

Fun with Folktales!

• Storytime •

by | Nancy K. Wallace

Grades
PK-1

Folktales have endured for generations. They have been passed down orally, written and rewritten, and still have meaning today. New versions of old tales are being published each year, allowing this rich tradition to continue. Children who are permitted to participate in the telling of these stories will remember them for a long time. Each of these picture book folktales has an interactive component to make your Story Time memorable.

Before You Begin...

Preparation for *It Could Always be Worse* from *Do Me! Stories From Around the World for Young Children* by Susan Pagnucci & Franco Pagnucci. Bur Oak Press, Inc., 1993.

Copy the pictures from *Do Me!* of the old man, his wife and children along with the chickens, goat and cow. Since this story is a little longer, you may only want to do it once. Make multiple pictures of the children and chickens from the book so that each child can have a part in the story. The pictures can be hung with yarn around the children's necks. If you have time, the children can color the pictures as a craft project.

Spoon Puppets 101: Preparation for *The Princess and the Pea* retold by John Cech. Sterling Publishing Co, Inc., 2007.

The **Storytime section** that includes the story of the Princess and the Pea uses wooden spoon puppets. You will need one wooden spoon at least 8" long, one wooden clip clothespin, ¼ yard of fabric, and acrylic paints for each puppet.

- Paint the face of your character on the back of the spoon using acrylic paints. Accentuate the eyes and be sure to use a blush color for

the cheeks. Acrylics are very forgiving. If you make a mistake, allow the spoon to dry and paint over it. Hair can be painted on, too. A painted neck makes your figure look more graceful. When you are satisfied, seal your spoons with a coat of spray polyurethane. (Spray your spoons outside or somewhere with plenty of ventilation.)

- Dresses for the queen and princess can be made with very little fabric. Cut two 2 ½" x 4" rectangles of fabric for the bodice. Put one rectangle under the spoon handle in the chest position and the other on top, right sides out. Match the edges. Turning the fabric under, pin and then hand sew a ¼" seam at the top of the shoulder, tying off your thread on each side of the spoon handle. Make sure the material is tight around the handle. Then turn under both ends of the rectangle (where the sleeve will connect) and sew a ¼" seam. Lightly stuff the bodice front and back to form a natural looking chest and shoulder. Finish the bottom seam by turning in the edges and sewing it closed. Lace or braid can be hot glued or sewn around the neck.



Spoon doll bodice and sleeve

- Cut two 4" x 4" rectangles for the sleeves. Turn under and sew a small hem on one edge. Fold the rectangle in half with the hem at the bottom. Machine or hand stitch a ¼" seam on the side opposite the fold, forming a tube. Baste across the top edge and gather

tightly. Take the clip clothespin apart, discarding the metal spring. Insert one half of the clothespin inside the sleeve (pointed end toward the gathered shoulder). Stuff the sleeve lightly. Baste sleeve $\frac{1}{4}$ " from hemmed edge. Pull thread tightly around the wooden "hand" of the clothespin. Sew the gathered edge of the sleeve to the bodice.



Queen spoon doll

- The skirt is a rectangle seamed together at the back and gathered at the waist. Cut one 8" x 24" rectangle for the skirt. Make a small hem on one 24" side. Sew basting stitches along the other 24" side. Fold fabric in half and sew a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam on the 8" side. Gather the basting stitches to fit around the bottom of the bodice and hand sew. Your basic puppet is finished!

You can embellish these puppets a number of different ways! Braid makes a good crown, or you can substitute a gold pipe cleaner. Lace, beads or a ruffle can be added. A Prince requires a little more ingenuity. His shirt simply has a longer flatter bodice. The trousers are made separately. They are joined with a slit for the spoon handle in the back. He looks better with a cape to cover this odd arrangement! Once the face had been painted and dried, a spoon puppet requires about an hour to make.

Setting the Scene for Story Time

Use a table to set out your books. Stand the books upright and put the items you will be using to tell each story in front of the books. This creates excitement about what is to come and will prompt questions as the children enter the Storytelling area.

To Begin

Gather the children around you. Tell them that you are going to need some help telling today's stories. Remind them that everyone will have a chance to participate, but they have to take turns.

Picture Book

Hattie and the Fox by Mem Fox. Aladdin, 1992.

Hattie, a black hen, sees a nose in the bushes. Alarmed, she tells the pig, the cow, the horse, the sheep and the goose. But no one seems to care. Then Hattie sees two eyes and a nose in the bushes. While it is obvious that a fox is lurking in the shrubbery, the other animals repeat their stock responses "Who cares," "So what," and "Well, well." As Hattie sees more and more of the predator emerging from the bush, she continues to warn her friends. At last, Hattie screams "It's a Fox!" and flies away. The cow saves the day by mooing loudly enough to scare the fox away. And the stunned animals are reduced to silence for the rest of the day.

Read the story aloud one time, so that everyone knows what happens. The pictures are bright and colorful—perfect for Storytime sharing.

Activity

This book can be lots of fun as an interactive story. Designate specific children to play the parts of the goose, the pig, the sheep, the horse, and the cow. Tell them you will be the narrator and read Hattie's part. Make name tags or provide puppets or stuffed animals for the kids to hold. Since each animal repeats his response several times, the lines will be easy to remember even for nonreaders. Read the story again, pausing for the children to respond. When Hattie yells "It's a fox!" have all the children run around frantically except for the cow which moos loudly. The story is short enough that it can be repeated multiple times to allow each child to take part.

Picture Book

The Princess and the Pea retold by John Cech. Sterling Publishing Co, Inc., 2007.

A prince, who is looking for a wife, has great difficulty locating a real princess. In the middle of a terrible storm, a young woman arrives at the door of the castle. She tells the Queen that she is the daughter of a King but has become separated from her family in the woods. The Queen concocts the idea of placing a pea under twenty mattresses, claiming that a real princess is so sensitive that she will never get a moment's rest. Fortunately, the princess announces at breakfast that she "didn't sleep a wink last night!" The prince who is a little wiser than his mother claims he could tell by her gentleness and kindness that she is a real princess and asks her to marry him.

Activity

Turn a shoe box into a bed and pile it high with "mattresses" cut from scraps of fabric. Use a dried pea, available in grocery stores, to put under the mattresses. Allow the kids to act out the play with the spoon puppets as many times as your schedule allows.

Interactive Story

It Could Always be Worse from *Do Me! Stories From Around the World for Young Children* by Susan Pagnucci & Franco Pagnucci. Bur Oak Press, Inc. 1993.

A poor man, who lives with too many family members in his one room hut, complains to the rabbi about his situation. He insists that things could not be worse than they already are. On repeated visits, his complaints escalate as the rabbi suggests that he bring one animal after another into his house. Finally, when the man is almost frantic, the rabbi tells him to remove the animals from his tiny hut. The poor man is, of course, amazed at the peace and quiet he finds when they are gone.

This book provides specific instructions for having children participate in the story. Two children join hands to form the house and the rest of the children become the characters. Full page illustrations of the chickens, goat, cow, old man, and his family members are provided to copy. Allow the children to act out the story as you read

it from the book. If you own one of the other versions of this story and don't have access to the one cited, simply make name tags for the animals and people.

Picture Book

Tops & Bottoms by Janet Stevens. Harcourt, Inc., 1995.

A lazy bear has lots of land. A hare, which lives nearby, has a large family to feed and no space for a garden. Hare proposes a business proposition: he will do all the work to plant and harvest on Bear's land and Bear may choose whether he wants the tops of the crops or the bottoms. Bear chooses "tops" and goes to sleep. Hare slaves all season growing carrots, radishes and beets. He chops off the tops and gives them to Bear. Bear is furious. He tells Hare to plant another crop. This time, he wants the bottoms. The clever hare grows lettuce, broccoli and celery and gives Bear only the roots. Again Bear insists on another garden, this time demanding both the "tops and bottoms" of the crops. Hare grows corn. He takes the ears and leaves only the stalks, tassels and roots for Bear. Bear dissolves their agreement and reluctantly plants and harvests his own garden. Hare has enough food leftover to sell. He is able to buy a little land and make his own garden never needing to do business with Bear again.

Activity: Veggies and Dip

Preparation

Buy a variety of the vegetables mentioned in the story. Try to find carrots and radishes with the tops still attached. Buy a head of broccoli and an entire bunch of celery. Buy or make dip. Provide napkins and small paper plates.

Show the children how the vegetables in the story grow and how Hare was able to trick Bear



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each time he planted them. Have an assistant cut up the vegetables while you are talking. Allow the children to sample the vegetables with dip.

Picture Book

The Full Belly Bowl by Jim Ayleworth. Atheneum, 1999.

An old man helps a tiny person, who is being carried off by a fox. As a token of the tiny man's gratitude, the old man is given "The Full Belly Bowl" which comes with instructions: the bowl is to be turned upside down after each use. The old man sits down to supper only to discover that the bowl multiplies whatever is inside it. For the first time in years he and his cat are able to eat their fill of stew. He soon finds that the bowl also multiplies buttons, spiders, and coins. It supplies him with enough money to go to town. He buys new clothes and food and returns with some money leftover. He discovers that he left the full belly bowl right side up in his absence and a mouse crawled inside. Now the house is overrun by mice. His cat, Angelina is frantically trying to catch them. He quickly puts Angelina into the bowl. Cat after cat emerges to catch the mice but the bowl breaks in the ensuing chaos. Left with dozens of lovely Angelinas, the old man decides that he really has everything he wants, after all.

I always tell read this story with a prop: a beautiful bowl I found at an import store that looks remarkably like the one in the book. I put a tiny note inside with the instructions and take it out and read it at the appropriate time. I also drop in a plastic spider and make it multiply by holding several other spiders concealed in my hand. Pennies work the same way. The kids always remember this little touch of magic, which adds to the story. If you have time, search for your own full belly bowl. I hope you will treasure it the way I treasure mine!

Craft: Simple coiled clay bowl

This craft uses modeling clay that is designed to air dry. You will also need small packages of spider webbing with plastic spiders (available from JoAnn Fabrics or Oriental Trading Company). Give each child a lump of clay. Teach them how to roll the clay into a long snake on the table. Then show them how to coil the clay tightly into a spiral shape to form a bowl. Give each child a spider and a piece of spider web to put in their bowls to

remind them of the story. Place the finished bowls on paper plates to take home. The fun part of this experience is working with the clay, so don't be too particular about the how the finished product comes out.

Conclusion

Review each story quickly, holding up each book and asking a few questions as you go along. Encourage the children to tell the stories they have heard to their parents when they go home.

Additional Picture Book Folktales that Adapt to Interactive Telling

- *The Enormous Potato* retold by Aubrey Davis. Kids Can Press Ltd., 1997.
- *The Farmyard Jamboree* by Margaret Read MacDonald. Barefoot Books, 2005.
- *Fat Cat, a Danish Folktale* retold by Margaret Read MacDonald. August House Publishers, Inc., 2001.
- *Henny Penny* by Vivian French. Bloomsbury, 2006.
- *Knock, Knock, Teremok! A Traditional Russian Tale* adapted and illustrated by Katya Arnold. North-South Books, Inc., 1994. (While this book is out of print, it is well worth borrowing from another library. The plot is similar to *The Mitten*, presenting a cumulative tale where more and more creatures pile into a small house.)
- *The Very Smart Pea and the Princess-to-be* by Mini Grey. Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
- *The Wide-Mouthed Frog (A Pop-up Book)* by Keith Faulkner. Dial, 1996.



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