

Christine Röhl

Families in fairy tales

Level: From A2



<https://www.teaching-english-and-spanish.de/>



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Families in Fairy Tales.....	4
Suggested Answers	7
Additional questions about families	8

Introduction

Fairy tales are well known in many cultures around the world and form a common cultural heritage. Examples include the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimms, such as Hansel and Gretel, The Pied Piper of Hamelin, The Frog Prince, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella and The Town Musicians of Bremen.

Fairy tales were originally intended for adults. Since their creation, these entertaining stories have been retold in countless ways. They tell of basic human experiences, such as love, jealousy, conflict, violence and death. As a result, creators in a wide range of genres, such as film and musical adaptations, have been inspired by fairy tales. In addition, fairy tales have been analysed and interpreted in a variety of ways, including literary history, social history, psychology, sociology and feminist perspectives.

In most cultures, fairy tales can be used in the classroom without a lengthy introduction, as it can be assumed that students are familiar with them. The following activity uses four popular fairy tales as a springboard to talk about different family forms and types of family members. There is also an opportunity to reinterpret the roles of some of the characters.

Revision of vocabulary

The follow website is useful to revise important family vocabulary according to different categories:

<https://usefulelenglish.ru/vocabulary/family-and-relatives>

Families in Fairy Tales

Introduction

1. What fairy tales do you know?
2. What do you think of fairy tales?

Families in fairy tales

Activity

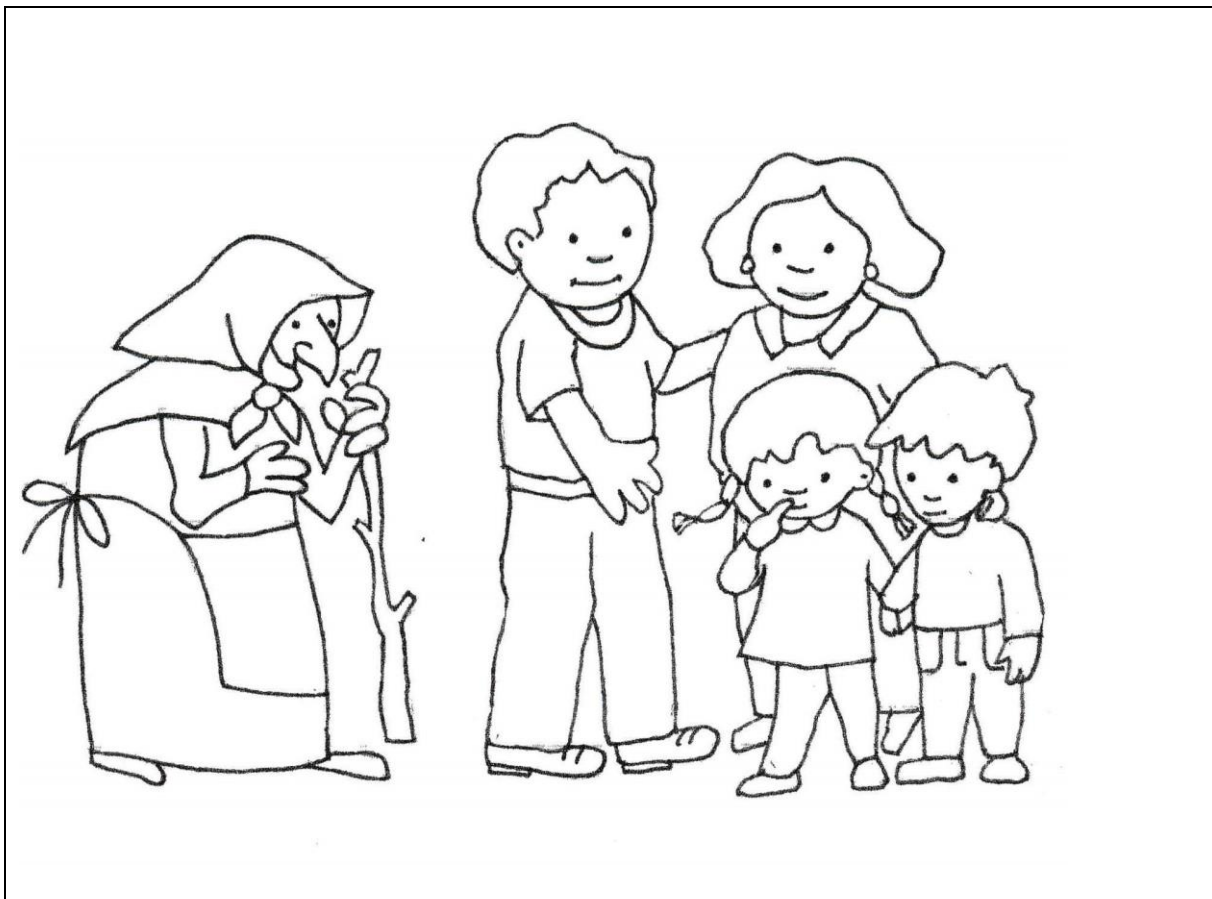
1. What is the name of the fairy tale?
2. You are social worker who has visited the family. Summarise their situation in a few sentences.

Who are the family members and how are they related?

What is the structure of the family?

How would you describe the relationship between the family members?

A



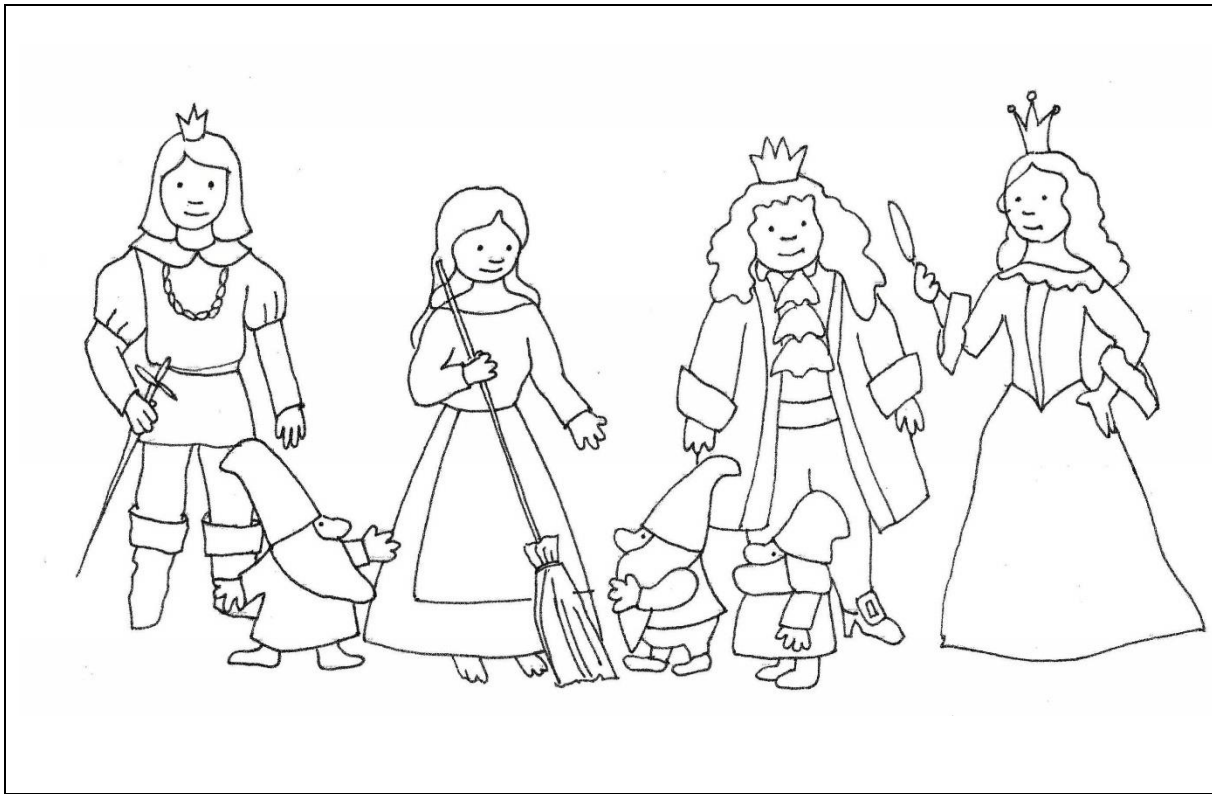
B



C



D



Questions to discuss:

1. Some characters of fairy tales tend to be portrayed in a stereotypical way, for example, the evil stepmother or the noble prince. Should children still be told these stories in a world that highly esteems political correctness?
2. Can fairy tales be interpreted in a way that is still relevant in today's world?
3. Do you know any new versions or interpretations of fairy tales?

Suggested Answers

Hansel and Gretel

2. This is a nuclear family. The family members are Hansel (brother), Gretel (sister), a biological father and a stepmother. The stepmother does not accept her stepchildren and wants to get rid of them. She is probably jealous of them. The father is subservient to his wife and unable to protect his children, while the brother and sister have a supportive, trusting relationship. The stepmother persuades her husband to abandon the children in the forest, where they meet a witch (a kind of abusive foster parent?). Eventually they escape and find their way back home. The stepmother has since died. After the stepmother's death, the family becomes a single-parent family.

B

1. Little Red Riding Hood

2. Little Red Riding Hood lives with her mother. The family is a nuclear family, perhaps a single-parent family with an absent father. The family members have a trusting relationship and support each other. One day, Little Red Riding Hood sets out to visit her grandmother, who is ill, and take her some food. On the way, she meets a wolf (a misogynist?). The wolf rushes to the grandmother's house. He then swallows the old woman and later Little Red Riding Hood. A hunter (a social worker or a psychologist?) kills the wolf and saves the girl and the grandmother.

C

1. Cinderella

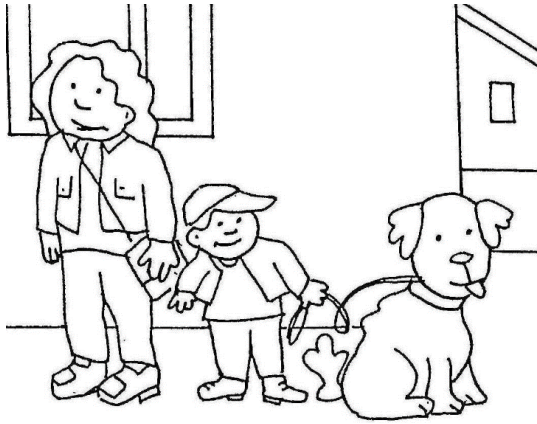
2. The members of the family are Cinderella, her biological father, her stepmother and her stepsisters. They are a mixed family. The stepmother is very domineering. The father is subservient to his wife and unable to protect Cinderella. Cinderella is therefore abused and exploited by her stepfamily and has to do all the housework. At a ball, Cinderella meets a prince whom she later marries. She marries someone of a higher social status, she 'marries up'.

D

1. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

2. The family is a nuclear family consisting of Snow White, her biological father and her stepmother. The stepmother and stepdaughter have a strained relationship because the stepmother is jealous of her stepdaughter's beauty and even tries to kill Snow White. Snow White runs away and finds shelter with seven dwarfs. The seven dwarfs could represent a kind of foster family or supported living. Her stepmother finds her and poisons her, but she is revived by a prince whom she marries.

Additional questions about families



Who is part of a family?

How many generations of your family can you name?

What words do you think best describe your family?

What do you like most about having a family?

What do you admire in your parents?

How do you spend 'quality time' with your family?

What is your favourite family tradition?

What rules are necessary to make family life work?

How do you overcome family conflicts?

What is the key to a happy family life?