White able to beat both Hare *and* Tortoise in a race? What if Jack climbs up the beanstalk to find the 3 Bears' house at the top, and he is the one to eat their porridge (climbing up a beanstalk makes a guy hungry, you know)?

Encourage your students to write and illustrate their ideas. You will end up with a whole classroom library of new fractured fables and fairytales...perfect for end-of-the-day storytime, or for students who finish an assignment early and are in need of a fun read.