

Once Upon a Time...

▶ MYTHS, FOLKTALES, AND FAIRY TALES

Long ago, wandering storytellers narrated myths, folktales, and fairy tales. The tales were passed on by word of mouth. Introduce students to storytelling traditions and folktales from different cultures. Read examples of **folktales** from around the world on our Web site.



introduce the genre

Myths, folktales, and fairy tales have been passed down through oral tradition. A **myth** is a made-up story that explains how something came to be. **Folktales** are similar to myths, but they often convey a moral and feature animals that act like humans. **Fairy tales** are stories full of magic—gingerbread houses good enough to eat, enchanted mirrors, and pumpkins that turn into carriages. They are set in a fantasyland of princes and princesses, giants and elves, ogres and fairies. Myths, folktales, and fairy tales provide opportunities for students to develop **characters** and **themes**, the message or moral of a story.

“Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale of all.”

—Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), *Danish storyteller*

spark creativity: story starters

Encourage your students to read folktales, myths, and fairy tales and to use these prompts to write their own stories.

Write a Creation Myth. Native Americans and people of most other cultures have creation myths to explain the origin of the universe. Write a creation myth explaining a phenomenon in nature, such as why leaves change color.

Plot Your Own Folktale. Write a folktale based on your life. Determine the message or moral that you want to deliver in your folktale. Think about stories with messages, such as “The Tortoise and the Hare.” Although the tale is about a race, the message is about not giving up.

Share Your Folktale. Remember that folktales are meant to be told—so read your story aloud. Practice ahead of time and focus on how you tell it.

Fracture a Fairy Tale. How would Cinderella’s story read from the point of view of one of her ugly sisters? What if the pumpkin turned into a Ferrari? Have students rewrite a familiar fairy tale from a different point of view or by setting it in a different time or place.

WRITING TIP: Create a Character

Paint a picture of your character. How would you describe your character? **Loyal? Courageous? Honest?** How does your character look, sound, or move? **Where does your character live?** Pretend to “interview” your character using the “**Character Trading Card**” reproducible.