How to Write a Hero/ine Adventure Journey Folktale:

A Manual for Teachers of Grades 8 and 9

By Molly Bang

Shebang

Falmouth, Massachusetts

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Introduction

Until four years ago, I was a writer and illustrator of children's books. I began teaching this course for two reasons.

One, writing and illustrating is a very solitary business, and I wanted to be with other people.

The second reason was peoples' questions about writing and illustrating. Over the years, many parents have told me how much they wanted to write something for their children, something better than what is 'out there', but they didn't know how to begin. Or people would ask, "How do you come up with your ideas?" "How do you draw so well?" The more I thought about it, the more I felt that I simply had access to and familiarity with certain patterns and structures that others weren't aware of, and that if I could just figure out what the patterns were and show them to people, everyone would be able to make stories and pictures that were meaningful. Our best work is not only meaningful to those who read or see it, it is the most meaningful to ourselves: it helps us to solve our troubles, assuage our pain, rejoice in our happiness and come to terms with our lives.

I first taught as a volunteer in the Falmouth Public Schools, in my daughter's third grade class. I gave the children a formula to follow—similar to the one I call the Hero/ine Adventure Journey—in which each child was the hero or heroine of his or her own story. I began to work our some of the structural principles of illustration and had the children use cutout construction paper to illustrate the stories they wrote. Luckily, I was also teaching with another volunteer mother, Shirley Wozena, who brought in Native American folktales and showed the class examples of sand-paintings and rugs and baskets, and talked about the symbolism of the pictures.

The children completed the project. It was clear that they understood the story structure to a large extent and could do what we asked, but somehow they weren't being touched to the core. They were much more interested in the precision of the Indian symbols, in making a key which explained the meaning of each symbol. They didn't like using cutout construction paper; cutting and pasting was an activity of first and second graders, and they were THIRD graders. They wanted to draw REAL things. They wanted to know about Native Americans, and knights and the Greeks; they wanted all the details. They wanted to use pens, pencils and magic markers—anything that made LINES—to draw unicorns, rainbows, princesses, rabbits (the girls), guns, rockets, tanks, knights and trucks (the boys). Maybe because Falmouth is on the sea, children of both sexes drew boats as well.

I still think folktales are appropriate for third graders—for any age. Writing a story based on a folktale pattern—be it a tall tale, a *pourquoi* tale, a trickster tale or whatever— gives children a recognizable structure within which to work, but it allows them to do anything and everything within that structure. A folktale enables each child to be the hero or heroine of his or her own story, and to go on journeys, face

dangers, solve problems and return home safely at the end. It allows them to explore who they are and who they want to be. It is a structure that enables a process to happen.

The pattern I had used with the third grade was too complicated for them, and I didn't give them clear enough guidelines. Now when I work in the third grade, I use folktales as a springboard to talk about other cultures and other people. I work with much simpler story patterns, and we do a modern or historical or national version of a specific folktale, especially those which include rhymes and repetition. Repetition enables a child (all of us) to understand. (Is it 16 times that researchers have decided we need to be subjected to a fact before we are fairly sure to learn it?) Repetition of a pattern gives understanding, assurance and self-confidence. I'm not sure of the pedagogical implications of rhymes, but they're pretty, easy to remember and fun to make up.

After the course, I talked with people and thought a good deal, and I began to wonder whether the pattern I had been trying to teach in the third grade might not be more appropriate in the seventh and eighth grades. More than any other age except perhaps for infants and toddlers, adolescents seem to live right NOW. EVERYTHING is vitally important, RIGHT NOW. Adolescents are volatile. They live in extremes: at the same time that they want to do something important and exceptional with their lives, they are acutely aware of peer reaction. At the same time that they are the most social of creatures, they feel desperately alone. Their friends of both sexes change daily, their bodies are changing out from under them, and their emotions pull them from the heights to the depths like ping pong balls. They are extremely loving and extremely cruel. They are on the verge of adulthood, in the thrall of their hormones.

Folktales give, in symbolic language, clear guidelines for success. The more recent versions of Western and Indian folktales usually end in success for the hero or heroine; the exceptions occur because the protagonist has continued to break "the rules". These stories, even when they involve animals and natural elements such as the wind or the moon and stars, are grounded in human society. The protagonists of Western and East Asian folktales don't seem to pay much attention to Nature except when it helps to solve a human, society-oriented problem.

Other cultures such as Native American, Eskimo, Ainu and Polynesian have many more tales we find cruel or tragic, but their hero/ines are often more involved with the elements of Nature, who is heartless and whose ways we have to understand in order to physically survive. One feels the hero/ine of these tales living between Nature and Society, which are forces of equal power contending for the hero/ine's life.

The more I reviewed traditional Western and Asian folktales, the more I wondered whether the exercise of writing and illustrating a personal folktale of the Hero/ine Adventure Journey sort might not give adolescents a stability and self-confidence that is rare in their daily lives, and might be somehow therapeutic. I also hoped that making pictures with clearly defined emotional content would be a pleasure to them and something they would find they were surprisingly good at, because it would give

form to their own strong feelings. I hoped they would be far enough away from cutting and pasting paper to see it as fun, almost as a way of revisiting their childhood.

I taught the course to four seventh and eighth grade classes in Falmouth.

The four classes were of very different abilities, which I could feel, but wasn't experienced enough to respond to. We finished the project in four weeks, because this was the amount of time I was given. We did not review the story pattern intensively because I thought it was so obvious; I had been working at making stories for 10 or 15 years by then and thought the procedure was self-evident. We used a rather loose outline, very similar to the one given in Part I of the manual. The books handed in by the 'top' English class were wonderful: powerful, cohesive, moving—everything a folktale could be. A few of these are included in the Appendix and the slides. Almost all the other stories were incomplete, confusing and/or inchoate, but I chose not to think too much about these.

It was only when I was working with Ann Stern, a Language Arts staff developer for the Cambridge public schools, that I began to gain some understanding of how to present material to children so that they could gradually build a sense of structure day upon day. I find it very difficult to teach this way because I don't work this way. I flounder around and take long walks and write pages which I think are brilliant at the moments I'm writing them and which I think are total inanities when I read them later. I rework and revise; I read other books; I rethink and rewrite. Eventually, after weeks or years, I come up with something that 'works'. But working with the children, I came to realize that I've learned a sense of structure over the 10 or 15 years that helps me understand what does or doesn't 'work'. Most children lack this sense of structure to a greater or lesser degree. Or rather, they have it, but they aren't aware they have it; they don't trust themselves.

As Ann and I taught the course in Cambridge, we found that a project which we had originally considered to be quite simple and straightforward was extremely difficult for many of the children. As we worked with various classes, both together and separately, we became more and more disturbed by the feeling that many of the students didn't seem to have any clear sense of an underlying connection between things. Their characters and dangers seemed to float onto the stage like phantom ships, where they were suddenly blasted to smithereens (by the boys) or wished away (by the girls). We would sometimes leave class feeling really disoriented, as though we'd been working with fog, or with space debris. We concentrated on clarifying, on defining, on formalizing the story structure so the children could get some sense of cohesion. If we left the structure loose, as I had in Falmouth, the results were as disastrous as they were in most cases there.

After Ann had figured out a better format for the pattern and we had used it with several classes, there was great improvement. Almost all the children seemed truly excited about their work, both while they were learning and with their finished books. They had clearly learned the pattern and were seeing it, and telling us about seeing it, in this or that movie or video or even book. Almost all the children made finished books which were based on the pattern and which 'worked'. Best of all, they seemed

to have gained a sense of competence and self-confidence, and some 'esprit de corps' that was unusual and heartwarming.

Why? What is so special about this pattern? The pattern requires that students define a clear goal which they must leave home to pursue. It requires that they (in the guise of their, protagonists) show courage, kindness, thoughtfulness, intelligence and wit. It requires them not only to give help, but to reach out for it and accept it—to depend on others' help as well as on their own resources. And it requires that they be successful—in terms they themselves define.

The students come from the most diverse backgrounds in terms of "wealth, culture, race and school performance. The pattern works regardless of their differences, because it is a pattern basic to us all as humans seeking form and meaning in our lives. And it is especially helpful to adolescents, whose lives are in more turmoil than at most other times.

I first thought that this was best taught to both seventh and eighth grades. Now I would raise the age by a grade. It is perfect for eighth graders but a bit beyond most seventh grade classes. I'd expect that ninth graders would thrive on it as well. The best experiences we had were with eighth grade classes who were writing these stories as they were just finishing junior high school and preparing to graduate. Two schools used the folktales as the theme for their graduation ceremony, and read some of the tales, showed slides of the illustrations. Here is the valedictory address of Aneesh Patel, whose speech defines the pattern and describes what it meant to him:

> ...Our folktale had six main parts.
>
> In part one of the (Hero/ine Adventure Journey) folktale, the protagonist, or hero, leaves home for some reason. For example, his parents have thrown him out of the house or her sibling is lost and she has to leave in search of him. The reason for leaving becomes the goal that the protagonist is seeking throughout the story. On the metaphysical level, this leaving home is growing up, separating from home to go out into the larger world. This also signifies setting out on the long journey of life. It means taking risks, being independent and mature, and becoming more responsible.
>
> In part two, the protagonist meets some kind strangers. Typically, there are three kind strangers in a hero-adventure folktale. However, in the English folktale which we read, called *Molly Whuppie,* there are none at all, while in the Hungarian folktale, called *The Good-hearted Youngest Brother,* there are four kind strangers.
>
> Each stranger has a need. For example, a bird might have a broken wing, or a spider might be drowning in a lake. The protagonist helps the strangers, who in return give him a gift. For example, the protagonist would bandage the bird's wing and would gently take the spider out of the water. In return, the bird might give him a feather, and the spider might give him a web or a filament. This meeting with kind strangers demonstrates the virtue of the protagonist.
>
> Sometimes folktales have one kind stranger from the sky, one from the land, and one from the sea; like a hawk, a horse and a fish. This represents the sky, the land and the sea, which are the three elements of the world. This also implies that if we, the protagonists in our journey of life, are good to the world, the world will be good to us.
>
> Symbolically, this proves the Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* This is a sort of social covenant in cultures throughout the world.

In parts 3, 4 and 5, the protagonist encounters three dangers. Each danger is progressively more dangerous than the previous one. In the illustrations also, the background of each danger is darker than that of the one before it. Customarily, the first two dangers are guarding the final one, and the final one has the object that the protagonist has set out to get. The protagonist uses the gifts given to him by the kind strangers to overcome the dangers. When the protagonist overcomes the last danger, he gets what he set out for.

In the Star Wars trilogy, which follows the hero-adventure folktale pattern, Luke Skywalker sets out to overcome the Evil Empire which threatens to kill the good guys. He meets kind strangers, who help him out. First, Luke must destroy a host of creepy hairy monsters. Then he must get past the Storm Troopers, until at last he defeats the Evil Emperor.

Metaphorically, the overcoming of the dangers implies that the protagonist, having taken risks that have paid off, gets settled in the cycle of life, with the earnings yet to be taken.

In the sixth part, the protagonist returns home or creates a new home, and gets some kind of reward for conquering the dangers. This signifies coming of age and earning the rewards of maturity and responsibility. For example, in *The Wizard of Oz,* the scarecrow gets a brain, the tin-man gets a heart, the lion gets courage, and Dorothy gets to go home to Kansas.

Our graduation today is both an ending and a beginning of a journey. We are celebrating the end of one journey and at the same time we know that a new journey begins tomorrow. Hopefully we will meet kind strangers and with their help overcome any obstacles.

This was all I was hoping the children would learn from the course, from the process.

The work of the children was far better than I had expected, but the biggest surprise for me was the reaction of adults. When I showed some of the children's work at the local library, I found that adults wanted to take a course like this—not so they could teach it, but for themselves. I've since taught several groups of adults, and found that the exercise is perhaps even more powerful—more emotionally involving—for them than it is for the children. Part of this may be that adults are more committed to the project; they don't take it as a class assignment but because they want to. Partly it may be that they tend to take it when they are asking more questions than usual about themselves and their lives. I seem to be perpetually in this stage of uncertainty myself, and this exercise, like gardening or raising a child or learning anything new, helps to ground me.

However, I think the biggest attraction writing and illustrating a folktale has for adults is that it gives them a clear structure within which to develop as artists—something most have felt closed off from for almost all their lives.

These manuals, then, are for teachers of eighth and ninth, perhaps also seventh grade students. I have two intentions in mind as I write them.

My first intention is to give you a guide enabling you to help students work with each other in writing and illustrating a personal tale based on the Hero/ine Adventure Journey model.

My second intention is more unusual for teachers. I'd like this to be a guide which enables the teachers themselves to come together in a group in order to write and illustrate their own tales. I don't think you'll teach the Course as well if you haven't first done every bit of it yourself. You'll not only have a better sense of how the structures work, what sorts of variations are possible and how the group interaction

helps you and supports you along the way; you'll also be able to empathize with your students. You'll have 'walked in their shoes', and you'll understand them from within their struggles.

This is scary work, because we're dealing with personal hopes and fears, and we're putting ourselves on the line. It is much more difficult and scary for adults than for children because we've created a nice safe shell of mature competence around ourselves, and it doesn't include 'creative' writing or illustration. But there is also the convenient rule that these stories have to end in success, and somehow this has the effect that not only the story but the whole project ends up triumphant, and safe, and at the Home of Homes. You'll find that this is a revealing and often a very moving exercise, and a group which works on it together over a period of 6 or 10 weeks does end up loving and appreciating themselves and each other.

My suggestions are these:

1. Do not teach the course until you have done every bit of it yourself.
2. Do not do it alone. These exercises are emotional, and the joy of sharing our feelings and insights is fundamental. But more than this, our individual ideas are so very limited and tend to spiral in on themselves. We learn from others, as they learn from us.
3. When teaching, let the students direct themselves from the start. In current parlance, be a "facilitator". Encourage, resist, root, demand high standards, question, tell them how you feel, but let them teach themselves. Let them learn from each other, as you have done.

Chapter 1. Course Introduction and Structural Analysis of the Tale

Time: 2 to 3 days.

Procedure

1. **Describe the course.**
   The sort of folktale described in this course is only one of many types. There are fables, which illustrate a chosen moral, there are *pourquoi* tales which tell how the tiger got its stripes or why the sky is blue, there are trickster tales and tall tales and humorous tales and riddle tales. The course will concentrate on the Hero/ine Adventure Journey Tale, or as the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp called it, the Wonder Tale.

   Tell the students that they will be writing a sort of personal folktale, a tale of an adventurous journey by a hero or heroine. Their stories will be based on a pattern that they'll recognize from their reading and from movies they've seen. In every story the protagonist will have to leave home, go on a journey, meet various strangers and overcome at least three dangers. All of the stories must end in success. The boys will be writing about a boy, and the girls will be writing about a girl; otherwise, the pattern will be essentially the same for everyone.

   The stories we make up are like footprints we leave as we walk along. We make different footprints when we're sad or happy, when we're feeling strong or weak, and we make different footprints now at 13 or 14 or 15 than we will make at any other time in our lives.

2. **Brainstorm about the elements of story. List elements on the board.**
   This shouldn't take more than five or 10 minutes at most. The purpose of the exercise is to ground the students in what they know and to give them self-assurance about the subject at the outset. The elements they mention will seem so obvious to them that they'll tend to feel that they know it all and it is superfluous. But they don't all know all of it, and it is not superfluous. It is the basic groundwork.

   Questions for discussion:

   1. *What makes a story a story?*
   2. *How is a story different from an essay or a letter? or What elements does a story have that the others don't?*

   Elements the students might mention:

   beginning, middle and end climax characters plot

   the five w's: who what where when why plus how something happens: action words in order an audience

   Write the suggestions of the board just as the students give them.

3. Brainstorm about the elements of folktales and how these differ from other stories. List elements on board.

Questions for discussion:

1. *What are some elements that make a folktale a folktale?*
2. *How does a folktale differ from other stories?*

Again, this exercise takes only five or 10 minutes. It will build on the elements of the story, and it will give both you and the class an idea of what they know about folktales and how familiar they are with them. Some children don't know what a folktale is, or they've heard them but haven't defined them as a separate category. This exercise enables you to define them. The list will probably lengthen the original by a good deal, and might include elements such as:

evil stepmother
monsters or dangers
king and queen
magic treasure
talking animals
changes
prince and princess
rich and poor
good vs. bad or evil
happily ever after
a quest

Brainstorming sessions aren't a time of 'right' and 'wrong' answers, but a time to just let ideas gush out. Unless a suggestion is way off the mark, I write it down exactly as the student has given it. We have done this either just as an accumulation of words, as shown above, or as a web, with (H)ero/ine (A)dventure (J)ourney in the middle:

4. Give short history of folktales

The more I learn about folktales, the longer I am tempted to make this introduction to the students, because the history is fascinating and diverse. Several of the books listed in the bibliography give more detailed background, but I'll restrict my general remarks to the following:

Folktales have been told for thousands of years and all over the world; the earliest recorded tales are from Egypt in about 1300 B.C., or 3000 years ago. Perhaps the biggest difference between these stories and those of modern times is not in their content but in their authorship. Folktales have no known authors, and the men and women who told them tried to remember them word for word, changing nothing, trying not to have their own individuality intrude on the story. They seem to have felt that they were passing on a sort of sacred knowledge received from the Past, and it wasn't their place to change anything.

This is very much the opposite from today, when an author is so aware of her or his individual voice and style, and who feels that s/he has CREATED a story and wants

the author's name, MY name, to be as well-known as the story itself. In one sense, we don't know where any stories come from; even when they come out of ourselves we often can't feel responsible for having written them. They seem to have welled up of their own accord from inside us. But there is a real difference between the folktale form and modern forms of story that have to do with that sense that someone 'made up' the modern ones.

Most people who have studied folktales now feel that they grew out of rituals; they were the form that kept the memory of the rituals when these were no longer felt to be meaningful and were no longer practiced. Thus stories in which a girl had to marry a monster or a boy had to fight a dragon are replays in folktale form of a ritual which once formed part of the steps to maturity for a young man or woman, or were experienced by one person for the benefit of society. One girl was chosen from the society to marry a snake or snake god, or she was sacrificed to him. A boy had to leave home and successfully complete three trials before he was accepted as a man in his village, and so forth.

Over the years, people seem to have forgotten the source of the tales, but the storytellers continued to tell them, and people continued to find them 'meaningful', though they couldn't define why. Folktales were usually handed down orally, though there were collections like the five volumes of Basile's *Pentamerone* published in Italy in 1634. However, they were not considered as "literature" appropriate for children until the 1697 publication in France of Perrault's *Stories from Past Times.* Folktales were generally regarded as beneath the dignity of the written word; they were 'old wives' tales' fit only for peasants and small children. Many people regarded them as too imaginative and gruesome for young people and refused to allow their children to hear them.

Folktales collected from peasants ARE gruesome. The lives of peasants have always been lives of ceaseless, grueling labor, lived in constant fear of starvation, sickness, powerlessness and brutality. When families grew too large to feed, parents exposed their children, as in *Hansel and Gretel.* Stepmothers are so populous in folktales because one in five men lost his wife and remarried. The journeys into the world were dangerous because the roads were long lonely stretches through woods full of wild animals and over areas where people made their livings by begging, robbing and murdering. You'll notice no mention of police protection in folktales.

Wealthier children around the world have been raised by a peasant nurse, who told them stories as she cared for them. They were recorded by courtiers (Perrault, Madame d'Aulnoy) or city scholars (the Grimm brothers), who chose the versions they preferred and edited them to suit their more refined tastes. The more truly 'folk' versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* which have been collected, for example, are quite crude. One has the girl unwittingly drink the blood and eat the flesh of her grandmother, then, under the direction of the wolf, strip off each piece of clothing before she climbs into bed with him. In one version she is eaten and that is the end of her. In another she escapes by telling the wolf she has to relieve herself. "Pee in the bed," he says. "It's the other," says the girl. The wolf ties a rope to her ankle,

which she ties to a tree and then races home naked, while the wolf calls, "Are you making whole coils of it?" Not exactly tales for the genteel nursery.

Although folktales weren't often written down, people did tell them, people in all walks of life. In Russia there were professional folktale tellers, as there were bards and troubadours in Europe. Tsar Ivan the Terrible had three old blind men follow each other at his bedside telling him folktales so he could fall asleep. One of the greatest Russian novelists of the nineteenth century, Leo Tolstoy, went to sleep as a child to tales told by an old man who had been bought as a slave by Tolstoy's grandfather—bought solely because he knew so many tales and told them so well.

Perhaps the most famous collectors of folktales were the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who wrote down what we know as the Grimm's fairy tales. *Hansel and Gretel, Snow White, Cinderella* and *Rumplestiltskin* are among the stories they recorded, after listening to hundreds of variations from all over their little German principality of Hesse- Cassel. But why did the brothers finally write the tales down, especially for children, when for years the stories had been considered too lowly to be considered appropriate for polite society?

(Note: The term 'fairy tale' comes from the French collection *Contes des Fees*, published in 1698 by Madame d'Aulnoy and published the following year in English as *Tales of the Fairy*.)

One reason was the Romantic Movement in Europe, when rich and middle-class townspeople began to feel that they had lost touch with the real values of life, and that true » wisdom lay with the peasantry, the simple 'folk'. Small groups of scholars all around Europe were collecting folk songs and folk dialects and folk art and folktales, and the Grimm brothers were members of one such scholarly group.

Another reason was Napoleon. By the year 1810, most of Europe was under the influence or the direct control of Napoleon, and the smaller nations grew to hate both Napoleon and the French. Partly as a reaction against Napoleon, the Grimm brothers, like many others, began to try to figure out how 'German' they were—how different from the French. This was at a time when the area we know of as Germany consisted of over 300 small principalities, of which their Hesse-Cassel was one.

The brothers Grimm felt they could find the truest spirit of the German people among the 'folk', so they studied folk dialects and how the German language differed from place to place, and what made it 'German'. At the same time, they collected folk literature or folktales, recording them as their national wisdom and national values which should be told within each household.

(Note: The brothers either didn't realize or didn't admit at the time that Jeannette Hassenpflug, the neighbor and friend who provided *Little Red Riding Hood, Puss'n Boots, Bluebeard, Cinderella,* and several other stories, had learned them from her mother, who came from a French Huguenot family, and they had learned the stories not from the 'folk' but from the books of Perrault, Madame d'Aulnoy and others. In the second edition of *Household Tales,* all but *Little Red Riding Hood* were deleted.)

The Grimm's first book, which they called *Household Tales,* was brought out in the Christmas of 1812, the winter of Napoleon's defeat in Russia. In June of 1812 Napoleon had left to conquer Moscow with 700,000 troops, the largest army ever assembled in Europe. One third of the soldiers were French, one third were from the

German principalities. Fewer than one man in seven returned alive. They died in battle, from disease and from the hard Russian winter. The hatred for Napoleon felt around Europe became a hatred for the whole French Empire and a consequent affirmation of one's own 'national' values. Napoleon's rise and fall thus helped sow the seeds of modern German nationalism.

The collection and study of folktales coincided with rising nationalism in other countries around Europe as it did in Germany. English, Russian and Danish scholars,and eventually those in most countries, began to go out to the countryside and ask men and women to tell them the tales of the folk. I've always thought it odd that it took a handful of erudite scholars fired by ideas of 'the soul of a nation' to make folktales into 'acceptable' forms of literature.

But folktales have continued to fall in and out of favor. Originally these were stories which were told to adults—shadows of rituals that had once been an integral part of the society. Then they became acceptable literature for peasants and children, helping to form 'national values'. At the same time, there have always been people who felt very uncomfortable with folktales, feeling that they corrupted the children who heard them with their cruelty and unreality. Now folktales have found 'acceptability' again, partially because psychologists are saying that they speak to a child's—or an adult's—deepest needs; they speak in the language of symbols and dreams, and they speak to the human soul.

5. Read aloud four tales to the class.

Have the students arrange themselves in a way that enables them to listen and concentrate in comfort. Read the four tales given in the Appendix. Be sure to introduce each story by giving its history or background.

Rather than using the stories given here, you might prefer to use stories you've found that seem more appropriate to your specific class—for example, if you have a lot of children with a Vietnamese or Spanish-speaking heritage, you might want to include at least one Vietnamese or Spanish or Central American story of this type as one of the four. Just try to use examples which are as close as possible to the Hero/ine Adventure Journey pattern.

6. Help students identify elements from each tale, and add these to list for folktales.

After each story has been read, have the students identify as many elements in that story as they can. Ask them, "What are the elements or the pieces of this story?" Write these on the board as soon as they define them, and build on this list as you read each tale, so that you have a large soup of words by the end of the four tales. Again, we have done this either just as an accumulation of words, or as a web, with (H)eroine (A)dventure (J)ourney in the middle. After reading *Tyeh May and the Magic Brush,* for example, we might have either:

7. Help students define a pattern common to all four tales.

When all four stories have been reviewed in this way, have the class work out a pattern that is common to all or most of the stories, and write it on the board. Since I've chosen four fairly different stories, there will be several places where you'll want to choose the pattern that occurs in two or three of the cases, or maybe only in one.

Questions to help the children determine the pattern:

1. *Is there any sort of pattern you can see here?*
2. *What elements are we given at the beginning?*
3. *How were the beginnings of the stories alike?*
4. *Were the events or episodes alike in any way?*
5. *How might we generalize that?*
6. *Do the four protagonists act in similar ways? How?*
7. *Are there any ways the other characters are similar to each other?*
8. *How are the endings similar?*
9. *Is there something that happened in only one story but that you feel should be included in a general outline?*

Continue in this way until you have a pattern that the class is satisfied with. By the end of day, you should have a pattern with some resemblance to the following:

Beginning

I. Protagonist at home

A. Home and family

B. Character

C. Reason for leaving

Middle

II. The Journey

A. Protagonist shows virtuous quality(ies)

1. Determination
2. Kindness to stranger(s)
3. Intelligence

B. Protagonist faces three dangers

1. Description of danger
2. How protagonist uses gifts or wits to overcome dangers
3. Resolution of reason for leaving home

End

III. Conclusion

A. Protagonist returns home or goes to new home

B. Protagonist celebrates success in some way

Notes to teachers

The object of this exercise is not for the students to come up with an outline exactly like one of these, but to enable them to see that there IS a pattern, to see how it works and how the pieces relate to each other, so they can then use this pattern to make their own stories. Once you have defined the pattern, you will be using it as a benchmark from which to look at similar stories.

There are two pairs of words I use fairly interchangeably here: structure and pattern, and hero/ine and protagonist. I'd better define each of these here as I define them for the students, so as to make it clear just how I use them.

The pattern of a story is the general outline, of the sort delineated above. There are internal patterns as well, which the students will be noticing and which involve repetitions, usually three times.

The structure includes these patterns, but the structure is more three-dimensional. It includes the more detailed components of each story, and it includes the ways the various elements are interrelated. The structure is more cohesive, like the skeleton of a complex building.

A protagonist is the main character in a story; the word originally connoted the main actor in a Greek play. The protagonist is usually a worthy sort of person, but not

necessarily. Raskolnikov, Babbitt, Scarlett O'Hara and Lady Macbeth are all protagonists, but they are far from completely admirable people.

A hero or heroine is someone whose character may not seem too great at the outset of a story, but who eventually shows virtue and strength of character by performing extraordinary deeds.

Chapter 2. Structural analysis: Seeing Variations on a Theme

Time: 1 to 2 weeks

Materials

Folktale folders

Students are given a folktale folder, which they use throughout the course. We began by using manila folders, but these fell apart after a couple of weeks, so we prefer the much sturdier sort which includes pockets. The pockets are a help for dividing the papers into working pages and reference materials.

Pattern sheets

At the same time that the folders are distributed, the students are also given 10 or more sheets with the outline mimeographed on it, or 'pattern sheets'. (See Appendix for original, to be copied and distributed.)

Procedure

1. **Hand out folktale folders and pattern sheets and explain their use.**
   Explain that the pattern sheet is the same outline as they worked out the day before, but in a format that seems more useful for analyzing. Instead of using an exact copy of what is in this manual, I think it would be best to use the model you and your students worked out, but rearranged in this 'writing format'. The pattern on the sheet will be used as a sort of benchmark or base model with which to compare the pattern of each new folktale the students will be reading.

   As soon as the teacher has read a tale, s/he will go over the pattern point by point, asking the students how the story does and does not fit. The students will fill in the pattern sheet accordingly.

2. **Read a folktale aloud. (See Appendix for suggested folktales.)**

3. **Help class analyze the tale in relation to pattern.**
   Questions for discussion:
   1. *How/ where does this story fit into the pattern we worked out?*
   2. *How/where does it deviate and how?*
   3. *How is this story different from the others?*

   Have the students fill in the appropriate spaces as you go along, so they'll get the gist of what you are doing, and so they have an example for when they do it by themselves. Use the first few days as a time to see how much of a sense of structure students seem to have, and how familiar they are with variations within a pattern, and move along more or less quickly accordingly.

   It was easiest for the students if we reviewed the first one or two or three stories, according to the abilities of the class, with the class as a whole, the second three or

six stories in groups of three, which we then went over and compared and discussed with the class as a whole, and the third five or so stories individually—again reviewing them with the class as a whole. We weren't looking for an absolute general consensus on every point, but rather we wanted to help the class see that there is a definable pattern, though there are some differences about exactly how to describe this.

If the assignment is given as homework and then reviewed in class, it goes much more quickly. By the time students have gone over 10 or 15 stories, following the same basic pattern, they really have a sense of how this works.

4. **Repeat this process for 10-15 stories.**
   The same plan is followed every day throughout the week, or for the slower classes two weeks:

   1. The teacher reads a folktale aloud
   2. The class analyzes the story in relation to the pattern:

      How/where did it fit the pattern ?

      Where did it deviate and how?

      How was this story different from the others?

      Was there anything you especially liked or disliked about this story?

   There is always a fine line between going over something enough so you learn it thoroughly and going over something so much it bores you to death. When you sense that enough children understand the pattern that they're about to fade out but a few still haven't quite caught on (maybe by the ninth or tenth story), it's time to take a break and discuss movies.

5. **Help class analyze a movie based on the HAJ pattern.**
   Spend at least one day reviewing the structure and its relation to movies with which the children are familiar. You can certainly do this by filling in the sheets, but I tend to take a break from paper and just talk about it, writing the structure on the board at the beginning of the discussion and filling it in as we talk.

   A couple of the easiest ways to approach the structure in movies are:

   1. Review one movie step by step, seeing how it relates to the pattern, constantly taking note of how the other movies are similar or dissimilar as you move along. (See Appendix: *The Karate Kid.)*

   2. Review the pattern part by part and see how each movie relates to it.

   After a day on movies, return to the analyses of the last five tales or so, with the children working as individuals or in groups of two.

Notes to teachers

The pattern

As you will see, the pattern sheet we used for writing the folktale (Pattern Sheet I) emphasizes three strangers and three kindnesses, as well as three dangers. This is the most simplified version we use. It has few variables, and most students can work with it fairly easily. (Analysis of a pattern is difficult for everyone, including adults. What I mean by 'easily' in this context is that each of the three variables is related to the other two and the pattern is repeated exactly. There is less confusion because there are few variables.) You can also use this pattern sheet for the analysis, but it is a bit like a Procrustean bed, as most folktales have to be stretched or reshaped beyond recognition to fit it. Pattern Sheet II, in which "virtuous qualities" are listed, is much easier to use for the analyses.

This business of pattern and pattern sheets has been the most difficult for us to work out: how to make it clear and specific and workable enough for those students with the least sense of structure, while making it open enough for the widest range of invention. Ann came up with the writing format, which has been a pleasure to use. The pattern itself has been more elusive. We've found that Pattern Sheet I works very well in teaching clear structure and cohesion, but the three strangers three kindnesses three gifts three dangers format can be constricting—IF you require exactly this pattern from every student. The analysis pattern is looser and more adaptable, less formulaic, but harder for some students to work with. I don't think this is one of those things that can be resolved definitively. Teachers will have to work out their own patterns. This is just the best I have to suggest.

Kindnesses

I've come to ask that all students have their protagonist perform at least one kindness for at least one insignificant stranger.

There are many folktales in which kindness is not one of the hero/ine's characteristics; Wiley and the Hairy Man is one example. In many tales the hero—less frequently the heroine—-is aided simply because he is there, or because he was the chosen one. In the Grimms' tale *The White Snake,* the hero's first act, which leads him from poverty to wealth and power, is to steal some of the king's food. (He does then go on to show kindness to three sorts of animals.) Many of us find great comfort in stories in which the protagonist doesn't have to be kind or smart, because since childhood we've been so often exhorted to be kind to people we loathed, and we want to revolt against the very idea of Being Kind. For a discussion of the emotional aspects of such folktales and how they give relief to children, see Bettleheim and Dieckmann. (See Appendix for an annotated bibliography.)Then why am I so adamant about requesting a kindness?

Because junior high and high schools are very competitive and difficult places for many students, and it is well-nigh impossible for students to show kindness in many situations. Yet they want to be kind, and they want to think of themselves as kind. One of the feelings I've had as I've worked in different schools is that in some places

kindness seems to be proscribed by a sort of unconscious general consent. When we require a kindness in the stories, and especially when we discuss specific acts of kindness over several days, it becomes a possibility not only in the stories but in the classroom. Is it that some children really don't know what a kind act is? I think so.

When I have not emphasized the kindness aspect and worked on specific examples of it, the protagonists have usually simply met a squirrel which befriended them for no reason, or they have been dug up by a mole who appeared out of nowhere, or 'an old man came along and gave her a magic leaf'. It takes a great deal of brainstorming to enable the children to come up with clear and specific acts of kindness, as will be shown in the chapter on Writing the Outline.

Movies

There is something truly magic about movies. As soon as students see that this pattern that they are learning in CLASS is the basis for MOVIES they see and love, a whole transformation takes place. Up until now it has been your average imposed classroom project to some extent, but with its relation to MOVIES, it becomes something worth doing. This is almost not work anymore. It's related. It's real.

Just about any adventure movie with which the children are familiar will include most, if not all of the elements we have been discussing for the past week or two. Movies are our present-day folktales—the same old pattern garbed in robes of Hollywood and modern life and science fiction.

The *Karate Kid, Star Wars, The Wizard of Oz, Aliens, Willow* all follow the pattern very closely. I'm especially fond of both *The Wizard of Oz* and *Aliens* because they have given the heroine all the male qualities of courage, intelligence, physical prowess, as well as kindness, but also both heroines have a strong sense of justice and decency. They are blessedly unlike the females in two of the other three movies, who exemplify the faithful and beautiful but otherwise insipid princess of most folktales—and most movies. In *Willow,* the warrior-princess is capable AND nasty at first, but becomes insipid with instant motherhood and love.

The other side of the coin, of course, is what behavior is shown as 'manly' in the movies. Some of the movies have now begun to use two heroes at once so they can show the two faces of 'manliness'. Willow has all the qualities of care, affection, faithfulness, courage and devotion to family and community and the Good. But even though he is greathearted, he is small, and more important, he is too good. Willow's necessary complement is Madmartigan, the supreme warrior out for only himself and the pleasures of today— until he is socialized by a love-potion. In *Star Wars* we have the same sort of double: Luke Skywalker is the main or more obvious hero of the tale, but Hans Solo is the apparently egotistical, mercenary, uncaring person inside each of us who grows into becoming a hero with each new test, almost in spite of himself. And he wins the princess.

What are the characteristics of a 'true man' today?

Must he always be fearless; must he always know where he is going? Must he do everything right? Even in folktales the answer is a resounding NO! Many folktale heroes begin as the youngest or least capable child or are considered fools. This is

much more frequent with boys than girls. Except in *Tatterhood,* girls are pretty from the beginning and if not brilliant, are also not thought of as fools. What is the implication here? I'm not sure.

What are the characteristics of a 'true woman'?

We always spend a while discussing this; there are plenty of disagreements, but to me this is part of what makes a discussion enjoyable. Whether the children agree with me or not, I think it's important to point out the differences, to share my opinions about them, and to have them share theirs. There isn't only one hero/ine; the question is rather: What sort of hero/ine is most meaningful to ME?

Chapter 3.1. The Outline: Brainstorming about Tricks

Time: 2 to 4 days

Procedure

1. Review tricks in folktales, movies and stories, categorizing them as you list each one.

Describe to the class what you'll be doing and what you want them to do. Folktales abound with tricks; tricks are the secret weapon of the underdog, and the protagonist of folktales almost always begins as the underdog, opposing apparently insurmountable odds.

Questions for discussion:

1. *What are some of the tricks in the folktales we've read? (Describe the trick and its effect or reason.)*
2. *How would you categorize the trick; what title would you give this sort of trick?*
3. *What are some tricks in Greek myths, movies and other stories?(Eddie Murphy in Beverly Hills Cop is a perfect example of the trickster.)*
4. *What categories would you put these in?*

A sample list of categories and tricks:

1. substitution/ switch/ trick present
   - pig for Wiley (Hairy Man took the pig, not Wiley)
   - rock for Zeus (Cronos ate the rock instead of Zeus)
   - Greeks inside Trojan horse (Trojans let Greek soldiers into Troy so the Greeks won the war)
   - straw necklaces for gold ones (so the giant killed own daughters and not Molly Whuppie and her sisters)
2. "I bet you can't" / challenge
   - change into a tiny possum (so Wiley could grab it)
   - make all the rope disappear (so Wiley's dogs could get free to help him)
3. Trick name/ play on words
   - 'my young'un' (Hairy Man had to take piglet and not Wiley)
   - Noname or Noman (Ulysses called himself this so when Cyclops called for help, said Noman had attacked him so no Cyclops came to help)
4. Avoiding the power
   - Perseus used the shield to look at Medusa (so he wasn't turned to stone and could kill her)
5. Give own medicine/ reverse the danger
   - pretend you don't know how to get in stove and push witch in when she shows you

- make Medusa see herself in mirror-shield (hypothetical situation: Medusa would turn to stone)

6. Please don't
   - "Please don't throw me in the briar patch" (that's where Br'er Rabbit likes best, so he escapes)
   - "Please don't take my sweet potatoes" (Potatoes were carried to house)
   - boil my baby (soiled clothes, which were boiled and thus washed)
   - eat my treasure (junk: monster sank in swamp when he ate cartful of junk.)

2. Provide a sample dangerous situation which students must overcome/escape from with a trick from each category.

Sample danger: A child-eating monster comes to this school every day and eats a child for lunch. What are some ways to trick it?

Escapes the students have come up with:

substitution:

- Tell the monster to come on Saturday and nobody would be there. The monster would think he'd eaten everybody up and would go away.
- Make a big dummy out of straw and put it in somebody's seat. Put poison in the dummy so the monster would die.
- Put a bomb in the dummy.

I bet you can't:

- Say, "I bet you can't drink all the water in this pond", and put poison in it.
- Or the pond was polluted.
- Say, "I bet you can't eat all the food in the world before you eat me, and then he'd pop.
- Say, "I bet you can't change into a fly, and when he did, you'd smash him.
- Say, "I bet you can't eat this bread, and you'd put a big piece of metal inside
- and when he bit it, it would break all his teeth.
- Say, "I bet you can't smash this," and there would be dynamite inside and it would blow him up.

Play on words:

- Tell the monster to come eat all the kids, and the room would be full of baby goats.

Avoiding the power:

- He has this pollution breath, and you could put up a big shield in front of you like one of those things for practicing skateboards, and the breath would bounce off and land in the next town.

Give own medicine:

- A whole bunch of people could stand around the monster in a circle and they'd be holding these boards and when it breathes they'd raise the boards and then all the pollution would bounce back on it and choke it.

Please don't:

- You could say, "Please don't throw me in the water," and he did, and you were a lifeguard.
- Say, "Please don't feed me chocolate ice cream" and when you ate it, it would make you strong like spinach did for Popeye, and then you could kill him.

3. Have the students practice with one or two exercises, in groups or as individual homework.

Exercise:

Make up three tricks which will enable you to escape from three dangers. The first danger will be a monster, the second an animal and the third danger will be a person. Describe the danger and how it will destroy you. Describe the trick—choose your tricks from three different categories, not all three from the same one. Then be sure to describe what happens to the danger: why does it go away or how does it get destroyed?

Notes to teachers

Tricks come fairly late in the outline sequence, but I have several reasons for beginning the section on outline brainstorming with them. First of all, making up tricks feels more like a game than some of the other parts, and this discussion promotes a playful, 'this is a game' attitude in class, so the students don't feel they have to be 'creative' (whatever that is); they can just have fun (which for me is the same as being 'creative'.) Secondly, these exercises are little puzzles; the writing of the whole folktale itself is like solving a puzzle or playing a game in which the students have to use both their emotions and their wits. This exercise gets them into the swing of it. Three, inventing tricks emphasizes logic and problem-solving, which are the areas of greatest difficulty for many children. Four, tricks offer an alternative to the violent or wishful-thinking escapist approach students see on tv and movies and practice in real life. Tricks emphasize the use of one's brain to solve a problem. And last of all, the exercise of categorizing the tricks and then inventing specific examples from each reinforces the awareness of both order and the relations between various elements. This is very, very hard.

I'll give some examples of the places students get confused, and what we've done to work with this.

Examples of tricks

1. When we were trying to come up with ideas for 'avoiding the power', and for 'give own medicine', we had to first come up with a power that the monster possessed, such as breathing fire or breathing pollution breath. Then it became difficult to 'avoid the power', though students came up with tricky solutions from the other categories: "You could put a big string around where the monster was and soak the string in kerosene, and then when the monster came inside the circle you could make him breathe on something and it would burn up and then the whole circle would burn and he'd be killed." The solution sounds workable to me, and I told the student that, but I then asked the class which category they thought it belonged in. 'Give own medicine'. So we thought some more, and one child came up with an asbestos suit;

another suggested "You could make him come someplace and fall in and there would be ice in the hole and he'd get so cold the fire wouldn't work anymore." Again, the class decided that the ice trick was a really good one, but it was 'getting rid of the power' rather than avoiding it. There was a long discussion about the asbestos suit. It was a way of avoiding the power, but it wasn't a trick, and if it was an asbestos suit that looked like normal clothes, how could you cover up every bit of you and not look totally weird? Finally they came up with the skateboard ramp solution, which relieved everybody.

We always run into problems when we're trying to make up examples. Often, we don't know what we've done wrong, but we just feel that something isn't right. I've found that one of the most helpful actions to take in such a situation is to refer to the same kind of trick in a folktale we've read, and to analyze just how it is different from our example. This almost always gives a clue as to how to revise.

2. One of the nicest parts about the tricks in Wiley and the Hairy Man is that they use the Hairy Man's weak spot—his great pride in his conjuring abilities—to create his own downfall. I pointed this out to the class, and then we thought up how we might use other sorts of weaknesses to lead a monster to his or her downfall. The idea of biting through the bread came up for a monster who was proud of his strength, as did the dynamite.

I asked what you might do to a monster who loved riches: give him a piece of gold that would burn through his hand, tell him where a gold mountain was and he'd go away and never come back, give him a gold snake necklace that would turn into a live snake and choke him. It's usually at about this point that I tell them the rather chilling example from real life that has always amazed me, in which a man played on the weakness of his captor and got away. It concerns a lawyer named Mark Lane.

There was a man named Jim Jones who sometime in the 1970's became such a powerful preacher and leader that he convinced about 1000 people—old and young, many with families—to leave the United States and set up a religious community in Guyana, a country in South America. These were poor people, and they gave Jim Jones all their savings, everything they had. He named the community Jonestown.

Now relatives of his followers began to get stories of unsavory religious rites, of misuse of money and other peculiarities, and at first some individual lawyers, and then some Congressmen went down to Guyana to investigate. Mark Lane was one of the lawyers.

When all these officials descended on Guyana, Jim Jones realized that this was the beginning of the end for him. He assembled his congregation and had his guards force everyone at gunpoint to drink a potion that would take them to the Promised Land. The potion was full of cyanide, and some 900 or more people died, including Jim Jones.

While all this potion drinking was taking place, Mark Lane and another man were walking around outside the compound, where they were met by one of Jim Jones' guards and told to join the others. Mark Lane saw what was happening, and said to the guard something like, "Jim Jones has realized that this Great Experience will be

an example to generations to come, and knows that it must be recorded for posterity. He has chosen me as his Official Recorder, so I am now watching as carefully as I can what is going on. Could you please give me your exact name?" The guard gave Mark Lane his name. Mark Lane made sure that he spelled it correctly, and said to the guard, "Continue your good work and I will see that it is properly recorded." The guard let Mark Lane and the other man go, and they escaped with their lives when everyone else there died. I ask the class what they think the guard's weakness was that Mark Lane used to get free. We generally agree that it is a desire for fame.

The Jonestown story is a macabre one, but it is the most extraordinary case I know of in which a man used his wits to escape from danger in a way that parodies a folktale. I want to emphasize to children in every way I can that we are not just writing folktales here, this is not just cute material we write to amuse the teacher and the school system. It is part of our lives, part of the way we think and act. Part of the way we survive.

Chapter 3.2. The Outline: Writing Order

The Sections in Writing Order

The writing order of the story is:

I. Protagonist at home
   A. Description of
      1. protagonist
      2. home
      3. family
   B. Reason for leaving home

We immediately jump from here to:

II. Three Dangers
   A. The last danger
   B. The second danger
   C. The first danger

Now we can turn to:

III. Three Strangers: Their Plights and Gifts:$_{v}$
   A. Stranger #7 Plight/ Protagonist's help/ Stranger's Gift
   B. Stranger #2 Plight/ Protagonist's help/ Stranger's Gif
   C. Stranger #3 Plight/ Protagonist's help/ Stranger's Gif

and then to:

IV. How the Gifts overcome the Dangers:
   A. Danger #3 and how a gift (and/or wit) overcomes it
   B. Danger #2 and how a gift overcomes it
   C. Danger #1 and how a gift overcomes it

and finally:

IV. The Conclusion.

Explanation

We build almost nothing in the same order in which we use it, be it a meal, a bridge, a dress, a house or a story. When we approach a finished house, we walk up to it and enter the door, then we explore the first floor, go up and see the bedrooms if there is an upstairs, and finally, if we're going to buy the house or if we have some special reason for being so familiar, we go down and look at the basement. But the house is built in an entirely different order from this: we start with the foundation and build the exterior walls, second story and the roof, and then we put in windows and doors and fill in the interior spaces.

It's the same way with a story: the order of construction can be very different from the order of reading. After some trial and error, the classes found that the following seemed to be the easiest to use, again because it enabled them to see the structure clearly.

We do begin at the beginning. We begin by figuring out who the protagonist is and where s/he lives, who his or her family is. Then we give the protagonist some sort of a problem: her sister has been lost, he has to find medicine for his dying parents, she has to find a treasure, he has to defend the world from a mortal enemy, etc.

Here the order begins to change. As soon as we have defined the protagonist's problem, it's easiest to immediately figure out how to solve it, and then to work backwards from there and fill in the rest of the story.

Who is holding the lost sister? Who or what is guarding the lost treasure? What danger prevents us from getting the medicine we need? Who is the enemy who threatens the world? At the same time, we decide on the setting for this danger. As soon as we have understood this final danger—the danger that will resolve the reason for which we left home—we can work our way back to the second danger, and the first.

Now we return to strangers we have met along the way, their plights or difficulties, how we help them and what gifts they give in return. Finally we decide which gift helped us overcome which danger and exactly how it did this. All that remains is the conclusion.

You will be going over the building order in much greater detail later on; at this point it is important only to show the students what the order will be, and to explain why it is easier to write this way. It is a very hard idea for many children to get used to, but they will see how much easier it works as soon as they begin to plan their stories.

(I've suggested the strangers, plights and gifts as #3. One can just as easily figure out "gifts to overcome the dangers" at this point and have the strangers as #4. My reason for doing it in this order is that it tends to force a greater inventiveness: the students invent *any* three gifts that have to be used to solve three dangers. If students can't figure out a good match between the three, they can always change a gift or a danger to suit. Outlines are changeable, malleable things, and this exercise will afford them plenty of examples to see this.

When students make up 'gifts to overcome the dangers' as #3, I think they tend to think up a neater but duller match. But either order works.)

Chapter 3.3. The Outline: Brainstorming Each Section

Procedure

1. Have the students note, in magic marker on a clean pattern sheet, the writing order of the tale.

This is very straightforward. Just have the students make a big I next to the Introduction, a big II next to the Dangers—and a 1 beside danger #3, a two beside danger #2 and a three beside danger #1—a big III next to the Strangers, a big IV next to How gifts overcome dangers and a V next to the Conclusion.

(See sample page in Appendix.)

2. Brainstorm about possibilities for each element in each section of the outline, IN THE WRITING SEQUENCE, not in the sequence of the finished story.

The two features I most try to keep in mind here are to:

1. ask questions that elicit the widest range of ideas from the students
2. have the students show how their pieces relate to each other again and again and again.

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PARTS IS THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECT FOR THE STUDENTS.

Begin with the first section and brainstorm each section in the order of WRITING:

I. Protagonist at Home

A. Description of

1. protagonist

One of the characteristics of a folktale is that the protagonist is never described in any real detail. It might be a princess with hair like a raven's wing and skin as white as snow or it might be simply that 'A farmer had three sons'. But there are no details like a long nose or a cleft in the chin or a high-waisted body on long gangly legs. There is, as always, an exception:

The protagonist is thought by everyone to be stupid or lazy or ugly, and one of the results of the story is to discover that the hero/ine was not stupid or lazy or ugly at all, but was the best of the lot all along. In the English tale *Catskins,* the father throws his favorite daughter out of the house because when he asks her how much she loves him, she replies, "As meat loves salt". When at the end of the tale, the daughter serves saltless meat at her wedding, the father realizes his mistake and repents.

Folktales are about everyman and everywoman; they are about the human soul searching for experience. They are not about a specific individual who is readily identifiable from everyone else. THE FOLKTALE IS NOT THE PLACE TO CONCENTRATE ON DETAILED CHARACTER DESCRIPTION; THE HERO/INE'S CHARACTER IS SHOWN SOLELY BY HER OR HIS ACTIONS IN THE STORY.

Questions for the students:

1. *Who might your protagonist be?*
2. *Does your protagonist have a name?*
3. *What are some reasons a protagonist left home?*

In folktales?

In movies?

In other stories?

4. *Why else might a person leave home?*
5. *What apparent character defect might be a reason for leaving home? (e.g., a child who loved to read in a family of sports fanatics or vice-versa; a farm girl who couldn't farm or who hated farming, etc.)*

2. home

The protagonist's home is usually described in a few short words, just enough to let us know his or her social status: rich, poor or middle-class; and to give us the setting for the story: the woods, the city, the countryside.

Questions:

1. *What are some settings you don't usually find in folktales but that you might want to use? (desert, city slums, a plain old middle class home in the suburbs, a planet in another solar system, Jupiter, the jungle, the Antarctic, etc.)*
2. *What might there be about your home that you hated and wanted to leave?*
3. *What might there be about your home that you loved and never wanted to leave?*

3. family

Questions:

1. *What sorts of families would you hate to live in?*
2. *What sorts of families would you love to live in ?*
3. *What trouble might there be in the family so that the protagonist felt s/he had to leave?*

B. Reason for leaving home

Try to keep this brainstorming as wide-ranging as possible. You'll find that the most frequent ideas raised in this session are the ones most commonly used by the students. I try to begin by asking a general question of why anyone might leave home, suggesting the more obvious examples of medicine or seeking one's fortune, but then move from the most idiotic (to find my uncle's hat; to find the bellybutton of

the world) to the most realistic (because one's parents are drug addicts, or too poor; because the country is destroyed by war and one's family has been killed.)

There are two minor elements to work on in this section of the outline, or at least to mention:

1. How to get where you want to go

   Does the protagonist know where s/he is going, and if so, how? If, for example, she wanted to find the Water of Life, where could she have learned of its whereabouts before she left home? If the hero is an orphan and wants to find his parents, what clues might he have before he leaves the orphanage or wherever he is?

   Again, try to elicit answers that range from the romantic, e.g., a rock left by a parent that only comes from one part of the earth, a locket with secret words on it or a verse whose meaning has to be deciphered, to the realistic: the birth records at City Hall.

   It isn't necessary that the protagonist know where s/he is going, but if s/he has no idea, it should be stated at the outset, as s/he leaves. It usually makes the story easier to write if the protagonist does know where to go.

2. What you take along with you

   The general rule is that you go empty-handed into the world. The hero/ine leaves home with nothing.

   There are exceptions.

Exceptions

One of the commonest exceptions is food. Food gives us two messages in the stories: one, it tells us how the parent, especially the mother, feels about the protagonist, because the food is usually given to the hero/ine by the mother. If she gives fine loaves and wine, we know that this is a favored child; again, usually this sort of food is given to the spoiled older children, while the youngest receives only crusts. In an English folk tale, the mother asks her sons as they leave whether they want a large bannock with her curse or a small bannock with her blessing. The first takes the large bannock, the hero takes the blessing. Children also take food for themselves or from someone besides the mother; however, I don't think food is ever mentioned in a folktale unless it is used later on. The hero/ine invariably gives some of the food—usually half—to a needy stranger s/he meets on the first leg of the journey, and this is the second reason for using food in a tale. Giving half of the food to the stranger shows that the hero/ine regards her or himself as equal to others, neither more nor less. But most important, the sharing of food shows kindness and generosity.

(Note: There is also the delightful tale of a young man who gives to his adversary the Black Knight seven bannocks made with the breast-milk of his twin brother's wife. "The Black Knight took one bite, and his face changed. He ate all the seven bannocks, and when he had finished, he was the sweetest man in all the world.")

The second exception is a memento, usually from the dead mother. If I had to give a general rule, it would be that USUALLY the memento is lost if the hero/ine goes on a journey, as in Grimms' *The White Duck.* If the heroine stays around the house, as in *Cinderella,* the tree growing from the bones of the dead mother continues to give the child solace and comfort - and dresses! Occasionally the memento is used as a sign to others of the hero/ine's true nature, as in *The Goosegirl* or the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece. In the Russian tale *Vassilissa the Beautiful,* the child takes on her journey a doll given her by her dying mother, and the doll performs all her tasks for her.

Nothing else is taken on the trip: no money, no extra warm clothes, no fancy camping gear, and especially no weapons. If the protagonist rides off on a steed, it is an old decrepit one, like the rusty spaceship on which Luke Skywalker left his home, or Danny's mother's old car in *The Karate Kid.*

Then what about Toto in *The Wizard of Oz?* Well, Toto is sort of a memento, sort of a companion; Toto is the one who caused Dorothy to go on her journey in the first place, and the one who finally unmasks the Wizard. Toto is the exception that proves the rule.

Questions:

1. *What have hero/ines taken with them? Give examples.*
2. *What did they do with these things? How did they use them? What became of them?*

Notes to teachers

Any and all of these 'rules' can be broken—as long as the story works.

This is one of the easiest and most fun parts of the course. There are no right and wrong ideas, only a huge variety of ideas. This is play time.

It is also a time for the teacher to be aware of which children don't seem to understand how the various parts of the stories relate, and to keep coming back and back and back to the relations between the parts, eliciting possibilities that DO relate, and discussing why they do.

Names:

Folktales tell the story of Everyone. The trials are what each of us goes through, so there is a studied lack of specificity. Most folktale characters have no names. Those which are given are the most common in that country: Jack, Hans, Kate or Ivan; or they are descriptive: Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Puss'n Boots, Tom Thumb, Catskins, Bluebeard, and so forth. But the children are making their own private folktale here. A name will often make the story feel closer to them—a name they might have chosen if they could have decided for themselves. Most students have no trouble thinking up good names. Names have meanings, but many children don't know the meanings of their own names. I'd suggest having in class a namebook of the type parents buy when they are naming their babies, both so that students can check on their own names and so they can get ideas.

Reason for leaving home:

One of the clearest differences between boys and girls in folktales is their reasons for leaving home. Girls almost always leave home because of an evil stepmother (occasionally a misguided father) or they leave to rescue someone like a lost brother or an enchanted husband. Boys much more often leave home to seek their fortunes. I think this reflects a social reality: boys did leave home to seek their fortunes while girls did not, but this is not the case today, when women as well as men have to find jobs. It's an important point to notice, because although the social situation has changed, our attitudes are still formed by things like folktales. When children see that the alternatives are different because the social context is different, they have more room to choose for themselves. Both boys and girls can leave home to rescue someone; both can leave to seek their fortunes.

Leaving home with nothing:

When I describe how the hero/ine leaves home with nothing, I often tell the story of the Prince Siddhartha, the future Buddha, the Enlightened One:

It was prophesied when Prince Siddhartha was born that he would become a great king, but if he saw sickness, old age and death, he would become a great ascetic. The king and queen had no intention of losing their son to religion, so they built high walls around the palace and raised their son so that he had only young, healthy and beautiful companions. He married a beautiful wife and had a son, and he knew none of the miseries of the world outside the palace walls.

But one day the prince visited the town, and in spite of his parents' precautions, he saw a decrepit old man, bent with age. "What ails that man?" he asked his groom. The groom replied, "That is old age; it happens to all of us if we are so lucky as to live long."

The prince returned to the palace troubled. The next day he again went to town, where he saw a person disfigured by disease—maybe leprosy or smallpox, which were common during his time. When he asked what this was, his groom told him, "That is sickness, and all of us who have bodies made of flesh and blood are liable to it."

Again the prince returned home troubled. The third day when he visited the town, he saw a funeral procession and asked what it was. His groom said, "That is death, and all of us who live must die, for this is the fate of all living creatures."

When Prince Siddhartha had seen these three things, he could no longer be happy inside the palace but must try to find out how humans could live in peace when faced with such a fate.

That night, he crept out of the palace and rode on his great horse Kantaka, accompanied by his groom, Chandaka, until he came to the gates of the city. Here Prince Siddhartha bade his groom return with his horse to his father, so the two could console the king for the loss of his son. When they had gone, Siddhartha cut his long hair, exchanged his princely robes with the first beggar he met on the road, and set off to find his way.

Even the greatest princes on the greatest journeys leave home with nothing; it is a sign of their commitment to self-discovery, to the Journey, to raw experience.

II. The Dangers

The Danger Map.

The danger map is simply three concentric circles. The final danger is in the middle, the second is in the second ring and the first is in the outer ring. Draw these on the board and show how they relate to the dangers in specific folktales or movies. The danger map can be thought of as a bull's eye, with the final danger you are aiming for at the center, and the lesser dangers in the wider circles around it. Examples of danger maps for three movies:

The Wizard of Oz *Star Wars* *The Karate Kid*

The Wizard of Oz

Star Wars

The Karate Kid

As soon as you have finished brainstorming about the protagonist's leaving home, go immediately to the LAST of the three dangers, because

1. the last danger resolves the reason for which the protagonist left home. This last danger will also most likely be
2. the most dangerous of all the dangers, and
3. at some extremity in space and maybe time.

The best way we've found of playing with the dangers is by using a danger map and by asking three questions:

1. What terrible danger might be:
   - holding your brother captive
   - guarding the antidote to the poison destroying the world about to kill your loved one about to drink the Life Potion destroying the fields in your nation?
   - (Refer back to all the suggestions as to why the protagonist left home.)
2. How is this a danger? Exactly what will it do if you don't overcome it?

3. Where does this danger live? Is it at some extremity?

Extremities:

The last and most fearful danger is in the middle of the map, which represents some extremity. Why some extremity? When the danger is at some extreme in space or time, it means that our journey there will test our own limits. It is one further element that makes the danger 'extremely' dangerous. Also, I think that we like to think of the danger as existing as far as possible from ourselves. What are some extremes?

- the edge of the universe
- the middle of the forest or the world
- the top of the highest mountain
- "the back of the North Wind"
- the bottom of the sea or the deepest cave
- the North or South Pole
- midnight in the middle of nowhere

When the children run out of ideas of their own, both about the final danger and about an extremity, refer once again to folktales and movies, so they will keep seeing how these ideas have been incorporated without their having noticed it.

As soon as you have brainstormed about possibilities for the final danger, move on (or back) to the second danger and finally to the first, each time asking the same three questions. But with the first two dangers come two more questions:

1. How is this danger related to the final danger?
2. How might you get from one danger to the next, or how are they related in space?

As you discuss these sorts of dangers and ask the students for examples, be sure to show them where the dangers fit on the danger map. Many people cannot visualize this concentric relationship in their heads. They need a visible guide to refer to, and the danger map gives them this.

Notes to teachers

Relations between the dangers:

In most folktales, as well as in most thrillers and mystery stories, the dangers are related to each other in some way. This makes for a more cohesive story to read; it also helps children, one more time, think about order and relationships.

Some ways the dangers might be related:

1. Central power:

The easiest way to relate the three—or four—dangers is to have the final danger be the Power or Intellect or Evil Heart which controls the environment in which the hero/ine lives. The second danger would then be the guards of the Power, or a false image of the Power, or some emanation from it, such as evil spirits or ghouls or demons or waves. The first danger, in the outer ring of the concentric circles, might then be a lesser form of guards, or it might be a dangerous area around the lair of

the Power: a swamp full of alligators and poisonous snakes, an ocean full of ice floes or creatures, or a ravine filled with fire or slime or disgusting garbage.

Examples to refer to: Star Wars, The Karate Kid, Willow.

2. Three tasks:

The three dangers might come in the form of three tasks assigned by the king for his daughter's hand, or by the creature holding the protagonist's brother, etc. Each task is usually a mortal danger, or failure to perform it results in death. If a child wants to have tasks as dangers, s/he might then want to add a fourth danger: overcoming the person who assigned the tasks. This usually requires either the help of the person to be rescued, or a display of wits.

Examples to refer to: Turandot, Wiley and the Hairy Man, The Master Maid, The Glass Mountain, Whitebear Whittington

3. Three environments:

The dangers could just take place in three very different environments. The final goal would be in the last environment, and the first two would be regions of danger the protagonist had to pass through on the way there.

An exercise to help children see relations:

Working in groups of three or four, the students invent three dangers and share them with the class. Ask the class whether the examples are related—if so, how; if not, why not, and do they have suggestions?

Differences between boys and girls:

Once the structure becomes clear to them, many children have little or no trouble inventing dangers. But some children do, and their difficulties often relate to gender. Both boys and girls have problems with the danger section, but boys have different problems from girls.

The ability to invent dangers is one revealing difference. Boys usually seem to have less trouble inventing mortal and unpleasant dangers; these often have various mechanical aspects: men in tanks or with laser guns, a swinging pendulum or robots with flashing red eyes. They prefer to have the protagonist smash the dangers to tiny bits more than the girls do. Boys also come up with blobs as monsters more often than girls: a jelly blob, or a pool of oil that is coming to get them, or a Glob Monster.

Boys' difficulties arise when they use their gifts against the dangers. They don't consider what gift they've been given, but just throw anything at hand, hoping against hope that it will blow up the danger or pierce it in its heart. They will just as often throw a toothpick as a rooster; throwing is their instant and unquestioned reaction to fear. What the teacher has to help them ask themselves here is:

What are the properties of this gift that might help me overcome this particular danger?

What are the properties of the gift, and what are the weaknesses of the danger?

If there is one more characteristic in the boys' stories, it's a sort of mindless violence: violence as a natural emanation of the creature or person rather than violence being a side effect of an evil intention.

Girls sometimes have much more trouble inventing effective dangers. One day when I was particularly frustrated about this, I said to the class, "Look, you face plenty of dangers in real life. What dangerous things could really happen to you?" Their answer was immediate: they could get raped, mugged or killed. I realized then that girls might often feel that the dangers they face in real life are so overwhelming that they are powerless to deal with them. In terms of their stories, this has had two results:

1. Girls more often invent intangible dangers, such as fog, a dark alley, getting lost in the woods. What they have to ask themselves in each case is :

What will the heroine meet in the fog or alley or woods that will cause her harm?

What actual peril is lurking there?

As soon as she can pinpoint this, she has a danger she'll be able to contend with.

2. Girls more often escape from danger by wishing themselves away. They hang onto whatever gift they've been given and they wish, and poof! The danger disappears. What they have to ask themselves here, though, is exactly the same as the boys:

How might I use the properties of this gift to contend with this danger?

Girls' dangers usually have more of a natural or a human element: they think up less numbers of blobs and armored ghost-warriors, more alligators and kidnapers and witches.

III. The Strangers: Their Plights, How they are helped, Their Gifts

Procedure

The procedure for this section is straightforward and follows that of the other sections. It is also easier by this time because the students have a grasp of what is going on. I'll only make a few remarks that seem helpful or relevant.

1. Brainstorm about social outcastes in stories and in reality.

Who are these strangers we meet on our journey, whom we help and who then help us in return?

The most consistent feature of the helpful strangers is their apparent insignificance or unattractiveness. These are people or creatures whom most of society doesn't notice or doesn't want anything to do with. They are social outcastes or misfits. The attitude of general society towards them is often shown by the reaction of the two older brothers or sisters, who pass by the stranger with indifference or with rude

words. This behavior sets off that of the third 'hero/ine' sibling, who is polite and respectful, or who offers food or aid to the stranger.

The function of the insignificant stranger in the story is to show that the protagonist is a thoughtful and kindhearted person.

Questions for brainstorming:

1. *Who are people or animals in folktales who were treated kindly by the protagonist?*
2. *What made them insignificant or unacceptable by society's standards?*
3. *Who might be some real people or creatures who are thought of as insignificant or unacceptable by society ? Have people helped them ? Who ? How ?*
4. *Who might be (has been) an outcaste in one society but highly acclaimed by another?*
5. *What might be a difficulty of this stranger?*
6. *How might the protagonist help them out?*

2. Discuss the relationships between the three strangers: their similarities and differences

When a story includes three kind strangers, they are often related in some way.

1. Three elements

When there are three helping animals in a story, the three are usually from three different elements or environments: the land, the water and the sky. In Grimms' *The White Snake,* the animals were fish, ants and ravens; in the Russian tale *The Frog Princess,* the helpers were a pike fish, (a drake,) a hawk and a bear; in the Vietnamese tale *Toad and the King of Heaven,* the animals are bees, a rooster and a tiger .

(Note: I have a lot of difficulty with the story of *The White Snake,* since the protagonist has no qualms about killing a duck to find the queen's ring, and later on kills his horse who has carried him for miles along the road in order to feed three ravens he has no connection with. It fits the pattern, but it rubs me the wrong way.)

The feeling this sort of story leaves us with is that the protagonist has sympathy for all the elements of the world; when we are 'in touch with' the whole world, it makes itself accessible to us in return.

Questions for brainstorming:

1. *If your story took place at the seashore, what might your three animals be? What might be the plight of each?*
2. *If your whole story took place in a garbage dump (or a desert, the South Pole, the Amazon, a swamp) who might be the three animals? The plight of each?*
3. *If the first two animals were a crow and a panther, what might be the third? Why? (Can the animals have the same color as well as the same habitat?) What might be the plight of each animal?*

2. Three similar strangers

In *East of the Sun and West of the Moon,* three sisters, each one older than the next, help the heroine on her quest for her husband. These sisters are reminiscent of the Three Fates who spin the thread of our lives, carding, twisting and spinning, and they reappear as helpers in Grimms' *The Three Spinners.* In the Russian tale of *Vassilissa the Beautiful,* the heroine sees three knights, one in white, one in red and one in black, who represent the dawning day, high noon and night. In the story of Prince Siddhartha, 'man' in three guises of decay was the helper who caused him to begin his search for enlightenment; in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol,* the three kind strangers are the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future.

Questions for brainstorming:

1. *If your strangers were three bears (or cats, people, birds, etc.) how might they be different? What could be the plight of each?*
2. *How might three old brothers (or dwarves, hermits, spirits, etc.) be different? Their difficulties?*
3. *How might the strangers appear scary or unfriendly at first?*

3. Three in one

Frequently a folktale has only one kind stranger. This stranger sometimes gives the protagonist advice, but sometimes the stranger gives a set of three gifts. In *Whitebear Whittington* the old woman is helped with the washing of the wool, the carding and the spinning, and after the girl has helped her with each task, she gives her a different sort of nut. In the Russian tale *The Three Gifts,* it is Jack Frost who gives the younger brother three gifts.

Questions for brainstorming:

1. *What kindnesses might you do for an otter to receive a whisker, a little fish and a water bubble?*
2. *What gifts might you get from a tiger for saving its young from a serpent, a hunter and a flood?*

Notes to teachers

How insignificant is insignificant?

In most folktales the strangers are old people or insignificant animals like mice, ants or ducks, but there are plenty which include hawks, snakes or men with extraordinary talents. Dorothy makes friends with a lion; a Russian hero befriends a wolf, etc.

In many classes, the children's first reaction is to befriend three vicious creatures who will protect them; one boy chose as his traveling companions a pit bull, the Hulk and a werewolf.

Now these children are dealing with reality here. If you are small or weak and unpopular, it truly would be wise to have a pit bull, the Hulk and a werewolf as boon

companions in your travels through the corridors of school. But if I encourage a child to stick to this sort of choice alone, I think I'm also encouraging him to persist in caging himself off from any possibility of trusting people, and baring his fangs to the world.

The ways I respond when children do this are:

1. I explain the purpose of the stranger in the folktale: to show that the hero/ine is a compassionate person. If a person only helps those who can protect him or her, this isn't showing compassion, it is showing fear. Whom might your hero/ine (and I stress that we are discussing the protagonist of a story here; I don't slide into using 'you' which I often do in other situations.) also help so that we the readers know s/he is a kind person?
2. Is there any way the protagonist might show courage in rescuing the creature, so we know at the outset that s/he isn't acting out of fear or out of the future convenience of having a devoted guard? For example, might s/he rescue a runt of a pit bull who is being attacked by bears or by other huge pit bulls? How? (No weapons.)
3. We talk about what creatures or people in various societies are regarded as 'untouchable' for some reason, how that might make them feel, and what kindness we might do. I remember playing with this exercise one summer, the summer of the gypsy moth caterpillars. That year they had taken over. The trunks of the oak trees had wide fuzzy stripes, slightly curved and almost motionless, of mats of worms in formation. They had eaten so many of the leaves that there was no shade underneath them, and in the night when you stood outside, you would hear the sound of rain, but it was only thousands of little fecal pellets falling. You couldn't go anywhere outside without having the hairy worms crawling down your neck or your arm, or squashing them underfoot.

I asked the children what creature a person might be kind to, when everyone else disdained it, and one child said, "A gypsy moth caterpillar." I was speechless, and I've held her slightly in awe ever since. It was an act of compassion beyond my imagination.

IV. How Gifts help protagonists overcome Dangers

Procedure

1. Make a list of gift suggestions on the board—both those the students have read about or seen and those they make up.

Brainstorming about possible gifts is quite straightforward. There are only a couple of things I watch for:

1. NONE OF THE GIFTS MAY BE A WEAPON (though they may turn into a weapon when they are used—as a light beam can burn a hole or a bee's sting can change into a knife)

There are plenty of folktales that do include weapons as gifts; there are even more myths and epics(hero tales told by and for warring societies) and movies that do so. But there are two reasons I've come to this restriction:

1. This is the first thing our male children think of when they are faced with any sort of threat. The presence of weapons in our society and their widespread use in games, TV and reality encourages them to think along this track already; I'd just like to encourage a few alternative possibilities.
2. Capable and responsible use of weapons requires training and practice—with the weapons themselves. It also requires utmost restraint.

(The folktale as a genre doesn't seem to believe in practice and training of any sort. The reason for this might be that folktales grew out of peasant culture, and for peasants, life was continual, meaningless, backbreaking drudgery. The idea of 'meaningful' training and practice had no part in their lives; all they wanted was an escape from their daily existence.)

This business of writing a folktale is an exercise of the heart and mind—on paper. The best exercise I can give students is to encourage them to think: to think clearly, analytically, inventively. Letting them use weapons in their stories does none of this.

Maybe another way to think about it is this: that just as every object and experience in our lives can be seen as a gift, so can they all be seen as potential weapons. How we use them depends in part on the situation, but more important, it depends on our state of mind: on our ability to think clearly and inventively, and to remain calm in danger.

2. The second thing I watch for is variety. Keep a few ideas in mind for when the students flag or when their ideas are all tending in one direction. If their images are all sweet and beautiful: a golden locket, a lace handkerchief, a feather, I'd suggest a piece of bubblegum or a rubber band; if the images are all disguised weapons: the sting of a bee, a silver ice pick, a box of thumbtacks, I'd first help them notice that these are all pointed, skin-piercing objects ("Do you notice any similarities between these objects?" or "It looks to me like you all have an ulterior motive in giving these to yourselves.") and then would suggest some gift like a little bag of fog, a glass harmonica, a lullaby or an orange.

At some point, begin working with the idea of transformation: how might a gift change into something else that would help overcome the danger, e.g., the orange could be used in a variety of ways: its skin could be a little boat or a shield; the seeds could sprout into a tree or could form a necklace or could change to stones that might help you across the swamp or the ocean; the juice could turn into a golden river. Once students begin thinking in these terms, they can really take off. Just be careful that the transformation is *related to the original gift-,* a piece of thread might become a river or a rope or a rainbow, because of the similar shape, but not a raisin or a boat or a rock.

2. Make up two or three dangers. Have the students brainstorm about how each gift might be used with each danger.

There are three elements to watch here:

1. that the dangers you choose are different from each other so the students work with a variety.
2. that you define the danger clearly so we know exactly what the threat is and how it will affect the protagonist.
3. that the use of the gift makes sense in terms of the gift.

Exercises:

1. Choose a couple of dangers from folktales you have read or movies you have seen, but solve them with the gifts from the board, e.g.,
   a) You have wandered into a poppy field and halfway through it you realize what it is and that you are falling asleep.

      Ask:

      What exactly is the danger? (That you will fall asleep forever, i.e., die.)

      What can you do with gift "A"?

      How might the gift transform so that it helps you?

   b) You are on a space platform and face the Mother Creature, whose progeny you have just destroyed and who wants to eat you.
   c) A group of boys in skeleton suits is chasing you so they can beat you up.
   d) A witch is about to put you into the oven and roast you.
2. Your dangers are a swamp, palace Ghost Guards and the Wicked Sorcerer who is trying to turn the world into his slaves. Your gifts are a piece of bubblegum, a song and a golden comb. How might each gift be used for each danger?
3. You must cross a desert, the ocean and mountains of ice. What is the exact danger in each environment (i.e., how will you die?)? Your gifts are a ball of yarn, a glass bracelet and rabbit spit.
4. Have the students suggest three dangers. Be sure they are different from each other; be sure the exact threat is clear.

Notes to teachers

Difficulties:

Students seem to have two main difficulties with the use of gifts:

1. Understanding the characteristics of this particular gift and how one of these might be used to contend with this specific danger.

2. Inventing a gift that isn't so powerful that there is no contest: a cap of invisibility so they can steal or destroy without fear, a magic beam that destroys everything in its path, or a missile that always hits its mark.

I'm not saying these aren't related to reality or that children haven't seen them in movies or other folktales. It's just that these gifts don't encourage analytic or deductive thinking or thinking of any kind. I think the most helpful way to deal with

images like these is to limit the gift: if a cap renders you invisible, it must have a short time limit on it; if a beam destroys everything in its path, you must find just as you are about to use it that your sister is standing in front of the Evil Sorcerer and will be destroyed as well; if the missile always hits its mark, you must realize that that mark is the center of your own world. Every gift must have its limits; there is no perfect charm.

Somehow, children aren't aware of the side consequences of their actions. Putting limits on the gifts and giving each 'perfect' gift a fatal flaw helps them to go one step beyond simplistic solutions. Again, this is in the nature of folktales themselves: each element is used appropriately, thoughtfully and wisely. Maybe the evil in folktales is arbitrary, but the ways in which the protagonist overcomes evil and deals with it are appropriate and considerate of limits.

Not all of the gifts will work as well as others; some that you think are duds will turn out to be the most interesting, or elicit the most inventive answers. Some that seem the most 'creative' won't elicit any ideas at all. It is important for the children to see this: if a gift doesn't work, you can just choose another. Some gifts work for one situation, some work for another. Our job isn't to force every gift to fit every danger, but to explore with them, play with them and see what ideas we come up with, what combinations make something marvelous. But if a gift doesn't work, CHANGE IT.

Examples from science:

Science is full of examples in which, as the Nobel Prize winner Albert Szent-Gyorgi put it, someone who has seen what everyone else had seen but thought something new. These occurrences—be they accidents or dreams or seemingly bothersome chores—are also gifts to the person whose mind is set on a particular task or problem.

Most children know the (apocryphal?) story of a man who was sitting under a tree , wondering why, if the earth was spinning around so fast, everything didn't just fly off into space, when an apple fell on his head and he suddenly understood. When I describe this to the class, many of them immediately know that **I**'m talking about Isaac Newton. He realized that all bodies are attracted to each other, and that the greater their mass, the greater the attraction. The earth's mass is so much greater than that of the apple that the apple falls to the earth instead of the earth rising to meet the apple. One could say that the apple was a gift from Mother Nature, allowing him to discover the Law of Gravity.

There are two more examples that come to mind, in which people were given 'gifts' like this that would have been meaningless to anyone else, but which they alone knew how to use.

In 1928 a man named Alexander Fleming was trying to find some way to kill bacteria, as there were no effective medicines against bacterial infections. Fleming had grown various kinds of bacteria in his flat petri dishes, and had then introduced different agents into the dishes to try to kill the bacteria. He had worked on this for many years and nothing much had happened, when his laboratory dishwasher got

sick and was off work for a couple of weeks. Fleming had to wash all the petri dishes himself.

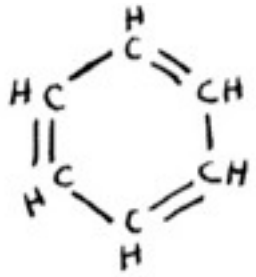
Fleming was washing along when he noticed that some of the dishes were covered with bacteria, while some had large round blank spots on them, where nothing grew at all. He brought the dishes to the microscope, scraped off some of the spot material and looked at it. He eventually discovered that it was a kind of mold that looked like a lot of little pencils, so he named it after the Latin word for pencil, penicillin. This is how the first antibiotic was discovered.

Alexander Fleming's gift was a laboratory full of dirty dishes.

One last example from science involves a dream. About a hundred years ago, people knew that all of the molecules that make up matter had specific structures, but there weren't microscopes small enough to allow us to look at the actual molecules. People had to figure out the structures from other sorts of clues, like the ratios of different atoms in a specific molecule.

Friedrich August Kekule was working on the benzene molecule, and he knew exactly what it was made of: six atoms of carbon and six atoms of hydrogen. But no picture he made of its structure made any sense in terms of how it connected to other molecules and how it acted. He drew the molecule in straight lines, in branches, in as may ways as he could, but nothing was right. Then he had a dream, and the dream was his gift.

He dreamed that a snake was slithering along, when suddenly it came to a staircase, whereupon it immediately took its tail in its mouth, turned into a circle and rolled up the stairs. Kekule woke up and knew at once the structure of benzene. It was a circle. Since his discovery, many molecules have been found to be circular, but this was the first.



I only know these examples from science because I come from a scientific background, but there are examples in every field. The only movie I can think of which shows how chores were the gift of the stranger is *The Karate Kid,* in which Mr. Miyagi has Danny polish the car and paint the fence in very specific ways. The motions he uses then turn out to be karate moves, which help him become a champion.

But the point that is important to me is that when we have a problem, whether it's a scientific problem or a danger we're facing in a folktale or a problem in everyday life,

we have to use whatever gifts fate has given us. It is the USE of these gifts, and not the gifts themselves, that show our true mettle.

Relationships between the gifts.

This short section on gifts seems like it would be one of the easiest; you'll find that for some students it will be the most difficult by far. The section on gifts is more crucial than the others, because it is here that relationships make all the difference, and some students really do not have much of a sense of connection.

There are three sorts of relationships the children might use with gifts:

1. how the gift is related to the kind stranger; is this an appropriate gift to receive from this stranger?
2. how the gift changes from its original form to a new one in the hands of the protagonist
3. how the gift is used to combat the danger.

As I've mentioned, there is a revealing gender difference in the use of the gift: boys tend to *throw* their gift at the danger, while girls tend to hang onto it and *wish* themselves out of the situation. These reactions might have worked when we were still hunters in the wild, having to spear our food and "freeze" into immobility when endangered; neither one seems especially helpful in most situations today. Neither reaction is one which examines the possibilities inherent in the gift itself and uses these in an inventive way. They are knee-jerk reactions (which implies that they are also at least partially inherited?) to panic.

"Good heavens, woman," you might say, "This is only a folktale. Don't read so much into it." But these are also the fantasies of our children, and when boys consistently respond to danger by throwing any gift at it—from necklaces to feathers to bubblegum to missiles—and girls hang onto this same object and wildly WISH, both expecting the danger to instantly explode or disappear, then this implies to me that this is how they basically expect life to work, and I don't regard this as healthy. We are creatures of instinct— if this be instinct—but we have also been given hearts and minds.

One last word: the relationships I'm describing here are not always logical, or at least the ideas don't come to us by a process of deductive reasoning, although one can see logical relationships after the image has been thought up. The best ideas are beautiful, and are a surprise to those who have them. We can rarely explain where they came from. The best ideas are gifts, that's all we can say, and it is the job of the teacher to help open the children up so they can receive them.

V. Conclusion

Procedure

This whole procedure shouldn't take more than 10 or 15 minutes at the most. The class is ready to begin writing their outlines. But be sure not to dismiss this as insignificant just because it is short. The conclusion determines the feeling we are left with; it sets our overall understanding or sense of the story.

1. THE STORY MUST END IN THE PROTAGONIST'S SUCCESS.

1. Discuss conclusions in folktales and adventure movies.

Review how specific folktales and movies have ended and what the hero/ine has done at the end.

One conversation that is interesting in this context is the difference between the original written story and the movie version. In the original *Wizard of Oz,* Dorothy has truly been swept away by the cyclone to the Land of Oz; in the movie version she wakes up to find it had all been a dream. I was furious about this when I saw the movie. I felt cheated. How do the children feel about each ending?

The conclusion should give the reader the sense that the story has been finished. It relates back to the situation that was described at the beginning of the story and rounds it all off 'like a little o', but it also ties up any loose ends that have been left hanging. I think of the final line of Kipling's Just So Story, *The Butterfly Who Stamped:* "But wasn't that clever of Balkis?" The reader should have the sense, "Wasn't that clever of the hero/ine?" or "What a good way to end!" or "Ah!", rather than, "But I don't quite get it."

2. Brainstorm about what might happen to the companions, if the protagonist has them.

In most folktales, the companions pretty much disappear into the bushes without anyone noticing them, and they are never mentioned again. But others are taken home, or make a parting speech before they go back into the woods; some ask to be killed and become a beautiful princess the moment their head is chopped off. Review some of the fates of the companions in the tales and movies the children are familiar with, and ask them to brainstorm alternatives.

3. Discuss how the protagonist might celebrate success.

"Celebrate success" doesn't necessarily mean to have a party, but more to give form to the feeling of joy or accomplishment. The stock ending is to marry the prince or princess and "live happily ever after". Tyeh May celebrated her success by going around the country drawing things for the poor. The heroine in *Whitebear Whittington* celebrated her success by getting their three children and going home. "That spell on him was broke so he never was a bear again, and they lived happy."

What might the protagonist do at the end to "wrap up" the story and mark its completion?

Notes to teachers

Success:

You will notice this more when the children write their outlines and their final stories, but this is a good time to begin to be aware of this: some children will write a good story, but will sabotage their success by having a tricky ending. Two endings which I don't find acceptable are:

1. The protagonist wakes up to find that it was all a dream. No. The protagonist has *actually accomplished* all the actions in the story, no matter how the *Wizard of Oz* movie ends.
2. The protagonist returns home to find it was all a spoof or a prank.

One boy wrote a wonderful folktale, in which he had had to get a medicine which would cure his little sister. He returned home to find that his sister wasn't sick after all, but had merely wanted to set him off on a wild goose chase. When I told him that the folktale had to end in real success, he tore up his paper. Could I have caught that earlier? Would it have helped if I had said, "That was a rotten thing for his sister to do, but look at the adventure your hero had anyway. Maybe you could make that clear in your conclusion. I think he was really a hero."?

Make success a clear requirement at the beginning, but try to help each child determine for him or herself the sort of success they can handle for the time being. A small success can lead to bigger ones later. Or one hopes so.

Chapter 4. Symbols

Time: 1-3 days

Much has been made of the "symbolism" of folktales, but all of human understanding is symbolic. Humans are the animals who use symbols to live.

A symbol is a thing which represents something else. Language itself is the underlying system of symbols, in which the words either represent something else: an object, an action, a thought—or they connect such words together. Because of language, we imbue the world with meaning, from "That is a tree" to "I hate you" to "His heart unfurled like a flower"—from definition to expression of feeling to metaphor.

Myths are sets of symbols we use to give meaning to our existence; science is a symbolic system for representing and understanding the physical universe; art makes systems of formal symbols: shapes, sounds, colors, smells—which resound with our emotions and perceptions and intensify them.

Anything can be a symbol, in that anything can stand for something else. But the symbols in art, including folktales, are effective because they are not specific. A fork on a roadside sign stands for a restaurant and nothing else. The symbols in folktales hold a different personal meaning for each one of us. The pure pearl that the hero is seeking is what each of us who reads the story is seeking, but you might be seeking scientific truth, your sister might want to be rich and famous, and I might want true love. If a heroine finds a flower growing out of a rock, this could stand for hope, for the courage to fight on against overwhelming odds, for a sign that her beloved is alive and faithful, for a reminder that delicacy (or beauty or gentleness or purity) will win over brute force (or rationality or impassivity or death). The fact that symbols do not represent only one single thing but mean what we each need them to mean at that time—this is the secret of these symbols, and their power. Tell this to the students. Help them be aware of what they are doing as they use symbols in their work.

Students often know that they are dealing with symbols in folktales, but they aren't aware either of how pervasive symbols are in our daily lives or how they work. I like to take at least one day off and play with symbols. This doesn't have to come at the end of the section on Outline Brainstorming, as I have it here; sometimes it works best at the end of the section on Pattern Analysis, or on one of those 'off' days when you feel the class flagging or just 'missing something'. But a day playing with symbols should be included somewhere in the pre-writing section. If the outline is the skeleton of this building we refer to as a folktale, then symbols are bricks, the building blocks; they are the very stuff of folktales, of dreams and of our human lives.

The order in which we play with symbols changes every time I teach, depending on my mood, on the class, on the time of year. In the fall we would tend to analyze jack

o' lanterns, falling leaves and turkey while in the spring we might think of eggs, melting snow and daffodils.

I begin here with exercises on symbols in daily life. This by itself gives sufficient symbolic play to the students. However, I've also added a second section which concentrates on ideas of the soul. I usually bring this in if we have read *The Frog Princess* or an Indian folktale in which an evil rakhosh's soul is hidden inside of a pomegranate seed or inside of dice, or after we have read *The Paper Crane,* which is sort of a story about the soul of a paper napkin, or maybe the soul of a Stranger. If you feel the topic of the soul is too abstruse or if it offers other difficulties, just skip this section and concentrate on other symbols.

Procedure

1. Discuss symbols in our daily lives

Questions for discussion:

1. *What are the names of cars and why? (Colt, Mustang, Vixen, Cobra, Ranger, Samurai, etc.)*
2. *What are the names of rock and movie stars and why?*
3. *What are the names of shoes and why ? (Nike, Reebok, Kangaroos, etc.)*
4. *What do the specific symbols on national flags represent and why were these chosen?*
5. *What are the meanings of some religious symbols:*
   - Buddhist: the lotus as the pure soul growing from the mud of daily life
   - Christian: Christ as the Lamb of God
   - the bread and wine of communion
   - Jewish: the havdalah candle, lit at the end of the sacred Sabbath to mark its separation from the "profane" days of the week
   - Islamic: the word "Islam" itself, which means 'submission (to the will of God)'
   - for many religions: head coverings to show respect for God; shaving the head as a sign of giving up personal vanity
6. *What are some other symbols we see in our daily lives and what are their meanings? (i.e., the wedding ring as love without end, made of gold that won't tarnish, etc.)*

2. Play with symbol exercises

1. What might a raven (owl, pearl, box) be a symbol for and why?
2. You are starting your own — company and need a symbol for it. What might this be and why?
3. Give a metaphor for 5 rock stars (figures in history...), e.g. lace gloves for Madonna
4. Make up a symbol for yourself, for example as a T- shirt design, or for a personal calling card.
5. Choose 3 advertisements on television which use a specific symbol to advertise a certain product. These can range from a jolly green giant talking

about vegetables or a tiger in your gas tank to a sleek dark cat wearing a tiara and necklace walking around pillars and sticks of incense.

Define what the symbol is, what product it is being used to promote and why you think this symbol was chosen, i.e., what it is trying to make us feel.

(I'll be as strong and good as the green giant if I eat these vegetables; I'll be riding on a tiger if I buy this gasoline; I'll be as rich as, or I'll feel like I'm as rich as, an Egyptian princess if I give my cat this food, etc.) Why are advertisements more effective when they use symbols? What do they do to us?

3. Discuss ideas of the soul

The Greek word for soul is 'psyche', from which our words like psychology and psychic derive. Originally this meant only 'breath', as does the Hebrew word. The Bambara in West Africa feel that each of us is born with two souls, one of which will return from where it came when we die, but the other dies with us. The second soul grows with us like a shoot of millet, and matures as we mature, weakens as we grow old; when we are sick it leaves us to seek refuge in cool pools of water. On Hallowe'en our children dress up as ghosts and goblins to commemorate All Souls' Eve, when the souls of people who have not gone to heaven roam the earth and wreak their vengeance on living humans. And in the story of Savitri and the Lord of the Dead, the soul of her husband Satyavan was a little man no bigger than her thumb, pulled by a noose to the Land of the Dead.

Ask the students what they might remember from their reading or from past history classes about the image of the soul in other cultures. What did it look like? Where did it go after the death of the body?

4. Brainstorm about ideas of the soul.

Questions for discussion:

1. *If you were a ... (hyena, refrigerator, fir tree, rhinoceros, etc.), and were imagining your own soul, what might it look like?*
2. *A witch wants to steal your soul. What does your soul look like and where is it hidden?*
3. *When I was traveling alone in the South, years ago, I became taken with a great hairy hog. He was very old and very big; his black hair was grayish and so thin in places that his backbone and his flesh showed through. He had trouble walking. The whole rest of the trip, I thought of that hog as the soul of the South, and his soul was a flock of blue butterflies. What is the soul of the South? the North? the East? the West?*

Notes to teachers

There is a point which comes while you're teaching this course when you realize that this territory is sacred. The mood shifts from one of games and fun to a sense of wonder, of excitement, of awe. Often that point comes when we are discussing symbols. A child will come up with a symbol that just goes into everyone, and you don't know where it came from. It is a gift.

But sometimes the most potent images are ones that make other children embarrassed or uncomfortable, or at other times an image that seems frivolous to most people is not at all frivolous to the person who has it. I'm thinking of two instances in particular.

In the first case, a child had written a story in which one of the strangers was a rabbit whom the hero saved from a wolf. The rabbit then spat into a little bag and gave the spit to the hero as a gift; later the spit became a big lake which drowned an attacker and saved the hero. Now when the class heard about the spit, especially spit from a rabbit, they were grossed out, and reacted accordingly. It didn't help matters that this was a child whose normal behavior was constantly and relentlessly disruptive.

For me, this is an instance when we're dealing with a complex and potent symbol, and we need to talk about it. I asked the class how they felt about spitting and why, and then I told them about stories I knew which used spit in other ways. The discussion included something like the following:

Spitting at somebody is a universal gesture of hatred or disgust. "I spit at you" means "You are hateful and disgusting." But spit itself is our water of life. If we don't have spit, we die. In the novel *Dune,* the planet is so dry that every drop of water is precious; when someone spits at the hero, he eventually understands that this is a gesture of the deepest respect; the man who spat was literally giving up a drop of life in deference to him. With increasing pollution of our own earth's water, maybe we'll assume ,the same attitude. I also told the class how I had felt when I was reading *National Velvet,* in which the heroine's little brother is always carrying around with him this bottle of his own spit, which he gradually fills up as the days go by.

> (Note: I later learned that people used to carry bottles around with them specifically for this purpose, feeling that a handkerchief in the pocket was too permeable. When I saw the movie of *National Velvet,* I found that the bottle's contents had been replaced by insects. The topic is clearly a difficult one for many people.)

Somewhere along the line the bottle breaks, and I can remember being distinctly put off by the whole thing. But his mother knew what it meant to him, and knew he'd get over it, and she accepted. Our spit might be disgusting to other people, but to ourselves, it IS ourselves, almost a liquid soul. Maybe part of the reason we feel disgusted by other people's saliva is that it is too intimate a part of them to be mixed with us. It's reminiscent of the line in a Woody Allen movie when he cuts himself, looks at the blood and says,"Hey, this is supposed to be on the inside!" And speaking of blood, what is the symbolism involved in "blood brothers"?

Talking about all this doesn't necessarily convince too many children; you aren't going to change years of response in 5 minutes. And spit isn't really the most attractive of substances for most people. (My own attitude might be slightly more receptive than usual here, as my mother studied nasal mucus secretions for years, and we often heard at dinner about how nasal mucus protects the body by trapping and sloughing off germs before they can get deeper into the body, and how we were to drink a lot of water when we were sick so our mucus could flush out the virus, and so forth.) But if the teacher treats an image with respect and supports the child, the other students will follow suit at least to some extent, and most important, the child will feel validated.

Now the result you'll often get when you accept an apparently bizarre image like this is that a lot of other children will jump on the bandwagon, and you'll be overwhelmed by a vast array of the grossest possible images. There is a tendency to do this, not just with the disgusting images but with any that work well. You'll see when this happens, though. All I do in such cases is point out to the class that they seem to be imitating, not plumbing their own resources, and I ask them to try to think awhile longer.

The second instance, of an apparently frivolous image, involved an outline in which a boy was writing about a dog who was originally brown but who had been changed to blue by a sorcerer. The dog then set off on a journey to regain his original color. The outline continued in this vein. Maybe it was especially late at night when I read this, or maybe I was just in a natural sort of foul humor, but I thought at the time that I had rarely seen anything so silly, and he was clearly treating the whole project as a hilarious joke. I wrote something to this effect to the child when I returned his outline to him, and I suggested that he find a better subject.

The boy's face the next day when he read my comments showed me I had been badly mistaken. I asked him if he could come out into the hall with me, and we talked there for about five minutes. I apologized for being so thoughtless, then explained why his story had made me think he was trying to be silly. He explained how *stupid* it would feel to be a blue dog; I had to admit he was right, and I asked him only to include a sentence or two that told exactly how the dog felt. I felt lucky that I'd seen his face and lucky that he'd had the strength and confidence to rebound after such an attack.

These are only two cases I'm using to illustrate how tender and complex and personal an issue this is—not just the subject of symbols, but the whole folktale itself. I've come to treat each suggestion with respect, as though it were offered from the heart. Plenty of times it isn't, and almost never at the beginning. We have to be unusually comfortable to write or live that way. On the other hand, children of this age so often wear their hearts on their sleeves, and I'm always taken aback to find them sitting out there so blatantly, so bravely. I'm a bit in awe of this freshness, this contact with the emotions, and I feel obliged to do whatever I can not to destroy it. Sometimes I forget. But then they are there to help me remember.

Drugs and alcohol:

Sometimes the subject of drug and alcohol abuse comes up, and it's easy to discuss this in the context of symbols. I don't go out of my way to bring it into discussion, but if it comes up, this is the sort of conversation we have. In this case, we began by brainstorming about the stages of abuse.

Teacher: What might be a symbol for a person who is first using drugs or alcohol?

Student: High.

S: Floating.

T: That's sure the feeling. How about giving us some specific objects that might be high or floating?

S: A balloon.

S: A feather.

S: Cloud nine.

S: A bird.

T: A bird sounds different to me from the others. How is it different?

S: A bird is flying more than floating. It's more in control.

T: Yes, there's that element of control. What about the others; if they aren't in control, what's in control of them?

S: The drugs.

T: Yes, but I mean when we're talking about balloons and things.

S: Oh. The wind and air.

T: Which one do you think is a more appropriate image for being high—the balloons and feather and clouds, or the bird?

S: The ballon.

T: Everybody seems to be agreeing with that, but I don't know. Some people are much more like birds, or even like jet airplanes and go zooming around all over the place.

S: Couldn't it depend on the person who was writing the story?

T: I think that's exactly what it depends on. It's whatever feels right to the writer, the author.

Now if you have to break the image down, you have two qualities mixed together in these symbols. First of all, we have the floating or the flying, and secondly we have the object that is floating or flying. What exactly does each one of these symbolize?

S: The object symbolizes the person.

T: And the floating or flying part?

S: The alcohol?

T: That doesn't feel right to me.

S: The feeling you get when you drink or drug.

T: That sounds more like it to me. The feather or bird symbolizes the person, and the floating or flying symbolizes the feeling. What about a person who's had a good deal of drugs or liquor and it's starting to wear off? What are some symbols?

S: Down.

T: What part is down: the person or the feeling?

S: The feeling. The person would be like a balloon that had popped or all the air had fizzed out.

T: What might happen to the feather and the cloud?

S: Rain: the feather gets soaked and falls down and lies in the mud.

S: The cloud turns to rain and disappears.

S: Or couldn't somebody fall off of it?

T: Anybody have an answer to that?

S: If it was a person who fell off the cloud, the person wouldn't be a symbol anymore.

T: What might fall off a cloud?

S: I don't know. A piece of paper or something.

T: All right, now how about some symbols for a person who's been on drugs or alcohol for a long time and has become addicted to it. What happens to us if we become an addict?

S: A bum.

T: Describe in specific words what we look like.

S: Dirty.

S: Wasted.

S: Red. Like their faces are all red.

S: They sit around all the time except when they get in fights. They don't smell good.

T: All right. Now what are some symbols for an addict who's become like this?

S: A dog.

A pig.

T: A dog or a pig. That reminds me of a story in the Odyssey. The Odyssey is a Greek epic about a man named Odysseus or Ulysses who sails for home after he's been at war. But he gets blown off course and shipwrecked, so it takes him 20 years to get back home again. One of his adventures during these 20 years involved Circe, a beautiful witch who lived on an island where Ulysses got shipwrecked with his men. Circe turned all his men into swine, or pigs, but their minds were still the minds of men. She fed them first some drugged wine, and then she fed them acorns that kept them that way. Only Ulysses took an antidote before he went to Circe's house, so the drug didn't have any effect on him, and he was able to rescue his men by forcing Circe to break the enchantment. What is the story a symbol of?

S: She turned them all into druggies?

T: Absolutely. Now describe an addict when he or she needs more drugs.

S: Mean.

S: Desperate.

S: They rob and kill you.

T: What are some symbols for this?

S: A wolf.

S: A panther.

S: A hyena.

T: Okay. Does everybody understand? Then I'd like to say two more things about this subject and we'll go on.

First of all, when you read a story of a pig or a balloon or a wolf, does this mean it's a story about alcohol or drugs?

S: No. *Charlotte's Web* is just about a pig.

S: But it can be about drugs. Circe was.

T: Yes. Sometimes they are, but not necessarily. What else might stories about these animals symbolize—not *Charlotte's Web,* I agree. At what other times do we act like pigs?

S: When we eat too much.

S: When we're messy.

T: When do we act like wolves?

S: A robber.

S: Somebody who goes crazy and kills people.

S: But wolves aren't really like that at all. They're friendly, and they live in families, and they almost never attack people.

T: Thank you. I'm glad you brought that up, because you also reminded me of something I'd forgotten to say. She's right. If any of you have read the book or seen the movie *Never Cry Wolf,* you'll know that wolves are not the vicious man-hunting creatures we think of; those in the North American continent are gentle, rather shy and family-oriented animals who live mostly on mice and small rodents and rarely if ever attack humans. But our image of them is of a vicious, human- devouring creature which chases us in packs over the moonlit snow, as wolves truly did in Europe and Asia. It's the image, not the reality, that gives a symbol its power.

Maybe it's like our image of alcohol: in Europe and the west, there's a romantic image associated with alcohol: lovers drinking wine and a rich man sipping his cognac or whiskey. In China, one of the favorite subjects of paintings was a group of saintly hermits who live alone in the mountains but who get together every once in a while to drink wine and laugh at the world. But in Islamic countries alcohol is seen as evil, the destroyer of people, of whole nations, the drink of the devil. It's the same old liquor everywhere in the world, but our image of it and our feelings about it depend on our culture and our experience.

The only other thing I wanted to make clear is this: is a person on drugs or alcohol who has become dirty and thieving and doesn't care about herself any more—is this person a pig?

S: Yes!

T: No. Alcohol or drugs make us ACT like a pig or a wolf or hyena or whatever. But we are still a person, under this mask or skin we wear when we become an addict. Is there a symbol for a person who gets rehabilitated and gets well again?

S: They change back into a person again?

T: Yes.

S: Like in *Beauty and the Beast,* when the beast turns into a handsome prince.

T: Like in *Beauty and the Beast,* when the beast turns into a handsome prince. As in *Beauty and the Beast,* the alcoholic always was a prince—or a princess—underneath, but the true form was covered up by a sort of spell or evil magic.

Let me recap quickly, so I'm sure you understand. You're writing a story about a boy who is looking for his sister and she has become a drug addict. How might you represent the sister's addiction in symbolic language?

S: She got turned into a hyena?

T: Exactly. And if you write a story in which a girl gets changed into a hyena, is it necessarily about drug addiction?

S: No.

T: No. And how the brother rescues her, only the author knows.

The lesson on symbols can last one, two or three days, or, hopefully, will be an ongoing part of the course. The purpose of the lesson is to remind students how pervasive is the use of symbols in our daily lives and to remind them that symbols have many meanings at once. A single symbol implies a whole complex of feelings, qualities and values. The lesson is to help students begin to consciously use symbols and to be aware of what they are doing while they do it.

We humans are the creatures who use symbols to understand our world and to live.

Chapter 5. Writing the outline

Time: 2 to 5 days

Outline-revising Checklist

Sections with stars (*) are optional.

Part I: Home and leaving home

1. Do we know the name of the protagonist?*
2. Do we know where the protagonist lives?
3. Do we know the family situation?
4. Do we know why the protagonist leaves home?
5. Does the protagonist take anything from home on the journey?
6. Does s/he know where to go? If so, how?

Part II: The Dangers

7. Does overcoming the last danger solve the reason why the protagonist left home? If not, CHANGE the last danger so that it does, or add a fourth danger that solves the reason.
8. Where is the last danger? (Refer to the danger map.)
9. Is each of the dangers in a different place? Are the places related?*

   (Refer to the danger map. Be sure you have transferred the information on the map over to your outline.)
10. Are your dangers truly life-threatening? (Mist and getting lost are NOT.)

Part III: Strangers: Their Plights and Their Gifts

11. Does the protagonist meet three insignificant strangers?
12. Are the strangers related in some way?*
13. Does each stranger have a problem or need?
14. Does the protagonist help each stranger in a different way?
15. Does the protagonist receive a gift from stranger #1? #2? #3?

    (The gift can be the stranger itself, i.e., the stranger can come along as a companion.)
16. Is each gift appropriate to the stranger? (No pearls from a moose)
17. Is each gift appropriate to the kindness? (No diamond ring for help crossing a street)

Part IV: Gifts and Overcoming the Dangers

18. Does your protagonist use a gift to overcome each danger?

(Or do you use a memento or wit for the last danger?)

19. Is each gift used only ONCE?

20. Does the protagonist THROW the gift at the danger? If so, CHANGE IT.
21. Does the protagonist WISH the danger away? If so, CHANGE IT.
22. Is a gift so powerful that there is no real danger? (for example, unlimited invisibility) If so, put limits on the gift's power.

Part V: Conclusion

23. Does your conclusion celebrate the protagonist's success?

Procedure

1. Fill in each section of the outline.

Hand out several outline sheets to each student or have them copy the appropriate section from the board, leaving spaces to fill in. Some students will do a fair amount of revising and will need reserve copies.

The rate at which students finish their outlines varies wildly. A class which writes easily can finish the whole outline in a day; students who don't have a good sense of the connections between things require at least one day for each of the five sections. I'll describe this for the slowest students, with each section given separately. Each teacher can compress this or use it as is according to the class.

2. Review each section of the outline with the checklist, first with the whole class, then in groups of two or three.

Hand *out* a checklist to each student. They will use this to review both their own stories and those of their friends and classmates.

Collect a few outlines from volunteers, read them over quickly and choose two or three that have some problems—some, but not too many. This has worked most successfully when the students can hand in their outlines at the beginning of the day and I can read them over quickly, then put three of them onto acetate and work with the overhead projector, so that we're all looking at the outline as we discuss it. When I can't do this, I write the outlines on the board.

Go over the outline with the checklist point by point until it works. This can be time-consuming; in some cases it takes a whole period to go over three outline parts. But by the end of the third outline, the students know better what is expected of them and how the outline can be analyzed with the checklist.

When the class seems to have a sense of how the checklist works, divide them into groups of three and have them read their stories to each other in turn, with the two listeners acting as editors. The editors' job is not only to point out things that are not on the checklist, but also to give suggestions when the author can't think of an idea.

3. Check once more for any points that aren't clear to the listener.

Questions for the students to ask:

Is there anything in this story I don't understand?

Is there something that doesn't quite make sense?

4. Revise and rewrite.

I've listed steps 3 and 4 separately, but in practice, the students revise their stories in the editorial sessions with their classmates. Some children work best in the middle of the discussions. Others have to go off by themselves to think before they can be sure of what they want to say. Some of them might want to work this out at home, some might find it helpful to draw pictures or plans of their stories. Reassure them that we all work in different ways. Tell them how you personally work best, and give examples of how students in other classes or other years have worked.

Revising and rewriting does not mean that a student has to come up with every single idea by him or herself. It means that they have to write an outline that works according to the adventure folktale format. The ideas can come from anywhere. The author is responsible for choosing the ideas and for putting them together so the story works.

5. Review with the checklist once more, with another one or two students.

In some classes this step may not be necessary, but we've found that it is very helpful in classes which aren't used to this sort of analyzing and editing. It's also a way for students to hear more story ideas, and the more they hear, the better.

6. Revise and rewrite.

7. Hand in to the teacher for comments.

The teacher is looking at these not so much to comment on them as to see whether everyone understands how the outline works. If the student editors have understood what is expected of them, the teacher is essentially superfluous. This is how it should be: the teacher provides an environment in which children learn to think for themselves and to help each other. When papers come in with serious problems, I keep those children after school so we can figure out what they haven't understood.

The most helpful comments are questions—the same sorts of questions as are on the checklist.

8. Revise and rewrite.

Notes to teachers

The folktale is one of the most cohesive and spare of literary forms. Almost nothing is introduced without a purpose. No pebble is overturned that doesn't reveal a hidden door or a secret key. No gift is given that is not used.

The Outline:

The outline is the foundation, the bedrock of the story. If the outline is solid, the story will work; the writing comes almost by itself. The outline is the place where all the basic ideas get worked out. It is also the place where you—and the students—can see the relations between the parts.

Again, THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTS IS THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECT FOR MOST STUDENTS.

I often see the outline purely as a puzzle, with all the pieces lying there scattered on the table (inside the author's head), waiting to be picked up and fitted into place. By seeing other students' outlines, by going over them in class with the checklist, along with a 'buddy' or in a small group, the students begin to set their pieces into place. I often get the feeling that they know exactly where they are going all along; they just don't know how to get there.

The Checklist

It was because the outline proved so difficult for many students that we developed the checklist. It has been helpful for several reasons:

1. It helps the students check their own work.
2. It enables students to review each others' work with specific questions in mind.
3. It enables students to see that there are clear requirements for the folktale, and that these requirements apply to everyone—they are not unknowns locked away in the teacher's head and dependent on the teacher's whim.
4. It enables the students to help each other with their stories and to give each other ideas.
5. It relieves the teachers of the unnecessary burden of correcting the same mistakes in numerous papers, leaving them free to concentrate on the children who are having the most trouble.

As clear as this presentation seemed to us, it is still difficult for many students. The more I work with this, the more I am convinced that this is because they have not been required to think clearly. When I go over the outline several times with the whole class, when I require the same high standards for everyone and refuse to accept sloppy thinking, and when I can work with students after school, the stories gradually take shape. The students understand how the structure works. Three examples of outlines (in the students' own words), followed by discussion:

Example 1. The Ugly Dog

Protagonist at home

A. Description

1. protagonist - the big blue hand dog (hound dog, ed.) name Prince Ali

Everyone teased him (of ugliness)

2. home - little village

3. family - Evele witch (evil witch, ed.) casts a spell on a prince turns him into a big blue hand dog

B. Reason for leaving home - to find evel witch and to reverse the spell

Discussion:

Teacher: This is one of the few outlines to have a title. What do you think of this as a title?

Student: Good.

T: Why?

S: Because it gets you interested and it's about an ugly blue dog.

He could name it The Ugly Blue Dog.

The Enchanted Ugly Blue Dog.

T: I agree: it is an appropriate title. It also might be added to. Author, why don't you think about these suggestions, see whether you want to use one of them or whether you prefer to keep the title you have. Class, if you haven't thought of a title for your story, now is a good time to start thinking.

Let's go over the checklist. Do we know the name of the protagonist?

S: Prince Ali.

T: Then what do you put next to question #1?

S: A check.

T: Do we know where the protagonist lives?

S: In a village.

T: Put a check mark next to that one. Do we know the family situation?

S: Well, we know he's a prince, but we don't know about his family.

T: Author?

A: He lives with his mother and father the king and queen and his little sister. I knew that; I just didn't put it down yet.

T: Why don't you write it down now? Where will you put it?

S: Next to 'family'.

T: And where does the part about the witch casting the spell go?

A:?

S: With the reason for leaving home?

T: I think so. But now I'm going to throw you a curve ball. Do you have to put something in the story about his mother and father and sister?

A: Yes.

T: Is it relevant to the story? Or is it necessary for us to know?

S: Not really.

T: Not really. On the other hand, does the author really want to put that in the story? Is it important to you, personally?

A: Well, yes. I want him to have a sister, and his mother and father.

T: Then put them in. We don't have to know a protagonist's exact house and family in every case, but we do have to have a sense of who they are. And if there's

something special you want to say about the protagonist, even if it isn't absolutely necessary, put it in.

Do we know why he leaves home?

S: Yes.

T: Does he know where to go?

S: No.

A: But everybody **knows** where the witch lives. She tells him when she puts the spell on him because she doesn't think anybody can get there. It's in the Swamp of the Wimps.

T: Is it on your outline?

S: No, but I was going to have it in my story.

T: I think a lot of you have done this; it's one of the hardest parts of writing.

Something seems perfectly clear to us, and we can't figure out why the other

person can't understand it. The reason is that it isn't written down. Your outline should have all the essentials of your story, and that includes all the questions on the checklist. You have to be able to put a check mark next to every one that doesn't have an asterisk next to it. In order to do that, everything has to be written down on the paper.

S: But we can fill some of these in when we write the story.

T: Not in this case. Why am I so adamant about having the essentials in the outline? Because a folktale IS an outline. A folktale is the bare bones of story, and when you have clearly understood how the bones are put together, you can add the meat and the fat and the hair. But if the bones aren't strong, and clear, and don't fit well, nothing else works. The actual writing of the folktale is easy, but the outline is hard, because every piece of it has to work. Which means we have to see every piece clearly. If the outline works, the writing is duck soup.

Could everyone look over the outline once more now, to see if there are any questions you have or anything that doesn't make sense.

S: Why did the witch put a spell on him?

A: I don't know. She just did. Maybe she didn't like him.

T: Anybody have a suggestion as to why she might have done it?

S: She hated the royal family because they had power.

The prince was mean to her once, like she pretended to be a beggar and he made fun of her and didn't give her any money.

Maybe she just hated anybody who was handsome since she was so ugly, so she was jealous.

T: Author, does that give you some ideas?

A: Yes.

T: Write the one you like down NOW, so we can see it. Any more questions or parts that don't quite seem to work?

S: Is he really a dog or a prince? I mean, it says he's a blue dog but he's a prince.

A: He's a prince!

S: Then you should say he's a prince at the beginning and put the part about changing into a dog where he leaves home.

T: I'd agree with that. His true form is a prince. He leaves home because he's been changed into a dog and everyone teases him and he wants to find the witch so she can reverse the spell.

I think you wanted to make the story interesting by beginning with him already changed, and that's a good stylistic device. But in the outline, have the protagonist start out in his true form.

Are there any other questions? Okay, then let's go on to another outline.

Discussion:

This is a rather long-winded example, but I wanted to show that every detail can be worked out by the students, if the teacher restricts her or himself to asking questions and seconding a student's remark when the student is unsure.

It seemed logical to me at first that if the assignment is to fill in the outline and the students have thought up a story, they merely have to transfer to the paper what is in their heads. Not the case. I think that often they don't write things down because they see a big mass of semi-fluid details in their heads and it seems an interminable task to them to put them all down. Or they don't realize that they haven't written something down.

In a few cases we've found that a student has the whole story in his or her head but finds it impossible to transfer it to the paper. When this happens, it's a help if the student can put the story onto a tape recorder and work with someone to then transfer it onto paper. More often, the students aren't aware of what they have put down and what they haven't, until this is pointed out to them. Once they see it, they can revise.

When the spelling is askew, I write the correct spelling onto the acetate or the board and ask the students to check the words I've circled on their paper against the same ones on the acetate or the board, and correct them accordingly.

Example 2. Milly

Protagonist — Milly, foster child

home —

family — foster parents

Reason for leaving home — going to look for her real parents

thing(s) taken from home?

How does she know where to go? — Her foster parents helped her look

Discussion:

In this case, it doesn't feel so important to me to know anything about exactly where Milly lives, and it is clear that she gets along well with her foster parents if they're going to help her look for her biological parents. My only objection to this beginning is that in the folktale format, Milly has to go alone on her journey. Her foster parents cannot come along. If her foster parents are going to help her, they have to do so in a very specific or tangible way: they have to give her a memento or special food, or they could give her directions, even the address, if they know it. They might go to Town Hall and find her birth certificate.

The story is getting off to a very prosaic start. I might remind the author that this is a folktale, and there could be some magic somewhere.

Example 3. Oliver

Protagonist — Oliver (bum)

home — lives in a garbage can

family — he's alone

Reason for leaving home — poor, needs lots of money

thing(s) taken from home? — nothing, he's too poor

How does he know where to go? — Finds magic lamp wishes to go to dreamland but says wrong thing and go's to bad land

Discussion:

This is complete, fine. I'd like to know details, such as where he found the lamp and how he knew he was supposed to say something, or what he was supposed to say, but the basic information is all there.

One of the surprises of teaching this course is to find how frequently children from all sorts of families want to be RICH.

Part I. Home and Leaving Home

Questions for the students:

I generally ask the questions aloud while the students are writing, but they are also listed on the board. If students are writing the outline for homework, the questions are taken home on a separate sheet of paper. Obviously, the students are not required to answer All of the questions; the essential is for us to know who the protagonist is at the outset of the story, and the reason for leaving home.

1. Who is your protagonist?
    - Does s/he have a name ?
    - If so, is the name meaningful in some way?

- Does the protagonist have an apparent fault that might be the basis of the quest?

2.Where does the protagonist live?

- Does s/he live in the past, present or future?
- Does s/he live in a particular country or climate?
  If so, keep this consistent throughout the whole story, i.e., have the flora, fauna and situations be those of this country or climate.
- Is the house located in any special place?

3.What is the protagonist's family like?

- Is the protagonist an orphan?
- Is the parents' work important in the story?
- Is it important for us to know whether the family is big or little, rich or poor?
- Does the protagonist love his or her family or hate it? If s/he hates the family, why?

4.What is the reason for leaving home ?

5.Does the protagonist take anything from home on the journey?

(What are things a folktale hero/ine IS allowed to take from home?)

6.Does the protagonist know where to go? If not, say so. If so, how does s/he know?

Part II: The Dangers

Hand out danger maps to the students, or simply have them draw three concentric circles on a page. Have them write the third and final danger in the center, the second in the second circle and the first danger in the outermost circle. If there isn't room inside the circles, have them describe the places along the side of the page.

Questions to ask the students:

1. *What danger is preventing you from accomplishing your goal? What evil creature or person is guarding the person or treasure or medicine you are seeking?*
2. *What is so dangerous about this danger? What might it do to you? What has it done to other people?*

   Remember that this is the third and most horrible danger. What is the most horrible danger you personally can think of for yourself?
3. *Where is this danger?*
4. *What is another danger that is slightly less awful than the final one?*
5. *Is it related to the final danger in some way, i.e., is it some form of guards or protection around the final danger?*
6. *Or is it completely unrelated to the final danger?*
7. *Be sure that it is very different from the final danger—in its looks, its way of being dangerous, its shape, abilities.*
8. *Where is the second danger?*

9. *What is the first danger you meet and where is it?*
10. *Is it related to the last two dangers or not?*
11. *Be sure that it is different from the other two dangers.*

Dangers that don't work:

1. Intangible dangers like fog or a dark alley. Describe what is IN the fog or the dark alley that is actually dangerous.
2. A character from comics or a movie.

Have the students transfer the information from their danger maps to the outlines, then follow the same procedure as you did for Part I. If you feel it is necessary, go over one or two outlines with the class as a whole before having the students work with each other using the checklist.

Notes to teachers

I'm no longer terrified by the outlines the students first bring in. I was at the beginning. Here I thought we'd gone over everything so thoroughly. We'd brainstormed for a solid week on pattern and images, pattern and images. We'd gone over the outline point by point and now we were working with only small pieces of it. And the ideas they'd come up with in class had been so good!

Then to see these outlines which are half done, awkward, rambling, incoherent and unconnected—how could this have happened? What had I done wrong? What had I missed? How would they ever make something meaningful out of this chaos?

Maybe the most important statement that I have to keep repeating to myself at this point is that PROBLEMS ARE WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT. THIS WHOLE PROCESS (and life itself?) IS ABOUT CREATING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS. REJOICE IN THEM!

I forget how garbled my own writing is the first time around, how it is mostly loose ideas without form, how easy it is to come up with ideas when it doesn't really matter, and how clutched and blocked I become when I'm supposed to "produce". I forget how much help I get from friends and family and editors, and how radically a piece can change in a very short time.

Children seem to have much less difficulty than adults in letting images float up out of themselves. Their images aren't so contrived or self-conscious or stale as those of adults. They don't know enough for them to be stiff yet. They are still fresh. But they aren't necessarily connected in story form; they're more dreamlike in every way, and this is their power. As much as possible when reviewing these outlines, I try to keep their original imagery, only asking questions to make the situation more specific and connected.

CHILDREN DON'T LACK IMAGERY BUT A SENSE OF CONNECTION.

The students don't have difficulty with the basic purpose or meaning of their stories but only with getting all the pieces and fitting them into place.

It is difficult for them to get their stories "grounded". Just as dreams usually seem to float in space, so do their stories. I think part of this is because the stories aren't

taking place in geographical space but in our hearts. They aren't attached to the earth. The danger maps are an effective way to help them situate the action in a specific place, but it is very hard for many students to get the floating images connected to places all at once. That's fine. As soon as they've seen it done a couple of times, they begin to get the hang of it.

Three of the biggest hurdles the children have with the dangers are

1. inventing three situations that are both specific and mortally dangerous to the protagonist
2. making the dangers markedly different from each other
3. putting them in order. All three of these difficulties are fairly minor and can be dealt with for the most part by the children themselves, working in small groups of two, three or four.

When a group is stuck, I'll offer their problem to the class. After four or five suggestions, their juices are flowing again and the mood shifts. They rise to the occasion.

Example of one set of dangers:

1. freeze to death
2. mugger
3. poisoned food

Questions to the student:

1. *Which sort of death would you least want for yourself? i.e., poison or freezing?*
2. *Where might you be when you are freezing to death that brother?*
3. *Who wants to poison your protagonist? Why? How? Or is it poison meant for rats and she gets it by mistake?*
4. *How might the dangers relate to each other?*

Suggestions from the class:

1. Her brother could be captured by slave drivers who live at the North Pole.
2. He could be trapped in one of those refrigerators for storing meat, and the slave driver thaws him out whenever he wants him to work.
3. He could live in Alaska, and she gets to the doorstep and she almost freezes because nobody hears her.
4. The slave drivers could find out she was coming to rescue her brother and send somebody to poison her.
5. She's hungry and a crazy killer could give her the poisoned food. She didn't bring any food with her.
6. The mugger could be on a train. She has to take a train to get to Alaska or the North Pole, and she's sleeping on this empty car and he mugs her.

The dangers proposed in this story are all fairly realistic, in that they are 'of this world'. This author introduced magic in her three strangers, which brought it more into the folktale mode. But the dangers are also manageable.

Most folktale dangers, like those in adventure movies, are of enormous dimensions. Folktales are about a solitary little protagonist facing dangers that seem overwhelming. This is what makes the protagonist truly a hero or heroine.

This came out in a discussion I had with one class in which there were two boys who had been singled out to be picked on unmercifully by several larger boys. When we got to the section on dangers, I asked the class,

"In a folktale, when there is a fight between a huge person and a little person, which one is the hero or heroine?" The class said at once that it was the little guy. "Sure," I said. "In folktales the hero or heroine always fights opponents who are much bigger or more powerful than they are. It's an indication of the weakness of the adversary, in fact, that she or he chooses to fight only little people like the protagonist." One of the smallest boys in the class raised his hand.

"You mean, when big guys pick on me, it shows they're weak?""If they really feel that they are strong," I said, "and are sure of themselves, don't you think they'd fight with people their own size?"

The boy was truly nonplussed.

But the bullies in the class are acting the way they do because they themselves feel squashed by overwhelming odds as well. All of us have these in our lives, whether it is a difficult family situation, a personal difficulty, a regional disaster or the threat of nuclear destruction. The message of folktales is that we *can* be successful against overwhelming odds.

On the other hand, I've found that the children who are having the greatest difficulties, whether in school or in class, tend to invent the most outsize dangers. What happens then in their stories is that the solutions often don't work: the protagonist just bashes right through them and they disappear, or they somehow dissipate into thin air. In these cases, I encourage the student to scale down the danger—which rarely works—, but I find I spend a great deal of time working on solutions after school, or I'll work in class with several children who are having problems. The children usually come up with much better ideas than I can; my job is to help them see how the pieces are or are not appropriate in a specific situation, and how the pieces fit together, and most importantly, to help them help each other.

Part III Strangers: Their Plights and Their Gifts

Questions for the students:

1. *Who are your three strangers?*
2. *Are the strangers insignificant?*
3. *What problem does each stranger have?*
4. *Are the strangers humans or animals or a mix of both?*
5. *How does the protagonist relieve the problem of each? (Remember, the protagonist has brought nothing from home unless so stated. If you need to go back and add something to Part I, fine, but don't pull helpful bandages or hot soup or crutches from thin air.)*

6. *What gift does the stranger give as thanks?*
7. *Are the strangers related to each other in some way?*
8. *Are the strangers very different from each other, or are they all similar?*
9. *Where does each encounter take place?*
10. *Is the gift appropriate to the help given? (No golden goblet for help carrying a heavy load up the mountain)*
11. *Is the gift appropriate to the stranger? (No berries from a fish)*

Follow the same procedure as for Parts I and II.

Notes to teachers

Kindnesses:

The outline given here requires three insignificant strangers for whom the protagonist performs three kindnesses. I recommend requiring three kindnesses not only because this affords a five-fold repetition of a pattern of three (three strangers with three problems, three kind acts by the protagonist, three gifts and three dangers), but because it emphasizes the aspect of kindness. Some children will object that this pattern is too constricting. If they can come up with other preliminary episodes which enable them to solve their dangers, I relent, but I always require at least one kindness to one insignificant stranger. This is something I've thought about a lot, because I don't like to make rigid requirements. The following are some thoughts about this.

When students are required to show a specific act of kindness in their stories, they live that act themselves. Each student IS his or her protagonist while writing the tale, and the actions of the protagonist are the actions of the writer. Artistically this requirement is too rigid, but I'm teaching values at the same time that I'm teaching writing, and in this case I emphasize the values. One of the unexpected joys of having taught the course was to have teachers on several occasions tell me that some of their more difficult students had noticeably changed their behavior after completing their folktale books. After a project like this, children do feel better about themselves: they feel kind, capable, smart, courageous and successful—like their hero/ines. And they become so, to a noticeable degree.

There is another aspect involved in the pattern of a kind act to a stranger and the gift which helps overcome the danger, and that it that we are not alone in the world. We don't have to 'make it on our own' every inch of the way. We help others, but we exist because again and again and again we are helped ourselves. This is something that goes against our 'individualistic' grain, when Americans have so often had examples held up to them of people who were 'self-made'. None of us is 'self-made'. There were always people who helped us, whether it was parents, grandparents, other relatives or friends or bosses or mentors or counselors or whoever. One of the messages of these folktales in which there is a kind stranger is that someone IS there to help when we are desperate—but it might be the person we least expect help from. We help, and we are helped in return.

This was brought home to me by an experience which corroborated the kindness in folktales, or in life, and which surprised me, because sometimes I tend to see folktales as interior sorts of actions, not quite reflected by 'real' life. It was when I was working with a group of teachers.

One of the teachers was a woman from Vietnam who wanted to retell her family's escape as her folktale. She said that this was the only story she could come up with, and she wanted to get it out. When we came to the section on kindnesses, she came up to me and said,

"But this is true, the kindnesses. We were able to leave because we had an American sponsor who was a minister in Ohio. He had come to Vietnam years before, and my parents had shown him and his family all around and had taken care of him. We continued to write to each other, and he sponsored us.

Then the helicopter was because of my cousin. His family didn't have much money, but my family didn't care, and had them do everything with us, and my father helped him and his brothers through school. So that cousin was very close to us, and he joined the Air Force, and when there was a helicopter, he told us to come, to run, there was room. We had to leave everything, and when we got to it, there were people all climbing in, and when he lifted off there were twice as many as the stated capacity.

Then there was a boat. They didn't want us to land. But the captain was a friend of my cousin's; he had helped him when they were in training together. I don't remember, but I think he shared his food with him, because my cousin had food and the other boy was too poor. So when he found out who it was, he let us land, and then we came here. They talked on the radio and let us down.

In all three situations, we were helped out of our dangers because of a kindness."

My urge is to temper her story by noticing that a great deal of "kindness", especially in the East, is obligation, and that at least one of the cases could be viewed as simple familial duty. But one can carry out an obligation with generosity and kindness or with meanness and displeasure. From the feeling I got from the woman telling the story, kindness was a family trait.

Children have difficulties being kind to a stranger when they have left home with nothing. One boy found an old man dying by the side of the road and gave him a potion of life. "That was nice of you," I said, "But if you left home with nothing, where did you get your potion of life?" "Oh," he said, " from the side of the computer." It took me a while to understand that he played with a folktale computer program in which you could pull whatever you want from the side of the screen. You can't do that sort of thing in these folktales; everything has to come from somewhere.

Sometimes when a child is writing a tale, the kindness becomes rather skewed, for example: "She came to a bird who was chirping and chirping, and she saw a baby bird on the ground. 'I'll pick up your baby,' she told the mother bird, 'if you'll give me a magic feather.' So the bird gave her a magic feather and she picked up the baby bird and put it in the nest."

This may be much closer to the way a child sees the world; maybe it is closer to the way the world really works. But one of the most telling characteristics of the folktale hero/ine AND one of the most difficult values for children in eighth and ninth grades to show in school is kindness or thoughtfulness *without any ostensible thought of reward.* For the example given, the author's buddy, or the class or the teacher can point out that the gift and the kindness are in reverse order here.

But there is another element I have to keep in mind when we're working on the kindnesses, and that is common sense. The folktale format does encourage kindness to helpless or needy creatures, but it is basically about survival. Many children are faced with the daily threat of physical assault in and out of school, and in their situation it is akin to lunacy to invent a trio of soft cuddlies as traveling companions. Like the boy in the Russian tale *The Boy and the Flying Ship,* they need to choose bodyguards with a wide array of survival skills. In spite of all my admonitions, several students insist on choosing wolves or pitbulls or giants as companions. They are right to do so. As they say, "It's a jungle out there". In these cases , I often relent, but I ask that the protagonist perform an outstanding kindness in order to win the favor of such a companion.

However, if I do let a child get by with 'insignificant' strangers such as a giant, however witless and sweet-natured, and a pit bull, however sickly and lame, you can be sure that the third stranger is going to have to be the smallest, softest imaginable slip of a kitten or bird. We need to have common sense, but we also need to have compassion.

Comic book and movie characters:

The choice of the Hulk or Wolfman is different. These are unacceptable because they are characters from somebody else's folktale: from comic books or movies. It would be like having Little Red Riding Hood as a protagonist; it turns the story into a spoof. Stephen Sondheim can do it on Broadway, but he's been at it for years. He's also using folktale characters to explore our attitudes and our hopes and expectations in daily life. These children have to get the basic components straight first.

(There are attempts at using comic book heroes and movie stars which are especially appealing. One of the more considerate authors tried to deal with both the Hulk and Christie Brinkley in his folktale. The Hulk was his boon companion. The Hulk was also painfully shy and in love with Christie Brinkley. At the end of the story, after the Hulk had helped him find success, the protagonist gave Christie Brinkley to the Hulk as his share of the spoils, while he himself went back home with the money.)

Comic book heroes can be replaced by a giant who is in trouble of some sort: a thorn in his toe, something in his eye that is too small for him to see, etc.

Insignificant strangers:

Patterns to notice:

As soon as I feel I've understood and worked out one glitch in teaching, another will rear its head. Repetition of one element is one of these recurrent reminders that something is going wrong.In one class, four boys chose a pit bull as a stranger. When one character occurs in several stories like this, I realize that I've emphasized something too much in the discussions. Children have seized on this element and aren't turning into themselves for answers anymore. When this happens now, I tell this all to the class, tell them my reservations about it and suggest that the students with the similar element form a group and discuss alternatives, or that they brainstorm with buddies.

In another class, 'bums and drunks' turned up as strangers in several stories. At first I accepted them, but I knew there was something I didn't like about them, and I realized later that there were two reasons:

1. Folktales are stories written largely in symbolic language. Part of their power is their distance from the 'real' world, their distance from our obvious daily fears. Folktales, like dreams, put our fears and hopes into symbolic language so we can deal with them on some other, 'safer' plane. It's for this reason that I don't encourage super-realism in these stories. As always, some children don't come up with any imagery but purely realistic, and in these cases I feel they can only work with the material their hearts give them. But folktales aren't dealing with practical solutions to daily problems; they more heal our hearts and souls, like dreams, so we're better prepared to be alive in the daylight.

2. Homeless wandering people, whether they be alcoholics, addicts or just abandoned by society, are real people whom more and more of us see, meet, have contact with and become. I think we all fear that this might happen to us; I know I do. These people may be 'symbols' of our fear, but they are not symbols; they are real people. They are ourselves. As soon as we start talking about bums and drunks and whores and junkies, we've put our brothers and sisters into category cages, where they are safely distant from us.

This isn't what folktales are about, especially in the section dealing with strangers. They are about cherishing all living creatures as ourselves; they are about sharing our lives with everyone, as equals. If children want to have some realism in their stories, the words they choose can't be derogatory or discriminatory. The language of folktales is a language of beauty, simplicity and compassion.

Part IV Gifts and Dangers

This section involves the most intense problem-solving, because the gifts have to be used in a way that is both appropriate to the gift and that enables the protagonist to escape from or overcome the danger in a believable manner. (By 'believable' here, I mean logical in the context of this particular story.) Furthermore, for the purposes of keeping the interest of the listeners, the use of the gift should be unexpected and interesting.

One of these tasks is difficult; this one has a threefold difficulty and it has to be done three times. It is very difficult.

Questions for the students:

1. *Which gifts most easily get you out of dangers 1 and two?*
2. *Are there any other ways these gifts might be used? Could they change into something else? Think of three or four things each gift could change into, e.g., a walnut could become a walnut tree, a boat or two boats(the shell), or it could break open to reveal food—whether the nutmeats or a banquet—or some other object. Be sure the transformation is appropriate to the gift, i.e., that it relates to it in some logical way.*
3. *Which gift seems most appropriate for Danger #3?*
4. *Is there some way you might use this gift to trick the last danger?*
5. *Does you last danger have some weakness that you can use to your advantage?*
6. *Is there one gift that just doesn't seem to work with any of the dangers? If so, can you replace this with a new gift that does work?*
7. *Do you like all three of your gifts but find that one of the dangers doesn't seem all that great? Try changing the danger.*
8. *If the three gifts and the three dangers seem to work too smoothly, do you want to add a fourth and final danger which you solve with your wits alone?*
9. *Have you used in your story all the mementos, food, gifts and friends whom you brought from home or met on your journey?*

Follow the same procedure you used for Parts I, II and III.

Whenever a student comes to you for help, turn the problem over to the class. This doesn't mean that the teacher can't give suggestions as well—Go to it! But give your suggestion only as one possibility among many, not as the Ultimate Solution.

Notes to teachers

You'll find that when the students are trying to overcome their final dangers in their outlines, some of them will become very frustrated with the requirement of NO WEAPONS. Expect to be challenged on this.

One of the few answers I've given to classes that elicited a more positive response from them than 'no comment' or surly looks was to talk about Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, as examples of men who have Overcome without resorting to violence.

I say something like the following:

India was fairly well conquered by the British by the end of the last century, and the various Indian states lived under English rule. But by the end of World War II, many Indians wanted independence, as did most colonial nations around the world. The British were well-armed, but there were only a few hundred thousand of them compared to millions of Indians.

There was a small, skinny Indian lawyer named Mohandas Gandhi, and Gandhi wanted independence as much as anyone, but he knew that if they used arms, there

would be a bloodbath like they had just witnessed in World War II. So Gandhi devised a plan of non-violent, or passive, resistance. As his power grew, Gandhi was able to call a strike— of railway workers, of cotton mill workers, of the postal workers —and the whole country would shut down. This was to indicate to the British the numbers of people who opposed them.

Just as there was a tax on tea in the American colonies under the British, there was a heavy tax on salt in India, and the taxes were sent to Britain, even though the salt came from India itself. People eat a great deal of salt in hot countries, because we sweat more when it's hot, and we need salt to help keep our moisture inside us. So Gandhi stopped paying the salt tax and encouraged all other Indians to do the same. As a gesture of defiance, he and hundreds of people marched 200 miles to the sea, to get their salt free, there where it washes up and,crystallizes on the ocean shore.

The British had the Indians grow cotton, but then sent it to be woven into cloth in England, from where it was sent back to India for the Indians to buy at high prices, because they were not allowed to manufacture their own. So Gandhi had the Indians refuse to buy manufactured cloth and had them make their cloth on hand looms, and spin the thread on spinning wheels like one sees in pictures of early America or in illustrations from fairy tales. Many of the photographs of Gandhi show him seated next to his own spinning wheel, spinning his thread.

Gandhi said to the cotton workers when they were about to strike against the large mill owners, "Do not destroy the property OR the self-respect of your opponents".

Gandhi closed off the country to British control purely by passive, non-violent resistance. Eventually the British had to give in, with almost no British-Indian bloodshed. Gandhi was not only successful, he was much more successful than had he encouraged war. His way, very few people were killed, there was mutual respect between the two sides, and most of all, the world suddenly treated India with new respect, because it had shown a new way of behaving, an attitude that no one believed could be effective.

Mahatma (meaning Great Teacher) Gandhi's approach was so effective that it was followed by a similar leader in the United States, who was also fighting oppression— Martin Luther King.

Children will object that there WAS violence in both countries. Some students will also know that both Gandhi and King were shot and killed. To this I can only say the following:

"Few people got killed compared to the masses who would have been slaughtered if the leaders had encouraged violence. I'm not saying violence isn't effective. It is. What I'm saying is that any idiot can use violence, can use weapons, but there are other, much better ways. These ways require courage, intelligence and thought. Everyone in this class has that courage and that intelligence and that thoughtfulness, and I expect you to use them."

Part V. Conclusion

Questions:

1. *Where does the protagonist go after overcoming the final danger?*
2. *Has the protagonist accomplished the original goal?*
3. *Does s/he take anything from the dangers with her/him?*
4. *Have you accounted for all three strangers and all three gifts?*
5. *How does the protagonist celebrate success?*

Follow the same procedure as for Parts I, II, III and IV.

Chapter 6. Verse

Time: 1 to 2 days

Procedure

1. Discuss verses students know from folktales.

Almost all students know some verses from folktales, usually from the Grimms'. I give the class a line, such as

"Fee, fi, fo, fum", and ask them if they can finish it. The most commonly known verses seem to be

Fee fi fo fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman.
Be he alive or be he dead,
I 'll grind his bones to make my bread.
(from Jack and the Beanstalk)

"Little Pig, Little Pig, let me in!"
"Not by the hair of your chinny, chin, chin!"
"Then I'll huff and I'll puff And I'll blow your house in!"
(from The Three Little Pigs)

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Who is the fairest of them all?"
"You, O Queen, are the fairest here,
But Snow White is a thousand times more fair."
(from Snow White)

Ask students if they know any other verses from folktales, and ask them to describe where they come in the story.

2. Categorize how the verses are used.

Questions for the students:

1. *Where in the story is the verse used?*
2. *What does the verse say?*
3. *Why use a verse at this specific point in the story?*
4. *What does the verse do? or Why use verse instead of prose?*
5. *How would you categorize this use of verse?*

Verses are used to accentuate an emotional high spot in a story, and often they encapsulate the crux of the story, as do those from *Snow White* and from *The Three Little Pigs.* I'd call the verse from *Jack and the Beanstalk* a threat, that from the *Three Little Pigs* a demand-refusal-threat exchange (for want of a more concise category) and the last something like 'the question that determines the whole story'. Obviously these categories are not definitive.

3. Read the class verses from other folktales:

Verses add a touch of elegance to a tale. They are also good mnemonic devices, because one can often remember most of the outlying parts of the story once one can recall the verse. This could well be why the Grimms' tale *The Goose-girl* has remained so consistent in its various versions; its two verses make the story so easy to remember. When the goose-girl passes under the gateway, she says to the head of her faithful horse which is hanging there,

"O poor Fallada hanging there"

to which the horse replies,

"O poor princess in despair,
If the queen your mother knew
Her heart would surely break in two."

Then when she goes into the fields with the geese and begins to comb her golden hair, the goose-boy tries to touch it, so she calls to the wind,

Blow, blow, thou gentle wind, I say,
Blow Conrad's little hat away
And make him chase it here and there,
Until I've braided up my hair,
And bound it up again.

The first exchange is a 'revelation of the truth'; the second is a light spell cast by the girl. Another revelation of truth occurs in *Cinderella,* when the doves call out as each false bride rides by with the prince,

Roocoo, roocoo
There's blood on the shoe.
The foot's too long, the foot's too wide.
That's not the proper bride!

When Cinderella herself rides by, they proclaim her as true. Another spell is cast in an Indian folktale by the evil monster:

Hemanto and Basanto, go!
Sons of Duworani, go!
Never to be seen again
In the world of living men.

In another Indian tale the witch says,

O poisonous son of my belly
O sevenfold curse of my people
My revenge will be sweet
My revenge will be red!

There is the 'list of past trials' verse in *Whitebear Whittington:*

Three drops of blood I've shed for thee
Three little babes I've born for thee
Whitebear Whittington, turn to me!

or the lovely version from the British counterpart, *The Black Bull of Norroway:*

Seven long years I served for thee
The glassy hill I clamb for thee
The bloody shirt I wrang for thee
And wilt thou not waken and turn to me?

Lastly, there are the words of a beautiful princess in an Indian folk tale, who floats by on a boat before a whole family of brother-princes and their mothers. The words she calls out to them are a description of the feats they must perform - a foreshadowing of the whole folktale:

My land is very far away
With many perils on the way.
Your sons may sail across the sea,
But only one can set me free
From three old hags with kingdoms three,
From Ranga River's dead calm sea,
And he must find the Flower of Pearls
And he must find the Leaf-fruit Tree.
My prince must come "
With a marriage drum
And he alone can marry me.

4. Categorize these.

The specific names of the categories don't matter so much as that the students see what the verses mean and how they are used. Ask the same questions as given above, and also

Where else might a verse be used in a folktale?

5. **Students choose 2 or 3 places in their stories where verses might be used.**
   I've suggested two or three places here because it relieves students of finding The Perfect Place, and helps them to see alternatives they otherwise wouldn't have thought of. If they do find One Perfect Place and One Perfect Verse, that's great.

6. **Students make up appropriate verses for these places.**
   Not all students will be good at this. You might remind them to think of words and rhymes from popular songs, to see if they can use them here. They usually know the words to MANY pop songs.

7. **Students share verses in small groups and revise.**
   Have them check that their rhymes really do rhyme, that their meter is consistent and that the meaning of the verse is clear.

Notes to teachers:

It isn't necessary that every student use a verse in every folktale. This exercise should last only about one day and should simply help them feel that they might want to use a verse, and that they and their friends might be able to work out one that is both appropriate and sounds good.

A verse does add a certain aura to a tale.

Chapter 7. Writing the Tale

Time: 2 to 4 days

Procedure

1. **Write and revise as for any writing piece.**

   I have not specified exactly how to write the drafts and final versions of the tale. I leave this open because with the work on the outline finished, the writing is almost automatic. All the teachers using this manual have their own ways of drafting, editing and rewriting which they know much better than I do.

   Some of the styles will be spare, some jovial, 'hip' or flowery. I tend to ask for a more restrained style, in keeping with the 'classic' form of the folktale, though I'm not rigid about this. However, I've noticed that the sparest tales, which are often not much more than a rewrite of the outline in sentence form, are those I like the best, while the teachers I've worked with have not thought of these particular children as 'writers' since they don't take advantage of the wide range of descriptive language available, while children who use the most flowery verbiage write pieces I don't appreciate so much, as their streams of words are too often a cover for deficient form. This isn't always the case, but I've seen it too frequently not to be wary.

   On the other hand, children of this age have often been encouraged to use as rich a fund of language as they can, and it is difficult to shut off the cornucopia once it's been unplugged. My plea for simplicity comes with one example of the spareness of folktale style: when characters in folktales are speaking, their speech is rarely introduced with a greater variety of verbs than "he said" or "she asked". See Max Luthi for a discussion of folktale style. A case can easily be argued against me by those who want to emphasize the modern adventure movies as examples of our present-day folktales. I won't concede , but I'll accept the argument as valid.

   Choose the style or range of styles you feel most accord with the folktale as you understand it.

2. **Write final copy on 6 separate pages.**

   The folktale will be illustrated with six pictures and a cover. The six pictures will illustrate the following sections, which should accord with the page divisions:

   Page 1. Part I

   Page 2. Meeting the strangers or Showing virtuous qualities

   Page 3. Danger #1

   Page 4. Danger #2

   Page 5. Danger #3

   Page 6. Conclusion.

   If the students need more than a single page to finish a section, that's fine, but then have them begin a new section with a new page, so their illustrations will face the appropriate words.

Appendix

Tyeh May and the Magic Brush

At the turn of this century, China had a very weak and corrupt government. In 1894, the tiny nation of Japan, which had been closed off to the outside world until only 40 years before, had essentially destroyed China's navy in a single battle. Foreign nations: England, France, Germany, Japan, Russia and the United States, divided China into sections, and each of the foreign nations largely controlled its own section, because the Chinese government wasn't strong enough to keep them out. A few Chinese were extremely rich, especially the Emperor and his court—though they had almost no political power—and the large landlords, who had their own small armies to keep control over the peasants and to fight off neighboring lords. Most of the people were so poor they could barely survive the taxes demanded by the rich, the droughts, famines, plagues of insects and other disasters.

One of the most common ways people had of escaping their misery—a way that was encouraged by both the foreigners and the landlords, who benefited from the peoples' weaknesses—was drugs. Opium had been brought into China in the mid-eighteen hundreds by the British, who forced the Chinese to buy it in return for Chinese tea and other goods. Opium was so common that people became addicts as small children. Once they were addicted, they needed to keep getting the drugs, and they were too dependent to be able to change their lives.

In the 1920's a young man named Mao Tse-tung, son of a small farmer, ran away from home and spent several years in Shanghai, reading and discussing politics.. Among the writers who most affected him were Marx and Lenin. Communism was the idea of Marx and Engels, and Lenin had made their ideas into a reality in Russia. Their basic idea was that the most just government is one in which the workers have control of power and in which the world's wealth is distributed equally among everyone. Mao Tse- tung began to work with factory workers and peasants in hopes that he could make China into such a country.

It took him over twenty years to overcome both the foreign troops, especially Japan, and the foreign-backed government of Chiang Kai-shek, but he was finally successful in taking over the whole of the Chinese mainland.

Mao felt that the people of China, like people everywhere, would fall back into the same old divisions of rich and poor, powerful and impotent, unless the government did something to prevent this. So the Chinese government spends a great deal of time and energy on the education of its children, teaching them values that emphasize communal sharing, generosity, and working for the good of the poor. As part of the education program, the Ministry of Education has made up hundreds of stories like *Tyeh May and the Magic Brush* which encourage these values. As you listen, find the parts that emphasize specific values, and analyze how the story does this.

Many years ago, a cruel and greedy Emperor ruled over China. His people were very poor. One of the poorest was Tyeh May. Her mother and father had died, and she lived alone, gathering firewood and cutting reeds every day to sell in the marketplace.

One day, as Tyeh May passed by the school, she saw the teacher painting with his students, and she stopped to watch. She knew right then that this was what she wanted to do.

"Please, sir," she said to the teacher, "I would like to learn how to paint, but I have no money to buy a brush. Would you lend me one?"

The teacher turned red with anger.

"Beggar girls don't paint," he said. "Get out of here!"

But Tyeh May had an iron will. She decided to make pictures her own way. Now when she gathered firewood, she used the sticks to draw animals in the dirt. When she cut reeds, she drew fish on the rocks with her wet fingers. Soon she drew so well that her pictures looked almost alive. When people saw her drawings of fish, they thought the fish would swim away. When they saw her pictures of birds, they thought the birds were going to burst into song.

Still Tyeh May had no brush. Every night she thought how happy she would be if she could have one.

Tyeh May worked especially hard one day, and drew until late at night. She fell into a deep sleep. A woman appeared and held out a brush to her.

"This is a magic brush," the woman said. "Use it carefully."

Tyeh May took it in her hands. The brush was soft and thick, and the handle was of shiny gold. It felt heavy and good.

"Thank you, thank you!" cried Tyeh May, but the woman was gone.

Tyeh May woke up. It was dawn. She looked around to find that everything was the same: the same dirt floor, the same broken walls, the same straw mat. It had all been a dream. But what was this brush in her hands? Tyeh May looked at it in wonder.

She painted a bird. The bird flew up, perched outside her window and began to sing to her! She ran outside and painted a fish. The fish flipped its tail, jumped into the river and splashed in the water for her to see. Tyeh May was happy.

She used the brush to make things for the poor: for a weaver she painted a loom; for a farmer she painted a hoe, a pail and an oxcart. Before long, a wicked landlord heard about the magic brush and sent for Tyeh May.

"Paint me a picture," he ordered.

Tyeh May refused.

The landlord shut her in an empty stable. That night it began to snow, and the snow continued for three days.

"Now she is cold and hungry," thought the lord. "Now she will paint for me."

He unlocked the stable door and looked inside. Tyeh May was sitting in front of a warm stove eating hot cakes! The smell made his mouth water. The landlord at once ordered six strong men to kill the girl and bring the magic brush to him. When Tyeh May heard the men coming, she painted herself a horse and galloped away down the road. The lord and his men mounted their horses and chased after her, coming closer and closer. Tyeh may dismounted and painted a big net on the road. The horses rode into it and the horses and men were tangled in the ropes. Tyeh May tied up the net and rode off.

She rode for days and she rode for nights, until she came to a town. There she decided to paint pictures and sell them in the marketplace. As she knew that it would not be safe to let people know about the magic brush, she painted birds without beaks and foxes with three legs. Because the animals were not complete, they could not come to life. No one knew about the power of the brush.

One spring day, Tyeh May painted a crane. As usual, she left out its eyes. Then, as she passed the brush over the picture, two drops of ink fell onto the bird's head. At once they became eyes. The crane raised its head, lifted its wings and flew off over the marketplace. Everyone stared after it. The secret was known.

When the Emperor was told, he sent his officers to bring Tyeh May to court. Tyeh May knew the Emperor was greedy and cruel to the poor, and she hated him.

"Paint me a dragon," the Emperor commanded.

Tyeh May painted a toad.

"Paint me a phoenix-firebird," the Emperor commanded.

Tyeh May painted a rooster.

The rooster crowed and flew onto the Emperor's head. The toad hopped onto his belly. They flew and hopped about all through the palace and left their dropping everywhere until the whole palace stank. The Emperor threw Tyeh May into prison and took the brush for himself.

He painted a long gold brick. It was too short. He painted another, but it was still too short. Then he painted a long, long, long, long, long, long, long gold brick, as long as the whole scroll of paper. The gold brick became a golden python, which opened its red mouth and slid toward the Emperor. The Emperor fainted. The snake disappeared. The Emperor woke up and trembled.

He set Tyeh May free and told her to paint for him. He promised her gold and silver, silks and jewels. He promised her a handsome prince. Tyeh May pretended to agree.

"What would you like me to paint?" she asked.

The Emperor thought about this. He was a greedy man, and he wanted something big, but he was afraid that if he asked for a mountain, wild beasts might come out of it and eat him up.

"Paint me the ocean," he commanded.

Tyeh May painted the ocean. It was wide and calm, and smooth as a jade mirror. The water was so clear the Emperor could see to the very bottom, where corals grew.

"Why are there no fish?" he asked.

Tyeh May made a few dots. The dots became fish of all the colors of the rainbow. They wiggled their tails and swam slowly out to sea. The Emperor watched happily.

"Paint me a boat," he commanded. "I want to sail out and watch those fish!"

Tyeh May painted a great ship, and the Emperor and Empress, the Princes and Princesses and all their court went on board. Tyeh May painted a few strokes. A breeze blew, ripples appeared on the water and the ship moved off. But it was moving too slowly for the Emperor. He stood on the bow and called to shore,

"Make the wind blow stronger! Stronger!"

Tyeh May painted a few broad strokes and a strong wind began to blow. The seas grew rough. Tyeh May painted on. The wind howled, the waves rose higher and the ship began to roll.

"Enough wind!" the Emperor shouted. "Enough! Enough!"

Tyeh May paid no attention. The winds blew into a violent storm and drove the ship across the ocean to a lonely island, where it crashed on the rocks. The Emperor and his court were washed ashore and stranded. No ships came to the island and they were never rescued, but had to work hard every day for the rest of their lives.

The story of Tyeh May and her magic brush was told throughout the land. But what became of her? No one knows for certain. Some say she returned to the village where she was born. Others say she still walks from place to place across the land and paints for the poor wherever she goes.

Questions for discussion:

1. How are communist values encouraged in this story? Define what the values are and how they are encouraged.
2. Who are the 'bad guys' in the story? How do they represent evil in a communist system?
3. Education has always been important in Chinese history. The government officials were men who had made the highest grades on the yearly government exams, and these were open to anyone, rich or poor. If poor families had a brilliant son, they would make every sacrifice to educate him, in hopes of his becoming an official. Girls in China were never taught to read or write, as society felt that it would "make their heads too hard and stiff"—just as girls were not taught physics or math in the West, thinking it would make them 'unfeminine'.

Today, education is compulsory in China, for both boys and girls. It is still extremely competitive, with the best jobs going to those with the highest grades.

Who gets the best jobs in the U.S? How much does education have to do with 'success' here? What does 'success' mean in the United States? How are we taught our values? (Do most children in class know that U.S children spend more time watching television than they do in school?)

4. How does the ending of this folktale differ from that of most folktales?
5. The name Tyeh May means 'ironplum-flower'.
6. Why is this an appropriate name for the heroine?
7. The original Chinese version of this story had a boy as the protagonist; I changed him into a girl in my version. Does this make a difference?

Whitebear Whittington

One time there was a man had three daughters. His wife was dead, and the three girls they kept house for him. And one day he was fixin' to go to town, so he called his girls, asked 'em what did they want him to bring 'em. The oldest told him, says, "I want a silk dress the color of every bird in the sky."

The second girl said, "I want you to bring me a silk dress made out of every color in a rainbow."

The youngest'un she didn't say anything. So directly he went and asked her didn't she want him to bring her something too. She studied a minute, says, "All I want is some white roses. If you see a white rosebush anywhere you might break me a basketful."

Well, he took him a basket of eggs and got on his horse and went to town. Got all his tradin' done and started back. Rode on, rode on, come to where there was a thick wilderness of a place, saw a big rosebush 'side the road, full of white roses. So he got off his horse and broke off a few. Thought he heard something behind him, says,

"You break them
and I'll break you!

So he stopped, looked around, waited awhile and tried to see what it was spoke, didn't see anybody nor hear it again, so he broke off some more. Then he heard it real plain— sounded like it was back in the wilderness-

"You break them
and I'll break you! "

He started to quit that time, but he still couldn't see anybody or anything, and the prettiest roses were still on the bush, so he reached out his hand to break them off— and that thing said:

"Give me what meets you first at the gate,
you can break all you want till your basket is full."

He thought a minute or two—and he knew that his old dog always came lopin' out in the road whenever he got in home. The old hound wasn't much good anyway—so he answered, says:

"Whatever meets me first at the gate,
you can come take it whenever you want."

Went ahead and broke white rosebuds till his basket was full. Got on his horse and rode on in home.

He kept lookin' for his dog to come out but the old hound was up under the house asleep and before he could whistle for it here came his youngest girl fly in' out the gate to meet him.

He hollered to her and motioned her to go back but she wasn't pay in' him any mind, came right on. She took his basket and was a-carryin' on over how pretty the roses were. So she thanked him and went to helpin' him unload his saddlebags, and when

they got to the house she saw he was lookin' troubled, says, "What's the matter, Daddy,?" But he wouldn't tell her.

And he never came to the table when they called him to supper, just sat there on the porch lookin' back down the holler. So the girls they ate their supper, and it got dark directly and they lit the lamp. Sat there sewin' and talkin', and all at once they heard a voice out in the road-

"Send out my pay!"

Their daddy came in the house then, and told 'em what'n-all he had heard when he broke the roses. The oldest girl she said to him, says, "Aw, just send out the dog. How could it know what met you first?"

So they called the dog and sicked him out toward the gate. He ran out barkin' and then they heard him come back a'howlin', scared to death, and he crawled way back under the floor and stayed there. Then they heard it again-

"Send out my pay!"

So the two oldest girls said they wasn't afraid, said they'd go see what it was. Out they went, and directly there was a commotion at the gate and the two girls came tearin' back to the house so scared they couldn't speak. Then it hollered louder -

"Send out my pay!"

Then the youngest girl said, "I'll have to go, Daddy, but don't you worry; I'll come back some way or other."

So she gathered her up a few things in a budget and kissed her father and went on out to the gate. There stood a big white bear.

"Get up on my back," it told her. So she crawled up on its back and it started off.

The girl was cry in' so hard her nose bled and three drops of blood fell on the white bear's back. They went on, went on, and 'way up in the night she made out how they went past a big white rosebush out in a thick wilderness. Came to a fine house out there and the white bear stopped, told her, "Get off now."

So she got off and went on in the house. The white bear came in behind her, says, "Light that lamp there on the table." So she lit the lamp, and when she turned back around there stood a good-lookin' young man. The minute she looked at him she thought the world of him. He said to her then, says, "This house and everything in it belongs to you now, and there's nothing here to hurt you."

Then he took the lamp and they went through all the rooms lookin' at all the fine things, and directly they came to a pretty bedroom and he told her, says, "Now I got a spell on me and I can't be a man but part of the time. From now on I can be a man of a night and stay with you here and be a bear of a day, or I can be a bear of a night and sleep under your bed and be a man of a day. Which had you rather I'd be."

So she thought about it and she didn't like the idea of a bear layin' under her bed of a night so she told him she'd rather he'd be a man of a night. So that was the way it was. He was a bear in the daytime and he'd lie around outside while she kept house,

and when dark came he'd be a man. He kept plenty of wood and water in the house and they'd talk together and he was good company.

So they kept on and she lived happy even if her husband did have to be a bear half the time. He told her how it was he'd been witched, said he'd get out of it same day but he didn't know just how it would be. And after three or four years she had three little babes, two boys and a girl. Then when her least one was big enough to walk she told her husband she wanted to go back to see her father again. It looked like that troubled him but he told her all right, they would go; but he said she would have to promise him not to tell anybody anything about him and never to speak his name.

"If you speak my name to any living soul I'll have to go away. And you will see me going off up the mountain and it will be awful hard for us ever to get together again."

So she promised him and early the next mornin' he took her and the three children on his back, and he let them off at her father's gate and she took her babes and went on to the house.

They were all proud to see her again and told her how pretty her children were and commenced askin' her who her husband was and where they lived and all. She told 'em she couldn't tell. Well, they kept on at her and she kept tellin'em she couldn't possibly tell, so her sisters they started actin' mad and wouldn't speak to her. Still she wouldn't tell; but the next day her daddy took her aside and spoke to her about it, says, "Just tell me his name."

She thought surely she ought to tell her own father what her man's name was, so she whispered it to him—

"Whitebear Whittington."

And she hadn't but spoke it when she looked up and saw her husband and he was in the shape of a man, and he was go in' off up the Piney Mountain, and on the back of his white shirt were three drops of blood.

Well, she loved him; so she left the children there with her father and started out to try and find her man again. She took out the way he went over the Piney Mountain but she never did see him on ahead of her. But she went on and went on. Sometimes she'd think she was lost but a white bird would fly over and drop a white feather with a red speck on it, so she'd go on the way that bird was headed. Then she'd stop at a house to stay the night and they'd tell her about the fine young man had stayed there the night before, had three drops of blood on his shirt.

So she went on, went on, for seven years and that bird would fly over whenever she got down-hearted, so she didn't give up. Then late one evening she stopped at a house and called to stay the night and an old, old woman awful stricken in age came to the door, looked like she was over a hundred years old and she was walkin' on two sticks, told her to come on in. The old woman looked at her, says, "Girl, you're in bad trouble, now ain't ye?"

So she told the old lady about what'n-all had happened, and how she'd been tryin' to find her man again; and directly the old woman told her, says, "You just stay here

with me now, and get rested up a little, and it may be I can help you. I got a lot of wool to work and I need somebody. Will you stay and help me with my wool?"

She said yes, she would. So the next day they got all the fleeces out and she helped pick out the burs and trash, and washed the wool in the creek, while the old woman carded. Carded so fast the girl had a time keepin' up with her and they got it all done by sundown. And that night the old woman gave her a gold chinquapin.

The next day the girl she helped with the spinnin': handed the rolls of carded wool to the old lady, and it was a sight in the world how she could spin. They got it all spun up about dark, and that night the old woman handed her a gold hickory nut. Then the third day the old woman she sat down at her loom and the girl kept fixin' the bobbins and handin' 'em to her and the old loom went click! wham! click! wham! all day long, and just 'fore dark the weavin' was all done. So that night the old woman gave her a gold walnut, says, "Now you keep these three gold nuts and don't you crack 'em till you're in the most trouble you could ever be in. And if the first one don't get ye out, crack the next, and if you have to crack the last 'un you surely ought to be out of your trouble by then."

So she thanked the old lady and the next mornin' she left with the three gold nuts in her apron pocket. She went on, went on, and in three days she came to a river and she went along the river till she came to a washin' place where a great crowd of young women was gathered, and there in the middle of all them women she saw her husband. She got through the crowd and went up to him but when he looked at her it was just as if he never had known her before in all his life.

He didn't have any shirt on and she saw the women lined up before the washin' place and one girl was down on her knees washin' his shirt with all her might. She listened and heard 'em talkin' about how that young man had said he'd marry the one could wash the blood out of his shirt. So she got in the line and fin'lly got down to the washin' place. The one ahead of her was a big stout woman and she was down on her knees awashin' that shirt so hard it looked like she'd tear it apart. Soap it and maul it with the battlin' stick and rinse it and soap it and maul it again, but the blood just got darker and darker. So directly the girl said she'd like to have her turn. That other woman didn't git up off her knees, looked at her, says, "Humph! If I can't get this blood out I know a puny thing like you can't do it."

Well, that girl she just leaned down and took hold on his shirt and gave it one rub and it was white as snow. But before she could turn around the other woman grabbed it and ran with it, says, "Look! Look! I washed it out!"

So the young man he had to go home with her.

His real wife knew now that she was in the most trouble she could ever be in. So she followed 'em and saw what house it was, and about dark she went there, went right in the door and cracked her gold chinquapin. It coiled out the finest gold wool you ever saw— just one long carded roll ready to be spun. So she started pullin' out the gold wool and pretty soon that other woman came in and saw it, says, "Oh, I must have that! What will you take for it?"

"Why, I couldn't part with my gold nut."

"You name any price you want now, and I'll give it to ye."

"Let me stay this night with your man and you can have it."

"Well! I must have that gold chinquapin. You go on out and wait till I call ye."

So she took the gold chinquapin and put it away. Then she put a sleepy pillow on the young man's bed and just before he went to go to bed she gave him a sleepy dram, and then she called that girl, and when she went in to him he was sound asleep. She sat down beside him and tried to wake him up but he slept right on. So she stayed there by him all night cry in' and singin':

"Three drops of blood I've shed for thee!
Three little babes I've born for thee!
Whitebear Whittington! Turn to me!"

And when daylight came that other woman made her leave. Well, the girl came back that next evening and broke the gold hickory ***nut.*** A fine spinning wheel came out of it, stood right up in the floor and started spinnin'. All you had to do was put the gold hickory nut in a crack in the logs and set the end of the wool on the spindle, and it spun right on— spin and wind, spin and wind all by itself. Hit was the finest gold thread you ever saw. And when that woman came in and saw it, she said she just had to have the wheel. So the girl let her have it for another night with her man. But when she went to him he slept right on through the night because that sleepy pillow was still under his head and that woman had gone and given him another sleepy dram. So all night his wife stayed by him tryin' to wake him up—

"Three drops of blood I've shed for thee!
Three little babes I've born for thee!
Whitebear Whittington! Turn to me!"

And early in the morning that other woman came, said, "Get on out now. Your time is up."

Well, the next evening the father of that woman called the young man just before bedtime. Said he wanted to have a word with him. So they walked out a ways and the old man said to him, says, "I couldn't sleep a bit the last two nights. There's some kind of a cryin' noise been goin' on in your room, and somebody singin' a mournful song right on up through the night."

The young man said he had slept uncommon sound the last two nights, hadn't heard a thing.

"Well now," says the old man, "I want you to be sure to stay awake tonight, and listen and see what all that carryin' on is."

So that night the girl came and cracked the gold walnut and a big loom came out of it —just r'ared up in the house time she broke the nut. It was warped with gold warp and all you had to do was feed it bobbins of that gold thread and it wove right on—all by itself. The woman she heard it a beatin' and she came running.

"Oh, my! I must have that! What'll you take for your loom?"

The girl told her.

"Well!" she says, real hateful like, "You can stay with him tonight but I'll tell ye right now it's the last time."

So she made the girl go out and then she looked about that sleepy pillow still bein' on the bed, went and fixed that sleepy dram, made it real strong, and when the young man came in to go to bed she handed it to him, made him drink it; but he kept it in his mouth and when she left he spit it out. Then he looked at that pillow and threw it off the bed. Laid down and closed his eyes. The woman she looked in at him to make sure he was asleep, then she let that girl in. She came in the room and saw him there with his eyes shut and her grief nearly killed her. She didn't know what she'd do. She came and sat on the edge of the bed and put her hand on his shoulder and started cryin':

> "Three drops of blood I've shed for thee!
>
> Three little babes I've born for thee!
>
> Whitebear Whittington! "

Well, time she called his name he opened his eyes and turned to her, and then he knew her. So he put his arms around her, and they went on to sleep.

The next morning that other woman came and found the door locked and she was mad as time. And after they got up, the young man he came and called that woman's father, said, "Let's step outside. I want a word with you."

So they went out and he told the man, says, "If you had a lock and a key, and the key fitted the lock perfect, and you lost that key and got a new one; then you found the old key again, and it fitted the lock much better than the new one—which key would you keep?"

The old man answered him, says, "Why, I'd keep the old one."

"Well," says the young man, "I found my old wife last night and she suits me a lot better than your daughter does, so you can just have her back."

So they left and got their three children and went on home, and that spell on him was broke so he never was a bear again, and they lived happy.

from *Grandfather Tales* by Richard Chase, Houghton Mifflin, 1948. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

Similar tales:

The Black Bull of Norroway

East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon

Wiley and the Hairy Man

Wiley and the Hairy Man is an Afro-American folktale written down during the Great Depression. The 1920's was a time of hope for the world: World War I was over and people thought it had been "the war to end all wars". Manufacturing boomed, as cars and assembly-line machinery of all sorts poured from factories and were bought by the public, especially in the United States. Because of the improvement in farm machinery, farmers bought more land, more machines and planted more acres. Stock prices rose higher and higher, as the faith in business grew and more businesses opened. Banks lent money to businesses, farmers and other individuals so they could buy supplies, stocks, houses and materials. People began to live more and more on credit, borrowing to pay for everything they bought.

In October 1929, the stock market crashed; prices of stocks fell by 40%, setting off the Great Depression around the world. The price of farm goods fell because there was too much food and no one to sell it to. In 1930 a bushel of wheat sold for the lowest actual price in 400 years. Banks began to fail, because customers were unable to repay their loans. People who had savings in the banks panicked and ran to them to withdraw their money. But the money wasn't there. The banks had lent it all out. Banks around the world went bankrupt and their customers lost all their savings; between 1929 and 1932, five thousand American banks closed, and the average value of 50 industrial stocks on the New York Exchange fell from 252 to 61. Thousands of businesses closed because they didn't have money to operate, and millions of people lost their jobs.

In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president. He decided that the only way out of the Depression was for the government to invent jobs. The money to pay for the jobs came from government savings bonds, which were to be repaid with interest after a number of years. It also came from taxes, from social security, and some was borrowed from abroad.

Jobs were invented to build dams to provide electricity, as in the Tennessee Valley,

or to build schools, roads, canals, bridges and government buildings. Under this program, called the New Deal, the U.S. economy did recover, and boom—though once again the recovery was based on borrowed money.

One of the very smallest government projects created under the New Deal was the Federal Writers' Project. This paid people in each of the 49 states to go out and collect local history, songs, games, legends and folktales. *Wiley and the Hairy Man* was one of the many folktales recorded then, by a man who had heard it when he was a little boy.

The story takes place in Alabama, along the Tombigbee River.

Wiley and his mother lived near a swamp by the Tombigbee River. One day, Wiley needed to cut some bamboo to make poles for the hen roost. He got his ax to go down to the swamp.

Wiley's mother said,

"Wiley, be careful when you go the the swamp. Take your hound dogs with you. The Hairy Man will get you if you don't watch out."

Wiley's mother knew the Hairy Man hated hound dogs. She knew all about the ways of the swamp, because she had grown up on the Tombigbee River.

Wiley said,

"I'll watch out. I'll take my hound dogs with me everywhere I go."

But when Wiley got to the swamp, his dogs saw a wild pig and chased after it, and ran so far Wiley couldn't even hear them yelp.

"Well," thought Wiley, "I hope the Hairy Man isn't anywhere around here."

He took his ax and began cutting poles.

But when Wiley looked up, there was the Hairy Man, coming at him through the trees. He sure was ugly: he was hairy all over, his eyes burned like coals and his teeth were big and sharp and white. He was swinging a sack.

Quick as he could, Wiley climbed up a big old bay tree. He had seen that the Hairy Man had feet like a cow's, and he'd never seen a cow up a bay tree.

The Hairy Man stood at the foot of the bay tree and called out,

"Wiley, what are you doing up there?"

Wiley said,

"My momma told me to stay away from you. What's in your big ol' sack?

"Nothin', yet," said the Hairy Man.

He picked up Wiley's ax and began to chop down the tree.

Wiley held tight to the tree and rubbed his belly against it, hollering,

"Fly, chips, fly! Fly back to your same old place!"

The chips flew back. The Hairy Man chopped faster. Wiley hollered as fast as he could but the Hairy Man was faster. The chips flew and flew, and the Hairy Man was winning. Then from 'way far off, Wiley heard his dogs yelping.

"H-E-R-E, dogs" he hollered.

When the Hairy Man saw the dogs come running, he fled away into the swamp.

When Wiley got home, he told his mother what had happened.

"Did the Hairy Man have his sack with him?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am, he did," said Wiley.

"Well," his mother said, "the next time the Hairy Man comes after you, don't climb a tree. Just stay on the ground and say, 'Hello, Hairy Man.' The Hairy Man will say, 'Hello, Wiley.' Then you say, 'I hear you're the best conjure man around here.' You tell him how he's the best conjure man, and he'll say, 'I reckon I am.' Then you say, 'I

bet you can't change yourself into a giraffe.' And he'll change himself into a giraffe. Then you say, 'I bet you can't change yourself into an alligator.' He'll change himself into an alligator. You keep telling him what he can't do, and he'll keep doing it, just to show you. Then you say, 'Everybody can change into something BIG. I bet you can't change yourself into a little possum.' Now when he changes himself into a little possum, you grab him right away and throw him into his sack. Then tie the sack up tightly and throw it into the river."

Wiley was scared to do what his mother said, but the next time he had to go to the swamp, he tied up his hound dogs. As soon as he got to the swamp, there was the Hairy Man coming through the trees. He was swinging his sack, and he was grinning, because he knew Wiley had left his hound dogs behind.

Wiley wanted to run, but his stayed where he was and said,

"Hello, Hairy Man."

The Hairy Man said,

"Hello, Wiley."

"Hairy Man," said Wiley, "I hear you're the best conjure man around here."

"I reckon I am," said the Hairy Man.

"I bet you can't change yourself into a giraffe," said Wiley.

The Hairy Man twisted around, and he changed himself into a giraffe.

"I bet you can't change yourself into an alligator," said Wiley.

The giraffe twisted around and changed into an alligator.

So Wiley said,

"Everybody can change into something BIG. I bet you can't change yourself into a little possum."

The alligator twisted itself into a little possum. Wiley grabbed the possum and threw it into the Hairy Man's sack. He tied the sack as tight as he could and threw it into the Tombigbee River. Then Wiley started back home through the swamp.

He hadn't gone far, when there was the Hairy Man again, coming at him. Wiley climbed right up the nearest tree.

"How did you get out?" he called down to the Hairy Man.

"I changed myself into the wind," said the Hairy Man, "and I blew my way out. Now I'm going to wait right down here. You'll get hungry, and you'll come down out of that tree."

Wiley thought and thought. He thought about the Hairy Man waiting below. He thought about his hound dogs tied up at home. After a while, Wiley said,

"Hairy Man, you did some pretty good tricks, but I bet you can't make things disappear."

"Hah!" said the Hairy Man, "That's what I'm best at. See the bird's nest on that branch?"

Wiley looked. It was there. Then it was gone.

But Wiley said,

"I never saw it in the first place. I bet you can't make something I know is there disappear."

"Look at your shirt, Wiley," said the Hairy Man.

Wiley looked down. His shirt was gone!

"Oh, that was just a plain old shirt," he said. "But this rope around my pants is magic. My Momma conjured it. I bet you can't make this rope disappear."

"I can make all the rope in this county disappear," said the Hairy Man.

"I bet you can't," said Wiley.

The Hairy Man threw out his chest. He opened his mouth wide. He hollered loud,

"All the rope in this county, DISAPPEAR!"

The rope around Wiley's pants was gone. He held up his pants with one hand, and he held onto the tree with the other. He hollered loud,

"H-E-R-E, dogs!"

The dogs came running, and the Hairy Man fled away.

When Wiley got home, he told his mother what had happened.

"Well," she said, "You fooled the Hairy Man twice. If we can fool him one more time, he'll never come back to bother us again. But he'll be mighty hard to fool the third time."

Wiley's mother sat down in her rocking chair and thought.

Wiley couldn't sit still. He went outside and tied up one dog at the front door. He tied up the other dog at the back door. Then he came inside. He crossed a broom and an ax over the window, and he built a fire in the fireplace. Then he sat down and helped his mother think. After a while, she said,

"Wiley, go down to the pen and bring me back a young pig."

Wiley went down to the pen and brought her back a piglet. She put the piglet in Wiley's bed. Then she said,

"Wiley, you go up to the loft and hide."

Wiley climbed up to the loft. He looked out front through a knothole in a plank, and he saw an animal run out of the swamp toward the house. The dog out front broke loose and chased the animal back into the swamp. Wiley looked out back through a crack between the planks. He saw another animal run out of the swamp toward the house. The other dog broke loose and chased the animal back into the swamp. The wind howled and the house shook.

Wiley heard footsteps on the roof over his head. It was the Hairy Man, trying to come down the chimney. When the Hairy Man touched the chimney and found it was hot, he cursed and swore. Then he jumped down from the roof and walked right up to the front door, banged on it and yelled,

"Momma, I've come for your young'un!"

Wiley's mother called back,

"You can't have him, Hairy Man!"

"I'll set your house on fire with lightning," the Hairy Man said. "I'll burn it down if you don't give him to me."

"I have plenty of sweet milk, " Wiley's mother called back. "The milk will put out your fire."

Then the Hairy Man said,

"I'll dry up your cow. I'll dry up your spring. I'll send a million boll weevils out of the ground to eat up your cotton if you don't give me your young'un."

"Hairy Man," said Wiley's mother, "You wouldn't do all that. That's mighty mean."

"I'm a mighty mean man," said the Hairy Man.

So Wiley's mother said,

"If I do give you the young'un, will you go away and never come back?"

"I swear I will," said the Hairy Man.

Wiley's mother opened the door.

"He's over in that bed," she said.

The Hairy Man grinned and grinned. He walked over to the bed. He snatched the covers back.

"Hey!" he yelled. "There's nothing in this bed but a young pig!"

"I never said which young'un I'd give you," Wiley's mother answered.

The Hairy Man stomped his feet. He gnashed his teeth, and he raged and he yelled. Then he grabbed the piglet and fled away with it into the swamp.

Wiley came down from the loft.

"Is the Hairy Man gone for good?" he asked.

"He sure is," said his mother. "He can't ever get you now.

Wiley and his mother had fooled the Hairy Man three times, and they never saw him again.

Similar Tale:

Liza Lou and the Yeller Belly Swamp, Mercer Mayer, New York, Four Winds Press, 1976.

Savitri

Savitri is only one tiny tale in the great Indian epic *The Mahabharata,* developed into its final form sometime between 200 B.C and 200 A.D. In India, this story is not regarded so much as a folktale as a paradigm of the Hindu woman: strong-minded in her devotion to what she knows is right, single-minded in her devotion to her husband and family to the extent that she is willing to give up everything else without a thought. (This is not just an Indian paradigm, but exists around the world. It is simply expressed clearly in this story.) Many Indian girls are given the name Savitri, as a constant reminder to them of the qualities their parents want them to develop. Indian children do not regard themselves as 'individuals' in the same way that Western children do. Of course they know that they are individuals, but the Indian tradition constantly encourages people to remember that we are only momentary accretions of flesh and blood, changing our forms throughout life. Our lives should be spent in embodying the ideals held up in stories like *Savitri,* in developing that spirit within ourselves. Every religion has some form of this; Christians, for example, try to 'live in Christ'. Hindus don't believe that this spirit of god has only one shape, but many, and Savitri is one.

Savitri is also a goddess—the goddess to whom the girl's father prays at the start of the story. She is the consort of the god Brahma, "the anthropomorphic embodiment of a certain holy prayer that ...invokes Divine Energy, bidding it enter into and take possession of the soul." (Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths arid Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1946. p.88.) In other words, Savitri is at the same time a goddess, a prayer, a folktale heroine and the name of a child who is to embody these.

There was once a king named Aswapati. He was virtuous and pious and beloved by his people. But the king grew old. Still he had no children, and he grieved.

In hopes of having a child, the king left the palace to live alone in the forest. He ate plain food, wore plain clothes and observed strict vows. Every day he lit a fire and offered prayers to the goddess Savitri. He continued in this way for eighteen years, when at last the goddess appeared to him in the flames and said,

"I am pleased, O king, with thy prayers, thy fasting and thy virtue. Know then, mighty Aswapati, that a daughter of great energy will soon be born to you."

The goddess vanished and the king returned to his palace and resumed his royal duties. Soon a daughter was born to his queen, and in gratitude to the goddess they named the child Savitri. The girl grew into a young woman with golden skin and eyes like lotus petals. People who saw her thought that a goddess had come down to earth. But there was no man who could match her in energy of virtue or splendor, and no one asked for her in marriage.

Aswapati said to her,

"It is time for you to be married, yet no one asks for your hand. You then, Savitri, go seek a husband who is equal to yourself in quality."

Savitri left her father and mother. She set out in a royal caravan,accompanied by servants and councillors, and she traveled to holy places throughout the country, where she spoke with ascetics and distributed wealth.

It was many months later, while her father was in his court talking with the holy man Narada, that Savitri returned. The king greeted her with joy and asked her if she had decided who was to be her husband. Savitri replied,

"Father, there was a virtuous king of the Salwas people named Dumatsena, who after many years of wise rule became blind. An enemy learned of the king's misfortune and invaded the country. The king was forced to flee into the woods with his wife and their infant son. The royal family lived in great poverty and simplicity, while the boy grew to manhood. We came upon him as he was entering the forest to cut wood for his parents. That man I have accepted in my heart and it is he whom I will marry."

All the while Savitri spoke, the holy man Narada grew more and more anxious. When she had finished he said to the king,

"Sire, your daughter has chosen wrongly. The name of the youth she saw is Satyavan. He has the energy of the sun, the courage of the gods, and is as forgiving as the earth itself. He is truthful and generous, and as handsome as the moon."

"You tell me that he has every virtue, and yet you say that Savitri has chosen wrongly. What then are his defects?" the king asked.

Narada replied,

"He has only one defect and no other, but it is strong enough to cancel all his virtues. Twelve months from this very day, Satyavan is destined to die. If you marry this man, Savitri, you will be a widow in one year."

The king turned sadly to his daughter and said,

"You have heard the words of Narada. Go out again and choose another."

Savitri replied,

"As death comes but once, so can I give my heart only once. I have chosen, and now I must face whatever comes to my husband."

Narada and the king marveled at the steadfastness of her heart and they approved her decision. The next day King Aswapati traveled to the woods where the royal family lived and asked for their son in marriage to his daughter. The king and queen accepted, requesting only that Savitri come and live with them, instead of taking their son to live with her family, as was the custom. Savitri and Satyavan were married, and Savitri put away her royal robes and jewels and went to the forest to live.

The weeks turned to months and the family grew to love one another, but Savitri remembered the words of Narada, and she counted the days that numbered her husband's life. She saw by the attitude of the king and queen that she alone knew of Satyavan's approaching death, and she kept the knowledge to herself.

Four days before the appointed time, Savitri took a vow. She would neither eat nor sleep for three days and nights, and would spend the time in watchfulness and prayer. In this way she hoped to achieve a state of mind that would allow her to see and hear things that are unknown to most mortals.

The king and queen could not understand the reason for her fast, and they begged her to eat, to sleep. But Savitri said to them,

"I have taken a vow," and they could say no more.

When the morning of the fourth day dawned, Savitri still would not eat.

"I will eat when the sun sets," she said. "Mother, father, I have not asked you for anything before, but today I cannot bear to be parted from my husband. May I go into the woods and stay with him the whole day?"

The king and queen gave their consent. Savitri went with Satyavan, smiling and laughing, though her heart was full of sorrow. Satyavan gaily pointed out to her the flowering trees, the pea cocks, but Savitri kept her eyes on her husband's moods, for she knew that in a few hours he would be dead. They picked fruit and filled their bags with it, and then Satyavan began to chop some branches for firewood. All at once he came to his wife, crying,

"My head aches! It feels like it is shot through with a thousand darts! I have to lie down. I'm so weak I can't even stand."

Savitri helped Satyavan to lie down, and she took his head in her lap. He fell asleep at once. Savitri looked up to see a man dressed in red approaching through the trees. He was huge and dark, though his body burned like the sun. His eyes were red, he wore a jeweled crown on his head and carried a noose in his hand, and he was dreadful to behold. Seeing him, Savitri gently laid her husband's head on the ground, stood up and said,

"Sire, I take you for some god. Who are you, and what do you intend to do?"

The figure replied,

"You are strong-willed and full of ascetic merit if you can see me, child, and so I will answer you. I am Yama, Lord of the Dead. Your husband's days have run out, and now I am going to bind him in this noose and take him away with me."

Lord Yama pulled out with his noose a person the size of a thumb from Satyavan's body. When Satyavan's life had thus been taken away, the body lost its breath and color, and it became unsightly. Lord Yama held onto Satyavan's soul and began to walk toward the south. Savitri followed after him.

"Go back, Savitri," said the Lord Yama, "and perform funeral rites for your husband. He is dead."

But Savitri followed along and talked with the Lord of the Dead. After awhile he said to her,

"Savitri, your words and manner please me. Ask a boon from me. Except for the life of your husband, I will give you anything you ask."

Savitri replied,

"My father-in-law Dumatsena has lost his sight. Grant, Lord Yama, that his sight be returned to him."

"It is granted," said Yama. "now return home."

But Savitri continued along with him and continued to talk. Again Yama was pleased by what she said, and again he told her to ask a boon, except for the life of Satyavan.

"Grant then," she said, "that my father-in-law's kingdom be restored to him and that he continue for many years to rule it happily and well."

"It is granted," said Lord Yama. "And now you must return home. Go back."

But Savitri kept following along behind, and at last the Lord of the Dead said to her,

"Ask one more boon, but then go back. This time, ask something for yourself, anything but the return of your husband."

"Then," said Savitri, "I ask that many sons be born to me."

"It is granted," said Yama. "Now go back."

Savitri stood where she was.

"Lord Yama," she said, "a Hindu woman can marry only once."

The Lord of the Dead saw what he had done, and for a moment he hesitated. Then he untied the noose from around Satyavan's soul and with a glad heart said to Savitri,

"There, child, your husband is set free. O brave and virtuous one, in such a way do the gods love to be defeated by mortals."

Savitri returned to where the ash-colored corpse of Satyavan lay. She took his head on her lap once more and waited. In a few moments, her husband's life and color returned, and he awoke.

"How long I've slept," he said. "I dreamed I was in some foreign land, and that a dark flaming man was dragging me away."

"That was no dream," said Savitri. "But it is night now, and the jackals are howling throughout the forest. Your parents will be worried. Let us go home, and then I will tell you what took place."

She helped Satyavan to his feet, and together they made their way back through the dark woods. When they reached home, Savitri recounted what had occurred, and indeed, everything the Lord of the Dead had granted came to pass.

The Karate Kid: A Movie as Folktale

Movies don't follow the pattern exactly anymore than folktales do, but an analysis of *The Karate Kid* reveals how many folktale elements it uses and how consistently it follows the basic form.

Protagonist at home:

Danny is a 'normal' American boy: not particularly good-looking, doesn't get great marks, and he lives with his mother in a small apartment in California. He is a typical folktale underdog at the beginning: fairly poor (his mother drives an old car that won't start except on a slope), he's weak and he's an outsider, since he has just moved to the city.

Reason for leaving home:

Danny leaves home twice. At the beginning of the movie, we find that he has just left his home in New York because his mother and father have gotten divorced. But a hero can't really leave home with a parent in tow. The real reason he leaves home is because he has to go to school and go out into his new city-world, just as Wiley has to go to the swamp. And Danny leaves home with nothing, gaining what he needs along the way.

Indications of sustaining/virtuous/heroic character:

1. He gives water to the dog. This incident has no reason for existing in the movie except to show Danny's care for other creatures. It takes place before he 'sets off', and the dog doesn't give him a gift in return, but the gesture is noticed.
2. He helps Mr. Miyagi fix things. Danny doesn't treat the custodian of the apartment complex any differently than he treats everyone else. He treats everyone as equals.
3. He trims the bonsai with attention and innate skill. Danny seems to have an innate sense of how to do this, which Mr. Miyagi remarks on. It shows not only that he's interested in learning to do unusual and seemingly 'non-manly' sorts of things, but he has a sensitivity to Art and Nature both.
4. He catches a fly when he is learning to use chopsticks. Danny is extraordinarily fast and adept—even more so than his teacher.

Goal or task to accomplish:

Danny recognizes his goal when he goes to the beach: to conquer the Enemy and win the Princess. She is a typical princess: beautiful, golden-haired, rich, living in a castle- mansion on top of a hill, with little personality shown in the movie except encouragement of Danny and faithfulness to him. She recognizes him as a 'hero' long before anyone else does.

Tasks which, once accomplished, give him what he needs to achieve success

The tasks imposed by Mr. Miyagi: of waxing the car with a 'wipe on, wipe off' motion, painting the fence and sanding the porch, give Danny the necessary karate moves that he needs to win. If there is one element in the movie that I find typically American, it is the speed with which he becomes Ready. Most folktale heroes and

heroines (especially the heroines) must submit to seven years of travail, or must search until they have worn out "3 iron loaves, 3 pairs of iron shoes and 3 iron walking staffs". Danny works for a few *days* and beats boys who have been learning karate for years in a matter of *weeks.* These trials and his practice of the 'crane' stance indicate his endurance and his determination to do a given job to the best of his ability. With the crane stance, Mr. Miyagi helps Danny transform himself into an animal when he most needs it. The crane is the symbol of long life and happiness in the Orient, but in general, all birds represent the triumphant Spirit, which soars above our lowly human world of drudgery and materialism.

Danny's accomplishment of the tasks or chores also results in his being given a 'golden-yellow' car. The folktale equivalent is the glorious steed which replaces the old nag (his bike, his mother's car) on which he first leaves home. Notice that the old nag comes from home and must be replaced with an appropriate mount found on the journey.

Mr. Miyagi is the old man/stranger met in the forest. His three gifts are the bonsai, the car, and mainly a knowledge of karate. He also saves Danny twice: once when the skeleton-boys chase him and again when he magically heals Danny's broken leg. Mr. Miyagi is truly a magician, who transforms old junk jalopies into collectors' items and boys into birds, whose tiny hovel of an apartment magically extends into exotic spacious rooms opening out onto a beautiful vast garden, and who has magic healing powers learned from his ancestors in Okinawa. Unlike most of the old men/kind strangers in folktales, he is also an old Warrior, and he becomes the father Danny needs, as Danny becomes the son he lost. This search for the father is a theme I don't remember in folktales. The closest analogy I've been able to find is the tragic Persian epic of *Sohrab and Rustrum,* which is much closer to our movie epic *Star Wars* in that the son unwittingly kills in battle the father he has spent his life seeking. But the theme is not unusual in modern stories and movies, and reflects a real search of many boys.

Lastly, Danny's dangers are all the same enemy, but under several guises represented by changes in clothes—from beach Jams (colorful) to school clothes (less colorful) to skeleton costumes (black with white) to a karate suit (white with black)—from daily dress to death mask to battle dress. As will be discussed in the manual for illustration, both black and white are the colors of death. The final battle is at the same time a fight to the death between the two boys but also battle between the two sensei who represent Good and Evil. The battle is won by the teacher who has sympathy with and knowledge of animals, machines, plants and people—all aspects of the world, who has felt the gamut of human emotion from joy to sorrow, and whose victory comes as a result of his active submission to Nature's ways.

Bibliography

Folktales

The more folktales you read, the better variety you'll be able to offer to the students. The following short list gives only a few of my personal favorites. I'd recommend reading as many versions of these as you can; each interpreter rewrites the tales in a new way, adding, deleting and changing all sorts of elements. Some you will like and some you won't like at all.

The Frog Princess, illustrated by Ivan Bilibin. This is a double folktale, somewhat reminiscent of *Whitebear Whittington* but with a man as the protagonist. It has essentially every element of the folktale pattern we use as our 'benchmark', including four animals from different environments who help the hero. There is a version of this tale in the famous collection of *Russian Folktales* by Afanasiev as well, but it is not so well told or so satisfying. This is one story in a set of six tales illustrated by Bilibin in the early 1920's, including *The Firebird* and *Vassilissa the Beautiful.* The illustrations are among the most beautiful I've ever seen, the stories are wonderful, and the books are extremely cheap, as they are subsidized by the Russian government. They are available through Imported Publications, 320 West Ohio Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

The Good-hearted Youngest Brother, This is the only tale we have found which exactly follows the pattern of three kindnesses, three stranger-animals from different environments, etc.

The Glass Mountain, illustrated by Nonny Hogrogian, New York, Knopf, 198;5. An odd mix of images from Prometheus and the tale of Atalanta, in the garb of an English folktale.

Marco the Rich and Vasily the Unlucky, translated by Thomas P. Whitney, New York, Scribners, 1974. This is a double folktale, with Vasily having to first overcome the father of his bride-to-be and then three more adventures out in the world.

The Reward Worth Having, by Jay Williams, New York, Macmillan, 1977. Jay Williams is one of the most successful of modern 'folktale' writers for children who use the form to make fun of old social conventions and point out some alternatives. These are much appreciated by children and adults, because they're silly, but they're also right on target.

A Story, a Story, by Gail Haley, New York, Macmillan, 1970 Retelling of an African tale which comes close to the pattern.

The Water of Life, retold by Barbara Rogasky, New York, Holiday, 1986. This closely follows the pattern as well.

Three-stone Woman, Glow Coalson, New York, Atheneum, 1971. An Eskimo tale which follows the pattern of the three tasks, it gives a flavor of the harshness of most Eskimo tales.

Tatterhood, from *Norwegian Folktales,* Asbjornsen and Moe, New York, Pantheon, 1982. This is a delightful traditional folktale about an ugly, rowdy girl who rescues her

beautiful twin sister from trolls. The end is a bit odd, as though it was tacked on, and various interpreters have tried to change it. A very 'feminist' folktale.

Yeh-shen, retold by Iai-ling Louie, New York, Philomel, 1982. This is a Chinese version of *Cinderella,* as *Vassilissa the Beautiful* is a Russian version

Tales from the brothers Grimm. This is certainly a good place to begin. Their stories range from the macabre to the religious to the romantic to the clumsy, and you'll have to read them all to see which ones you prefer. My own favorites are the well-known ones: *The Six Swans, Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, The Boy Who set out to Learn What Fear was, The Frog King or Iron Henry, The Seven Ravens, Fowler's Fowl,* (a very macabre story which ends successfully; the Grimm version of *Bluebeard), Snow White, Six Who Made Their Way in the World, The Master Thief, and The Goosegirl.*

Toad is the Uncle of Heaven: A Vietnamese Folktale, Retold and Illustrated by Jeanne M. Lee, H. Holt and Company, 1985. I like this because it is an Asian tale in which the toad-hero saves the world from drought with the help of friends: an example of a story with 'animal-helpers'.

English Fairy Tales, Retold by Flora Annie Steel, New York, Macmillan, 1918. A rich collection of well-known and not sol well-known folktales.

Hindoo Fairy Legends, collected from oral tradition by Mary Frere, New York, Dover, 1967. This is a reissue of a book first published about 1881, and a good way to begin knowing Indian folktales.

The books edited by Andrew Lang beginning with *The Blue Fairy Book* and continuing through a range of colors including Red, Green, Yellow, Violet and Olive. These are tales from around the world collected by one of the great British folklorists at the end of the last century. Reprinted by Dover Publications, New York, 1966.

Books about Folktales

The Hero with A Thousand Faces, Joseph Campbell, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949. This book will give you perhaps the best idea of why this 'Hero/ine Adventure Journey Tale' is so basic to our humanness, and why I so love to teach this course. Joseph Campbell was the great interpreter of myth and folktales, whose books have made them accessible to people in a way no one else has been able to even approach. All of his books are worth reading, though some, such as *Myths to Live By* and *The Mythic Image* are more readable by the general public than his 4-volume overview of mythology and its meanings: *The Masks of God.* The 6-part series of interviews with Bill Moyers on PBS is one of the most insightful programs I've seen, and is available in book form. If possible, see this in the form of videos, and show one or two to your classes.

Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales, Max Luthi, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1976.

The European Folktale: Form and Nature, Max Luthi, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986.

The Fairytale, as Art Form and Portrait of Man, Max Luthi, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987.

Max Luthi was Professor of European Folk Literature at the University of Zurich. These books first came out in the 1940's and 50's but were not translated into English until very recently. They are the best books I've read on the style and form of the European folktale, written with a clarity and simplicity that is rare in scholars. They are a joy to read; I found myself, thinking, "Of course, of course!" as I read - the sort of "Of course!" one feels when one sort of knew all along but didn't really understand. The other book of this sort that I found just as enjoyable for the same reason is

Theory and History of Folklore, Vladimir Propp, Minneapolis, U. of Minnesota Press, 1984. This is a recent translation of a book written in the 1920's by one of the greatest scholars of folktales.

The Uses of Enchantment, Bruno Bettleheim, New York, Vintage, 1977. This is the book that has recently made folktales into a 'psychologically acceptable' form of children's literature - for the moment. Bettleheim is one of the most well-known American child psychiatrists and has a wide range of experience from autistic children to children raised on a kibbutz. This book is fascinating, easy to read and complex. I disagree with a lot of his conclusions, or feel uncomfortable with the categorical nature in which he presents them, but it is the best psychological interpretation I've read, and will give you insight into what different meanings these stories have for each one of us, and how important they are in our views of the world.

Twice-told Tales: The Psychological Use of Fairy Tales, Hans Dieckmann, Chiron Publications, 1986. This is a much shorter book than Bettleheim's, without his pomposity, and is written very simply and clearly. The author is a German psychiatrist. The most remarkable section for me was the chapter in which he describes how many of his patients (of ourselves) have unwittingly latched onto a specific folktale, reinterpreted it or retold it according to our own needs, and then proceeded to live their lives as though following the tale as a script. Again, it gave me insight into what we do with folktales and how much they mean to us.

The Classic Fairy Tales, Iona and Peter Opie, London, Oxford University Press, 1974. This book gives the texts of 'all the best-known fairy tales as they were first printed in English, or in their earliest surviving or prepotent text' (p. 5). It is an interesting study of how various folktales developed and where they came from, as well as how they differ from versions from different countries.

The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context, Jack Zipes, South Hadley, Bergin and Garvey, 1983. This book is exactly what is says it is, and fascinating. Jack Zipes is one of the most interesting and knowledgeable of the modern scholars of folktales, and is a strong feminist. Other books of his are Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979, and *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization.,*

New York, Wildman, 1983. *Don't Bet on the Prince,* which he edited, is a collection of contemporary feminist folktales and folktale criticism, and has a good extensive bibliography.

Grimm's Bad Girls and Bold Boys: The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales. Ruth Bottigheimer, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987. This book shows in detail how the Grimm brothers changed the folktales they collected and imbued them with their own values, both explicit and implicit. We all do this; the book gives an indication of how extensively and how subtly the Grimms molded the stories and have thereby helped form 'appropriate' attitudes in both boys and girls. It is unsettling and very interesting.

Teaching books

In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents, Nancie Atwell, Upper Montclair, New Jersey, Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc. 1987. This book's philosophy about children and teaching, the book's suggestions' and exercises, the book's very feeling about what it is to be a teacher and a student are inspiring. This is largely because of Ms. Atwell's way of treating each student as a responsible, creative, interesting and fun individual and giving them a well-defined space and structure in which to express themselves. Her book shows 'cooperative learning' as a means of growth for everyone, including the teacher. If I had only one teaching book to read, it would be *In the Middle.*