Course Title: **Beyond Once Upon a Time: The Truth About Fairy Tales**  
Grade Levels: 5-6  
Instructor: Lindsey Hoel-Neds

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**Course Description**

Princes and princes, talking animals, magic, and of course, happily ever afters are all familiar parts of fairy tales. Did you know fairy tales are much more than that? Fairy tales have long been reflections of cultures, values, and morality throughout the world.

In this course we will study the history of the fairy tale from its origin in the oral tradition to modern day. We will examine traditional fairy tale structure and emulate it in our own writings. We will discuss how fairy tales reflect culture and how they are a part of culture. Finally, we will look at stereotypes and morality in fairy tales.

This course will require an extensive amount of reading, as well as both analytical and creative writing.

**Required Book List:** No paper texts will be used for the course. All materials will be available on the Moodle page or other websites. One of the primary sites we will use is: Sur la Lune fairy tales website: [www.surlalunefairytales.com](http://www.surlalunefairytales.com)
Extended Reading:
The Princess Bride by William Goldman
The Neverending Story by Michael Ende

There are so many books out there based on fairy tales, and so many stories we won't have time to read, so check out the Sur la Lune site and your local library for more!

Final Project Description
Students will write a modern fairy tale at the end of the course incorporating pop culture, fairy tale elements we have studied, and their own original ideas. Projects can be in short story format, play scripts, performance pieces (with an accompanying script), or a collection of poetry. Pieces should comment on a particular societal issue that connects it with modern culture and the fairy tale tradition. Students will present their projects at the final face-to-face session.

Instructor’s Bio
Lindsey Hoel-Neds is a graduate student at UW-Madison studying Theatre for Youth; she received her undergraduate degree from Ripon College. For six years she taught English and Theatre and directed plays with high school students in Waukesha then Cambridge. She has always loved reading and literature, ever since she got her first library card as soon as she could write her own name. Theatre is her other passion in life; she has directed, acted in, costumed, teched, and everything else for over 40 plays. She lives in Deerfield with her very own Prince Charming and their two noble beasts, Sunshine and Thunder.

Online Philosophy
In my mind, education has no purpose unless we teach students to be citizens of the world and to use what they learn in positive ways. Whatever we gain from a course not only increases our knowledge of the subject matter, but also helps us to learn new skills and to go out there and do something great with them.

I truly believe that we can learn so much about our selves and our culture through literature and through writing. That being said, those things are most of what you will do in this course. While writing and reading, I expect you to do one
very important thing: THINK! I want to know your thoughts and opinions as we progress through the course and through our study of fairy tales. They are intriguing and interesting stories with lots to talk about. I will also expect you to be able to express these great ideas you have using lively vocabulary, creativity, and originality.

I am also a teacher who loves teaching and I love my subject matter, which means I love to have fun in class. This in no way means that you do not need to be accountable or on-task. Fun is only possible if we are all in this together, invested in our learning as a team. In this course, I will learn from you as much as you learn from me, but only if we all put in the effort and time to make this a great experience.

Course Guidelines/Information

In this course you will be expected to keep up with this class and the work just like you would in a traditional classroom. There will be reading and writing assignments every week of the course. Please make sure that you do the reading early in the week so that you can actively participate in our online forums.

Our week for this class officially goes from Monday morning to the following Sunday night. I am not a night owl, so everything for a particular week needs to be submitted by 10pm on Sunday to count!

As this is an English course, I expect you to use proper grammar and other conventions as much as possible. I also expect you to cite your sources in MLA format when you submit an assignment that requires research (resources for this will be available on our Moodle page). If you have a question about something related to your writing, please let me know.

*If you do not have a library card, please make sure to get one within the first couple of weeks of the course. You will need to do some exploring and checking things out from your local library for some of the choice projects during the course. We may also access some materials online in the public library collections, so if you don’t know your library PIN number, please check with your library.

Contacting Me/Online Posting

Unlike in the traditional classroom, I am not available all day during school hours for you to contact. So, if you post your work, please do not think I’m ignoring you if I don’t get back to you right away. I will be on our Moodle page on a regular basis, but it will probably be at different times of day depending on my schedule. I will occasionally set up chats for us to discuss the week’s stories if it works out.

You need to make sure that you post thoughtful responses to the work and thoughts of your peers on a regular basis. We will chat about what a “quality” response looks like. Since we will only see each other and have discussions in person a few times during the course, our online discussions are very important!
If you need to contact me with a question, a comment, or anything else, please use the messaging feature on the Moodle site.

WCATY Benchmarks
15 (Reading Like an Inventor) Rather than assuming that meaning is fixed and located within the text, this student successfully navigated the text
24 (Communicating an Innovative Vision) This student clearly articulated his innovative vision
19 (Challenging Assumptions) This student challenged personal and cultural assumptions
20 (Perseverance and Risk) This student assumed responsibility for his/her personal creative process
18 (Envisioning the New and Reforming the Old) This student generated, communicated and implemented innovative ideas

Course Outline

Note: There are so many amazing resources about fairy tales out there that some additional things will be added along the way for you to read and experience!

Week 1 – Why do we tell stories? How are they an important part of our culture?
Activities
- Starter Forum: What were your favorite stories as a child? Why did you enjoy them so much?
- View storytelling video.
- Read the fairy tale history articles/timelines.
- Read background info on one of the major fairy tale writers (Brothers Grimm, Anderson, Perrault, etc.)
- Graded forum: Storytelling has been a part of culture for eons. Why are stories so important in culture? Why do certain stories carry on for many, many years? Not only have stories carried on for much of human history, but storytellers as well. What qualities does someone need to have to tell a story well, both in the story itself and performance? (Take into account what you have read and viewed this week).
- Start searching for a story to tell at ftf session #2.

Week 2 – What defines a fairy tale?
Activities
- Read the following stories from the websites listed:
  - “The Frog King or Iron Henreieh”
  - “The Bremen Town Musicians”
  - “Snow White and Rose Red”
Week 3 – What defines a hero or a villain? How do these archetypes work in fairy tales?

Activities

- Read the following tales:
  - “Bluebeard”
  - “Little Red Cap”
  - “Mother Trudy”
  - “The Blue Light”
  - “East of the Sun and West of the Moon”
  - “Aladdin and the Magic Lamp”
  - “Baba Yaga”

- Read additional articles posted on Moodle.
- Write a short diary entry as one of the “villains” in one of the story. Do the same for one of the “heroes.”
- Forum: Are villains more sympathetic in modern stories? Why? Illustrate your opinion with a comparison between one of the fairy tales we’ve read and a modern story or film.

Week 4: How do social relationships function in fairy tales? Are family relationships and the relationships between men and women different?

Activities

- Read the following stories from our text:
  - “The Fisherman and His Wife”
  - “Rapunzel”
  - “Brier Rose”
  - “Snow White”
  - “The Worn Out Dancing Shoes”
  - “The Pea Test”
  - “Rumplestiltskin”
  - “Hansel and Gretel”
  - “Thumbling”
• Forum: If the “traditional” fairy tales we’ve read this week were considered guidelines for how men and women should behave, what would the “rules” be? What would be your reaction if you had to live by these examples?
• Forum: Are the family relationships in fairy tales “healthy” ones? Think of any other fairy tales you know that may present families in a different way than those we read this week. Why do you think families may be presented this way? Find an article about modern family relationships and incorporate it into your discussion for comparison purposes.

**Week 5:** How can the same basic story vary based on origin? How are cultural differences apparent in the different versions of a story?
- Read the background information about “Cinderella”.
- Read the following stories:
  - “Cinderella” (Grimm)
  - “All Fur” (Grimm)
  - “Cinderella” Perrault version
  - “Little Burnt Face”
  - “Hearth Cat”
  - “Ratie Woodencloak”
  - “Yeh-hsien”
  - “Little Rag Girl”
  - “The Story of Tam and Cam”
  - “The Wonderful Birch”
  - “Sodewa Bai”
  - “Fair, Brown, and Trembling”
- Forum: What common elements do you find in several of these tales? Why do you think that is? Use examples from the texts to illustrate your ideas.
- Workshop: Choose one of the stories that you think is the “best” or most authentic Cinderella story (you cannot choose the Perrault version). Write a short “campaign” piece advocating for why your story should be considered the “best” tale. Be sure to use persuasive language as your peers will be voting on which tale had the most effective campaign manager.
- In addition to just writing your piece, you need to do research about the culture that the story you have chosen comes from and explain in your “campaign” how your tale reflects the given culture. You should use it as part of your argument! Please cite any sources you use in MLA format at the bottom of your post.

**Week 6:** How do tales change over time and through different cultures? Why do we need to explore and understand these differences?
- This week you will choose one section of the Sur la Lune site to focus your studies on. You will read all of the variants of that tale listed on the site and
the annotations that accompany them. You may not use “Cinderella”, as we looked at many of these tales last week.

- For our final FTF session, you will create and present a project on these tale variations and the cultures each represents. You may do this in any way you choose, as long as there is a strong visual aid to enhance your presentation.
- Forum: Why do these stories endure and change from culture to culture? What purpose may these stories serve in various cultures?

**Week 7: How has modern media impacted the genre of the fairy tale?**

**Activities**

- Choose one of the following movies to view:
  - *Ever After*
  - *Ella Enchanted*
  - *Hoodwinked*
  - *Enchanted*
  - *The Princess Bride*
  - *The Neverending Story*
  - *Penelope*
  - *Tangled*

  After viewing the film, write a short review of the film as in the role of the fairy tale expert you now are. Look at the model review I have included as a resource this week. One thing your review should have that a normal newspaper review might not, is a discussion of how the film fits the fairy tale genre.

- Read the articles provided about adapting fairy tales to film and television
- Forum: How has the idea of visual media changed the fairy tale? Use an example from a film you’ve seen that is based on one of the tales we’ve read to illustrate your thoughts.

**Week 8: How has modern culture been injected in literary adaptations of fairy tales from our time? How do these tales reflect changing values?**

**Activities**

- Read texts on Moodle site.
- Workshop: Submit your modern fairy tale for peer review – the final draft is due during our last week of class!
- Forum: Choose one of the texts we read this week and compare and contrast it to an earlier tale. How do these changes impact us as readers? Do you enjoy the modern versions more or less than the traditional?

**Week 9: What does “living the fairy tale” mean in modern society?**

**Activities**

- Read articles and resources for Week 9.
- Post a copy of your revised and ready to go modern fairy tale on our Moodle site.
• Forum: Find a news story that you think epitomizes the idea of “living the fairy tale”. Post it to Moodle. Discuss the idea of fairy tales and whether or not these idealized true stories really fit the definition of a fairy tale we’ve agreed upon as a class.

Face-to-Face Session 1

- Introductions/Ice Breaker
- Course Expectations, etc.
- Creating a fairy tale environment (role playing/mime activity)
  - Discussion of activity
- Archetypal Objects Activity
  - Discussion
  - Group story writing
  - Dramatization of stories
  - Presentation of dramas to large group
  - Discussion
- Guest Storyteller or Teacher story example (assignment for next f2f session)

Face-to Face Session 2 – Fear and Fairy Tales

- Starter: What are you afraid of?
- Present storytelling projects
  If time allows, based on number of students in class
- Read Dr. Seuss’s “What Was I Scared of?” aloud
- Traveling questions – students travel the room and write thoughts and answers on pieces of poster paper around room in response to prompts
- Discuss lists as large group
- Read Stephen King’s “Now You Take Snow White, That’s Scary!”
- Discuss article and films from childhood in small groups
- View film clips
- Split group in two teams – each team will debate whether children should be exposed to “scary” material such as fairy tales, films, etc. They must know what we’ve read today and other knowledge from the course to defend their positions.
- Informal debate
- Wrap-up activity

Face to Face Session 3

- Starter
- Alternate Structure Drama activity with story/poem
  - Discussion of activity
- Presentations of cultural variants projects
- Final wrap-up