



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

SPOT: Folktales, Fairy Tales, & Fables

*Jumping Into Genre: Folklore
(developing wide reading)*



Why is it Important to Read Folk Literature to Children?

Folk literature is worth reading just for fun. We first heard these stories at bedtime; later, we read them on our own. Because folktales have many layers of meaning, readers of differing ages can appreciate them. Most children like them because they contain adventure, humor, and rich language. Through folktales, readers can enter into another culture and find that wishes, dreams, and problems are universal to people around the world. Psychologically, folktales give us encouragement and tools that help us forge our own path, and give reason to hope that we will find happiness along the way. Folktales respond to questions that young people asked throughout time:

- How can I gain control over my own life?
- Given the dangers of the world in which I live, how can I succeed without the help of my parents?
- What must I do in order to survive and thrive as an independent person?
- How can I cope with those who would use their greater physical strength or the greater power against me?
- What is likely to be my greatest source of personal happiness, and how can I attempt to achieve it?

Enhancing Language Development

The language of the traditional storyteller combines a simple story with rich, expressive figurative language, which contributes to children's language development. Children who grow up listening to the traditional tales have an introduction to the colorful, rhythmical imagery in literary language. Since folktales contribute many words and phrases to American speech and literature, children who are familiar with these tales have the background knowledge needed to interpret these references.

Appreciation for Others

Folktales help readers make sense of the world. Folktales demonstrate that people everywhere share a common need for love, hope, and security. They possess feelings of happiness, anger, pride, and loneliness. The universal use of humor provides funny and exciting tales, and at the same time, readers become sensitive to the differences between cultures. Folk stories show how different peoples respond to emotional and environmental conditions.

Developing Story Structure

Folktales help children develop sense of story. The structure of fairy tales follows a predictable pattern. First there is a conventional opening (Once upon a time), a setting, introductions to characters, and initiating event, a problem attempts to solve the problem, and a resolution (They lived happily ever after). Children who hear and read many traditional tales gain structural insights that help develop their ability to understand narration. Knowing how a piece



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

SPOT: Folktales, Fairy Tales, & Fables

*Jumping Into Genre: Folklore
(developing wide reading)*



of writing unfolds lifts the reader from viewing a book as a succession of words, or isolated sentences, to seeing it as an exciting story evolving from a natural flow of language.

References:

Bosma, B. (1992). *Fairy tales, fables, legends, and myths (2ed.)*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Bosma, B. (1993). Fairy tales belong in the classroom. In G. T. Blatt (Ed.), *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children* (pp. 110-126). New York: Teachers College Press.

Norton, D. E. (1990). Teaching multicultural literature in the reading curriculum. *The Reading Teacher*, 44(1), 28-40.

Young, T. A., & Ferguson, P. M. (1995). From Anansi to Zomo: Trickster tales in the classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 48(6), 490-503.