Publishing pupils’ work

Miry Nivinsky

Writing stories is an excellent way to improve pupils’ proficiency in English, but it can be a tiring process for teachers and pupils alike. Pupils must be taught how to write stories, their work must be checked and revised and the whole process must be assessed. In 2000, I published a collection of fairy tales written by my seventh grade pupils at Zalman Aran Junior High School. Their excitement, enthusiasm and eagerness to read the stories written by their classmates made the whole process worthwhile.

Before I asked my pupils to write their own stories, I had to acquaint them with the main elements of a fairy tale: characters, setting, conflict, magic, resolution and moral. I used the pictures of “Little Red Riding Hood” (Go For It — unit 6, pages 76-77) to teach these elements (Appendix A). After describing the pictures, pupils were asked to map the story and write a conversation between two of the characters. Then we turned to the cloze exercise, based on the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, that appears in the Go For It workbook, and I asked pupils to map this story as well. In order to trigger their imagination, I asked them to write a continuation: what happened after Goldilocks left the bears’ house? The pupils read their work aloud and I then read to them the book Beware of the Bears, which continues the story.

My pupils were by now enthusiastic about the topic but I still needed to teach sequencing and the use of descriptive language (adjectives and adverbs). I gave them a worksheet based on the story of the Three Little Pigs. The worksheet required pupils to arrange the story in the correct order, reviewed the elements of a fairy tale, and provided practice in the use of adjectives and adverbs (Appendix B). In order to further stimulate their imagination, I read aloud The True Story of the Three Little Pigs, which gives the wolf’s point of view. I then asked pupils to compare the two versions.

Pupils were now ready to write their own stories, which I told them would be published after correction and revision. I also discussed with them the criteria that would be used to assess the stories (Appendix C). Pupils worked according to the guidelines detailed in Appendix D. The fairy tales were prepared in class and the whole process lasted for three lessons. First we discussed different fairy tales: which fairy tale pupils liked best and why. Then pupils were asked to choose characters and a setting, to define the problem, to suggest a solution and add a little bit of magic. Next, they wrote a first draft of their stories, using the criteria for assessment as a checklist. Pupils worked in pairs, groups or individually. They were asked to share their ideas with their classmates and to let others check their work to ensure that it was clear. I corrected the first drafts and pupils then revised and retyped their stories. Finally, I prepared a booklet with all the stories.

The most exciting and rewarding moment was when I gave each pupil a copy of the booklet. The first thing they did was to look for their own stories, and then they started reading the other stories. They were so enthusiastic that I asked them to choose the story they liked best and write a short review. In the following lesson, I gave pupils the reviews written about their stories, omitting the names of the reviewers. Pupils were eager to find out how many others had read their stories and their reactions. As the teacher, I was encouraged by my pupils’ excitement: they all wanted to know when they were going to write the next book.

Note: All the worksheets prepared for this project can be found on the ETNI website, where they appear with graphics, ready for use (www.etni.org and also www.etni.org.il)
Focus on Projects

References


APPENDIX A

These are the main elements of a simple fairy tale: setting, characters, a problem or conflict, the solution to the problem, and magic. Some fairy tales have a moral (they want to teach us something).

a) Map out the fairy tale: “Little Red Riding Hood” according to these elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting:</th>
<th>Characters:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem or Conflict:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resolution:</td>
<td>Moral:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Choose two characters and write a conversation between them. Write their names and describe them:

Name: ____________________________
Description: _____________________

Name: ____________________________
Description: _____________________
APPENDIX B

a) Arrange the story in the correct order.

1. The big bad wolf went to the straw house first. He said, “Little pig, little pig. Let me come in!” but the little pig refused. Then the wolf said, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down.” So the wolf huffed and puffed and blew the house down.

2. Once upon a time there were three little pigs. The first pig was very lazy. The second pig didn’t like to work. The third pig was very hardworking. One day they decided to leave home and build houses for themselves.

3. The second pig got some wood and built his house. When he finished he had plenty of time to relax and play. His house was not very strong.

4. The wolf decided to climb up on the roof and climb down the chimney. But the three little pigs were ready. They put a pot of hot water on the fire. The wolf fell into the pot and burned himself. He ran out of the house very fast and was never seen again. The three little pigs lived happily ever after.

5. The first pig found some straw and built his house very quickly. Then he had time to visit a friend and play in the park. His house was small and not strong at all.

6. The third pig bought bricks and worked hard day and night. It took him a long time to build his house but it was big and strong.

7. The little pig ran quickly to his brother’s house. Then the wolf went to the wood house. He said “Little pig, little pig. Let me come in!” but the little pig refused. Then the wolf said, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down.”

8. One day a big bad wolf was in the neighborhood. He was very hungry and loved to eat young pigs. The three little pigs saw the wolf and ran quickly into their houses.

9. The two little pigs ran to their brother’s house. This time the wolf was very angry. The three little pigs were very scared. The wolf didn’t say anything this time. He just huffed and puffed angrily but he couldn’t blow the house down.

b) Fill in the missing information:

Name of the story: ____________________________
Name of the characters: _________________________
The setting: _________________________________
The problem or conflict: _______________________
The solution to the problem: ___________________
The moral of the story (what the story tries to tell us): __________________________

c) Describe the following characters:

1. The first pig was ____________________________
   His house was ______________________________

2. The second pig was __________________________
   His house was ______________________________

3. The third pig was ____________________________
   His house was ______________________________

4. The wolf was _________________________________

Did you use adjectives to describe the characters? Yes / No. Circle the adjectives you used.


d) Answer the following questions:

1. How did the third little pig work? ____________

2. How did the first pig run after the wolf blew up his house? ______________

3. How did the wolf huff and puff when he tried to blow down the brick house? ______________

4. How did the wolf run out of the house? ________

Did you use adverbs to describe how these actions were done? Yes / No. Circle the adverbs you used.

e) Choose one of the following activities:

1. Interview one of the characters. Ask at least four questions and write the answers.

2. Write a different ending to the story.

3. Draw a scene from the story and describe it.
APPENDIX C
Assessment sheet

Names: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Maximum Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Draft</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Content</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Title</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Punctuation and capitalization</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Spelling</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Correct use of tenses</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sentence structure and vocabulary</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Individual/group classwork</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Story</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Corrections</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher’s Comments ____________________________

APPENDIX D
Your fairy tale

Written by: ____________________________

Everyone loves fairy tales and you’ve probably read many of them.

For this project you will write your own fairy tale. Then your class will publish a collection of fairy tales.

Write the names of fairy tales that you know.

Choose the fairy tale that you like best and explain your choice.

Characters
Fairy tale characters can be people or animals. They go on adventures, face dangers or have problems they need to solve.

Choose the characters that will be in your fairy tale. Give each character a name and describe what each character is like. Think about the relationship between the characters. Decide who your most important character is going to be.

Setting
The setting is where the story takes place. Fairy tales usually take place in a castle or in a magic forest. Where will your story take place? Choose the setting and describe it. Drawing a picture might help you imagine what looks like.

Some stories have more than one setting. Sometimes the characters go to another place. Make a list of other places in your story.

Problem
Sometimes the characters in a fairy tale have a problem to solve and sometimes they face terrible danger. Write about your characters’ problems or the dangers they face.

Magic
Magic is a big part of most fairy tales. Sometimes the magic creates problems and dangers, sometimes the magic helps solve the problems and overcome the dangers. Who will perform the magic in your story? What problem will it create or solve? How will the magic affect your characters?

Solution
Write how the problem was solved or how the dangers were overcome. Don’t forget that in fairy tales, the evil characters usually die and the good characters live happily ever after.

Moral
Some fairy tales want to teach us a lesson. If your fairy tale has a moral, write it here.

First Draft
You have already chosen the characters for your fairy tale; you have decided where the story is going to take place, what problem your characters will face and how they are going to solve it. You have also added some magic to your story. Now it is time to start writing. Remember that most fairy tales start with the words: “Once upon a time…” but you have to write the rest.