

Searching for Cinderella

Part of the Unit: Into the Woods, Jr.

There are more than 300 versions and variations of the tale known as "Cinderella." Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine use the Brothers Grimm version of the tale called "Ashenputtel" in their musical, *Into the Woods, Junior*. Students are given a list of clues about this "Cinderella" and search through versions of the "Cinderella" tale until the correct one is identified as "Ashenputtel." The students locate the geographic region from which that version came. Students then identify a story line, event, or characteristic and use it to create a madrigal about the "Cinderella" tale that was studied. This is performed for the class as a spoken or sung piece.

Length of Lesson:

Two 45-minute periods

Instructional Objectives:

Students will:

- * identify characteristics of a "Cinderella" story.
- * identify elements of the "Cinderella" used in *Into the Woods*.
- * locate on a map where the "Cinderella" story he/she read originated.
- * read and listen to the Prologue of *Into the Woods*.
- * read and research a "Cinderella" tale to discover if it was used in *Into the Woods*.
- * work in cooperative groups to create a madrigal about "Cinderella."
- * work in cooperative groups to identify key elements, events, or lines of the "Cinderella" story he/she read.
- * work in cooperative groups to present their madrigal to the class.

"Cinderella" stories are found all over the world. They are possibly the most recorded of all folktales. The stories have cultural differences but basically tell the same tale.

Discuss and identify what characteristics make a story a "Cinderella" story. List them on the board. Judy Sierra (See Sources.) summarizes the "Cinderella" stories as follows: "A young girl (boy) is mistreated by her family, but she receives magical help so that she can be recognized for the good and beautiful person that she really is."

Discuss and identify what elements make each a "Cinderella" story. (For example, the stories include a stepmother, two stepsisters, and a ball thrown by a prince. The Cinderella character cleans the house, is forbidden to go to the ball, and disguises herself in fancy clothes.)

Introductory Activities

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine use a "Cinderella" story in their musical, *Into the Woods*. They introduce the setting and the characters - and what each character wants - in the Prologue.

The Prologue is written in the style of a madrigal, in which three or more singers interweave lines, phrases, and tunes to create new lines. Have students listen to the song twice — listening to the song once to familiarize themselves with it, then listening a second time to identify how each character weaves his/her lines in and out of the song.

Have students listen to the Prologue of *Into the Woods* a third time and try to find clues as to which version of the "Cinderella" story was used to shape the musical.

Students list the clues they hear/see in "Cinderella." As the class discusses the clues, list these preliminary ideas on the board. How is "Cinderella" like the traditional story the students know? What elements listed by the students are found in this version? How is it different? Record these responses on the board.

Developmental/Guided Practice

Give each student a Cinderella Clues Checklist. Explain to students that they are going to work in groups to search for the version of "Cinderella" that Sondheim and Lapine used as the basis for the musical *Into the Woods*.

Divide students into groups based on Internet availability and available book resources. (See the Sources section for more information.) If Internet access is limited, you may choose to download several different versions of the "Cinderella" stories. Try to collect stories from each continent.

Assign each group a "Cinderella" story to read.

As students read their assigned stories, they should check off the clues that will lead them to the version used by Sondheim and Lapine. (It is the German Grimm Brothers' tale, "Aschenputtel." Make sure at least one or two copies of the story are in the room.)

Students should also note lines, events, characters, or other story elements that make the story they are reading a "Cinderella" story.

Allow time for students to discuss their findings.

Have the students who were assigned "Aschenputtel" retell the story.

Have the students locate the country of origin of the tale they read. On a Post-It note, write the name of the story and place it at the correct location for the story's origin on a class map or globe. (Example: Write "Aschenputtel" on the Post-It and stick it on Germany.)

Independent Practice

Listen to the Prologue of *Into the Woods* again. Can the students identify the "Aschenputtel" parts of the madrigal?

Regroup the students into groups of three. The groups should have people who read different versions of "Cinderella" in it. Distribute the Creating a Madrigal worksheet to each group. Review the directions together before students begin the assignment.

Give students ten to fifteen minutes to create a madrigal of their "Cinderella" stories. Each group member must find a line, a phrase — something not the same as the others — and then find a common element to play with in creating the madrigal with the group. (They should have noted lines, events, characters, or any story elements that make their story unique on the Cinderella Clues Checklist.) Circulate the room, helping students with this task as needed.

The groups record in writing the final product.