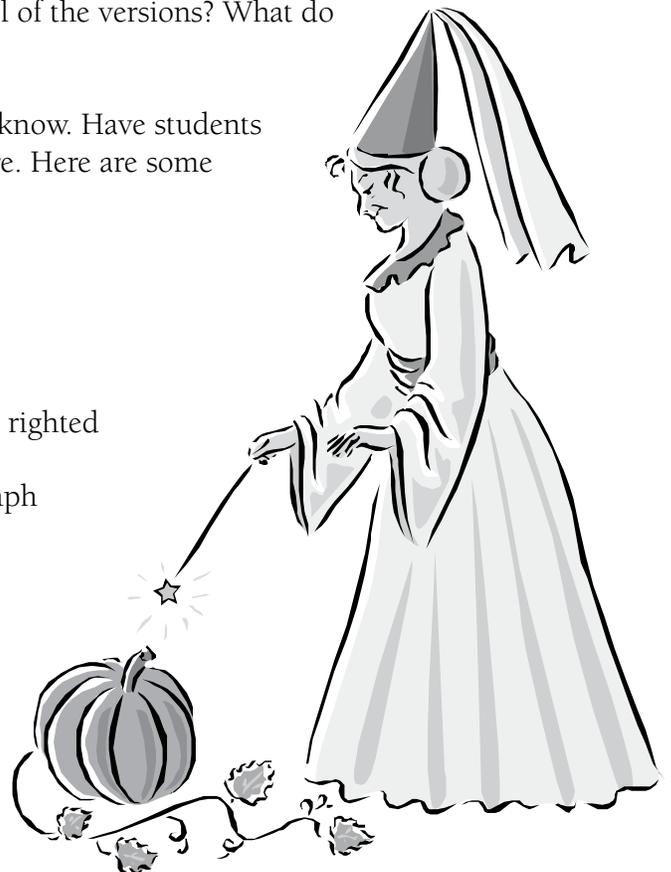


# Anatomy of a Fairy Tale Class Discussion Guide

Have each group show its Venn diagram and mention major similarities and differences between their version and the familiar French version you read together. Then discuss all the versions, using these prompts:

- Is the heroine a strong or weak character? A victim or a patient sufferer?
- What role does the heroine's father play in the story? Describe his character.
- What form does the magical helper ("fairy godmother") take in different versions?
- Compare the emotional tone of different versions—some are darker, more gruesome or violent than others (stepsisters cut off parts of feet to fit shoe, etc.).
- Compare heroine's reaction to injustice at end of story—does she forgive or punish her tormenters?
- Compare the theme in various versions. Can the class agree on a theme that fits all versions? (It might be something like "Virtue is rewarded in the end" or "Good character will triumph over outward power or beauty.") Why do students think this common message comes through from so many different times and places in the world?
- Do the characters in this story seem familiar, if exaggerated? Do they remind students of people they know? Why do the same general characters appear in all of the versions? What do they represent in terms of people and human nature?
- Think about these stories and other fairy tales students know. Have students suggest common elements that define the fairy tale genre. Here are some generally accepted characteristics of many fairy tales:
  - Usually set in the past
  - Characters that are obviously good or evil
  - There is a problem to be solved or an injustice to be righted
  - Magical elements that help a worthy character triumph
  - A moral lesson or warning about behavior
  - A happy ending for the "good" character.
- Can students suggest other familiar stories that fit this pattern?



# Anatomy of a Fairy Tale Worksheet

**Complete this worksheet with your group. You will analyze your version of the Cinderella story and then compare it with versions studied by other groups, to learn about the elements and characteristics of this story and fairy tales in general.**

Title of our version of the Cinderella story: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Country or region of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Find that country or region on a map. Record the title of the book and the page number where you found the map: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What time period does this version date from? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the primary language of that country or region? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe one or more ways that this version of the story reflects the culture it comes from: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the setting of the story (time and place in which it takes place): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name and briefly describe the main characters in the story: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Briefly summarize the plot of the story: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Anatomy of a Fairy Tale Worksheet

What is the overall tone of the story (happy, scary, sad, funny . . .?) Is the ending happy or sad?

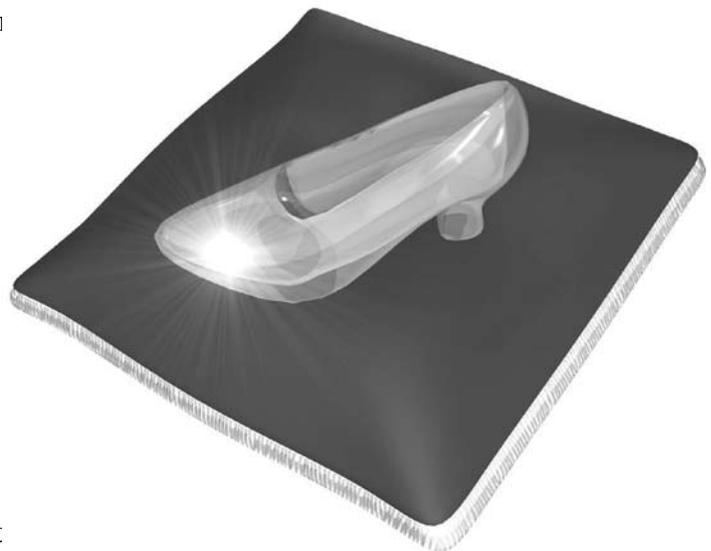
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What is the theme or message of the story? What do you think the storyteller wants you to learn from the story? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which of these common elements of the Cinderella story do you find in your version? Check all that apply.

- mistreated heroine of good character, rewarded in the end
- heroine's mother has died
- stepmother and or stepsisters mistreat heroine
- heroine forced to do all the work
- heroine sleeps in ashes by the fire
- celebration held to find nobleman a bride
- heroine denied permission to attend
- magical figure helps heroine
- heroine goes to celebration by magical transport
- heroine attends celebration, meets nobleman
- heroine leaves celebration suddenly
- heroine loses shoe (or other item)
- nobleman searches for owner of lost shoe (or item)
- nobleman finds heroine; rewards her or raises status (marries her?)
- heroine forgives those who mistreated her
- heroine has those who mistreated her punished



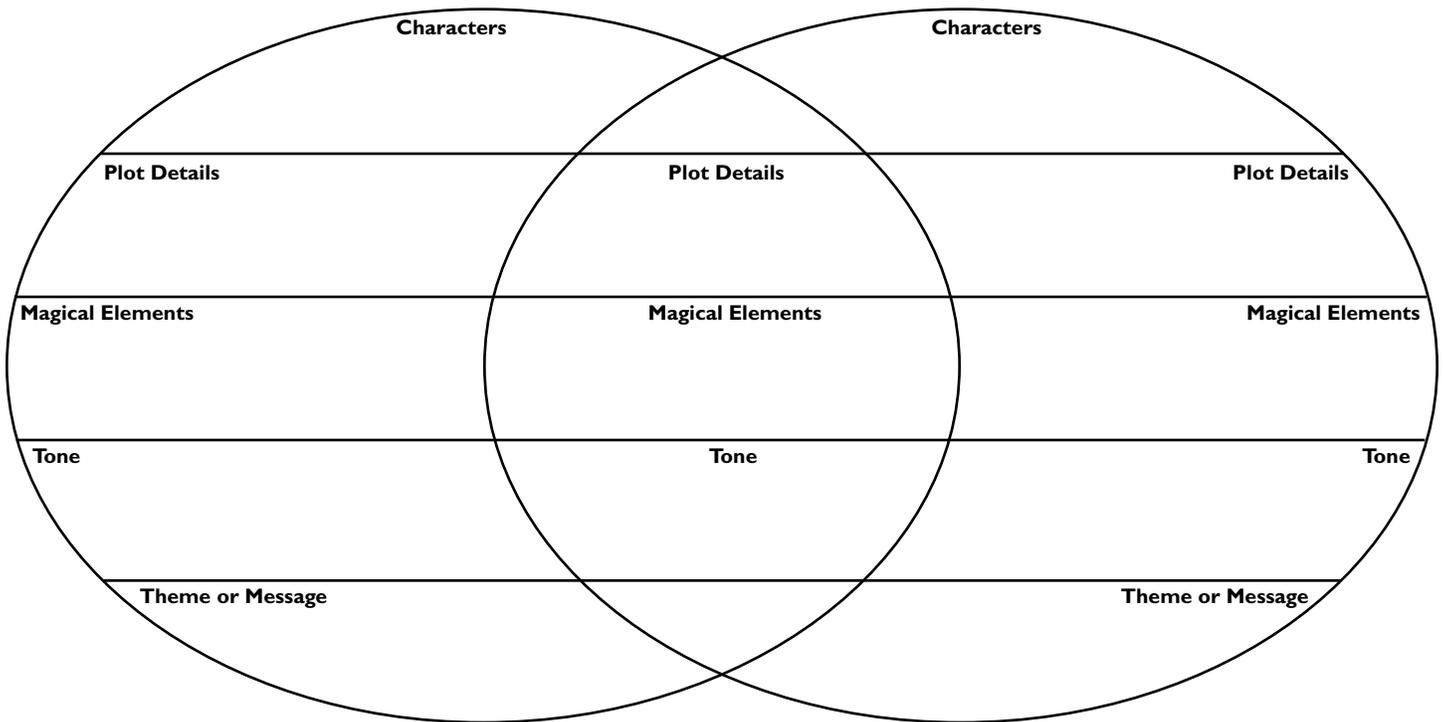
# Anatomy of a Fairy Tale Worksheet

Fill in the Venn diagram below, comparing and contrasting your version of the story with the familiar French version you read as a class. List common elements in the overlapping center area. Sample interesting differences in the separate areas for each version.

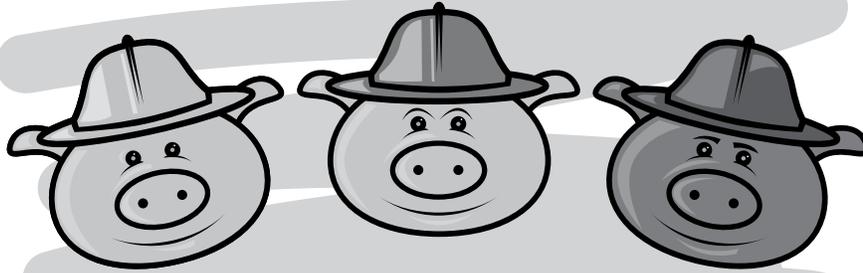
“Cinderella”  
(French version)

\_\_\_\_\_

(your group’s version)



# WHAT IS A FOLKTALE? Discussion Guide



Set this up ahead by asking several students to record a particular tale, like “Little Red Riding Hood” or “The Three Little Pigs,” as they know it. Play the recordings for the class and compare them, using questions like these:

- What details do the different versions have in common? What details are different? Do the differences change the basic plot or meaning of the story?
- What is the moral or message of this story? Do we all get the same message from the story?
- Have all the students heard this story before?

Talk about the qualities of folktales, using these prompts and ideas:

- How did you learn this story? Who read or told it to you, or did you see it on TV or as a movie? While we have books and movies of many of these stories now, they come from much older versions that were passed down as oral stories from older to younger generations, as part of everyday life.
- What is the purpose of this story? While folktales may be just for fun, they are also meant to explain a mystery of nature, teach good character, warn of dangers, preserve history, bring people together, or encourage proper behavior.
- Do the characters in this story remind you of people you know? Most folk tales have characters that seem familiar to us because they show qualities like cleverness, greed, laziness, kindness, or courage, that we recognize as common human traits. Similar stories develop in different cultures all over the world because human nature is the same everywhere; our basic needs, wants, and feelings are similar, no matter where we live.

Finish by reading a good picture book version of the story you started with.

