

ANIMATED TALES — OF THE — WORLD™

Germany: The Enchanted Lion



Background

Germany: The Enchanted Lion is a classic retelling of a tale published in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales) during the 19th century by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm of Germany. While the Grimm brothers were noted for their work in linguistics, they will always be remembered around the world for their collections of folk and fairy tales. In fact, they are credited with writing down oft-told tales, such as "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "Hansel and Gretel." Folk literature terms relevant to this tale are provided below:

folk literature/folklore — Traditional tales, knowledge and beliefs handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

folktale — A type of folk literature that has grown from the lives and imaginations of people. Folktales often tell of the adventures of human or animal characters and sometimes attempt to explain the physical or spiritual world. Folktales can be organized into several different categories.

fairy tale — Tales that contain mystical and magical characters, such as fairies, trolls, elves and dragons. Enchantment and magic helps to advance the plot. The endings are happy in that good characters are rewarded and evil characters are punished.

Program Summary

A prince named Hans lives a solitary life in a castle. Because of a curse placed on him by a witch, he spends his days in the form of a lion, returning to his human state once the sun sets. His quiet life is disrupted the day a merchant tries to pick a rose from his land. The lion meets the merchant and makes one request — the person who meets the merchant when he arrives at home must return to the castle to stay. The merchant reluctantly agrees and is saddened when he sees that it is his daughter, Hannah, who rushes to greet him when he reaches his home. Hannah returns to the lion's castle one night to fulfill her father's promise and is greeted by a handsome prince. The prince explains his curse to Hannah and they get to know each other, eventually falling in love, marrying and having a son. When Hannah's sister weds, they plan to attend the celebration after sunset but carefully arrange that a cursed song is not played. Hearing that song would cause the prince to turn into a bird and circle the Earth for seven years. However, they are tricked by the witch who originally cursed Hans and hear the feared song. For seven years, Hannah and her father circle the Earth, following the path of Hans' flight. When they lose track of him, they enlist the help of the sun, moon and wind, all of which provide useful gifts and needed wisdom. Hannah and her father find the palace where Gretta the witch and Hans are and see that a wedding is about to take place. Hannah uses the magical gifts she was given to trick the witch, lift the curse and save her beloved husband. Hannah and her family live happily ever after.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Share famous fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen and discuss what makes them fairy tales.
- Invite students to write and share their own definitions of fairy tales and then generate a list of characteristics of some of their favorite fairy tales. Students can even submit drawings for a class collage about fairy tales.

Follow-Up Discussion

- The tale ends as Hannah saves her beloved husband and lifts his curse so that they can live together happily with their son. What do you think their life is like after this? Do they ever encounter the witch again? Poll students on what they think and use the results of the poll to write an extended ending while modeling writing skills and creative writing techniques.
- "True love conquers all" is a well-known phrase. Discuss the meaning of this phrase and its relevance to this tale from Germany. Ask students to list other known tales that share this theme.
- Recall the events and characters of this tale. Which parts were realistic? Which parts were magical?
- Motifs are recurring elements found in many folk and fairy tales. They include everything from stock characters, such as tricksters, to magical objects, such as flying carpets. Recall the events, characters and details of this tale. What motifs can be found in this tale?

Follow-up Activities

- *Germany: The Enchanted Lion* is an example of a magic and wonder tale. Here, we see a witch who casts curses and some animal-human transformations. Have students compare this tale to other magic and wonder tales. Consider watching *Taiwan: Aunt Tiger* and *France: Evvnm Congar* — both tales contain animal-human transformations as well. Discuss why storytellers might choose to feature magic in their tales. Encourage students to get creative and come up with their own magical tales. Students can write and illustrate their stories or prepare for a dramatic storytelling.
- During the seven years that Hans is a bird circling the Earth, Hannah and her father follow him, using a trail of feathers as their guide. What do you think that experience is like for Hannah and her aging father? What are the challenges and rewards of pursuing Hans in that way? Invite students to write a series of journal entries from the perspective of Hannah or her father during this period.
- This tale is based on "The Singing, Springing Lark," retold by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Visit www.surlalunefairytales.com/beautybeast/stories/lark.html to read a translation of this tale and compare it to *Germany: The Enchanted Lion*. What details do they share? In what ways are they different? Poll students to determine which title they think is more fitting of the tale.
- *Germany: The Enchanted Lion* is often described as a beauty and the beast tale. This type of tale can be found across many cultures. Visit www.surlalunefairytales.com/beautybeast/other.html to read a sampling of these tales. Identify some common threads and discuss why this type of tale might be popular among storytellers and their audiences. As an extension, students can create comic strips that feature beauty and the beast tales of their own. Be sure to include some magical objects and animal-human transformations!
- The Brothers Grimm collected and recorded this tale as well as many other oft-told tales, such as "Cinderella," "The Bremen Town Musicians," "Tom Thumb," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Little Red Riding Hood." In fact, many of these tales have become the basis of plays, movies and other productions. Select a tale from the Brothers Grimm and compare their original version to a theatrical version. In what ways did the theatrical version stay true to the original? In what ways were the two different? Students can organize these similarities and differences in a Venn diagram. To access 19th-century editions of the Brothers Grimm's writings, visit www.fln.vcu.edu/grimm/grimm_menu.html. *(Continued)*

- This folktale is exciting in that it features some magical elements, romance and a struggle between two opposing forces. Have students design movie posters for this tale. As students plan their posters, have them consider how the image on the poster can generate interest among a wide variety of people. Also, make sure that the image doesn't give away the ending! As an extension, students can post their posters around the school and host a screening of the folktale in their classroom. Students can even lead discussions about the tale following the screening.
- Act it out! Recreate this tale in your classroom. This can be done as a puppet show, a mime skit, a student play, etc. In preparation for the production, examine and critically think about the story's elements of characters, setting and plot. Students can further explore fairy tales by examining some of the Grimm brothers' other classic tales. (Many are available online at www.grimmstories.com/.) Students can select a favorite tale to perform live.
- Before folk and fairy tales were written or turned into films, they were passed down orally, from one generation to the next. Introduce students to the art of storytelling. Discuss different ways in which the storyteller can engage listeners (e.g., using sound and gestures, giving vivid sensory details). Practice storytelling techniques by having each student retell a portion of this tale.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3997.htm
This site, assembled by the U.S. Department of State, presents information on the geography, history, people, culture, government and economy of Germany.
- www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/
This archive of folk and fairy tales from around the world presents a sampling of the many stories that make up our world's oral tradition.

Suggested Print Resources

To learn more about the land and people of Germany:

- Ayer, Eleanor H. *Modern Nations of the World: Germany*. Lucent Books, Farmington Hills, MI; 2001.
- Blashfield, Jean F. *Germany*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2003
- Gordon, Sharon. *Germany*. Benchmark Books, New York, NY; 2004.

If you are interested in tales from Europe, you might also enjoy:

- MacDonald, Margaret. *Fat Cat: A Danish Folktale*. August House, Atlanta, GA; 2001.
- Sierra, Judy. *The Beautiful Butterfly: A Folktale from Spain*. Clarion Books, Boston, MA; 2000.
- Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rapunzel*. Penguin Group, New York, NY; 2002. A retelling of a 17th-century French version of this tale.

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