Finn MacCool and the Giant's Causeway

Written by John Dougherty and illustrated by Lee Cosgrove
Teaching notes written by Teresa Heapy and Charlotte Raby

Background to the story

- Traditional tales have been told for many years. They help to keep alive the richness of storytelling language and traditions from different cultures. These tales, many of which will be familiar to the children, are rich in patterned language and provide a springboard for their own storytelling and writing.

- This story is based on one of the Irish legends of Fionn mac Cumhail. He was said to have been a great Irish warrior who had many adventures.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Look at the cover of the book and read the title together. Ask the children if they have heard of the Giant's Causeway or the story of Finn MacCool. Ask: What do you think is going to happen in the story?

- Ask: Do you know where the Giant's Causeway is? How could it have been made? After reading the story, you could help the children to find out more from a library book or on the internet.

- Look at pages 2 to 3 together, and ask the children to read out lines which tell them about the characters of Finn MacCool and Angus. Then look at page 8, and read about Oona. Ask: What sort of characters are they? Who do you think is the most interesting?

- All the words in this story are decodable. However, we've listed some of the more challenging words on the inside front cover of the book, to help build familiarity with these before children read the story for themselves.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story. Remember to give them lots of encouragement and praise as they read.

- Look at page 7 and talk about how Finn is feeling. Ask: Have you ever felt worried like this about something?

- Pause at page 10 (the end of Chapter 1). Ask: What do you think is going to happen next? What will Oona do?

- On page 11, check the children understand the meaning of the word snarled. Can they think of another verb that could be used here? For example: growled, grumbled, snapped or roared.

Returning to the story

- Look at pages 12 to 13 and ask: What was Angus thinking? Why did he look worried when he saw Finn dressed as a baby?

- Ask the children to find words that use the /or/ and /ee/ phonemes, spelled in different ways. For example: all (page 2), roared (page 3), sea (page 3), baby (page 8) and heaved (page 15).

- Talk about how Oona and Finn tricked Angus. Ask: What do you think Angus would say about Finn to other people or giants when he got back to Scotland?
**Storytelling**
- Show the class the video of the storyteller performing the story on www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/tradtales.
- Talk about how the storyteller uses rich and imaginative language to describe characters and events in the story.
- Ask the children to think about how the storyteller uses his voice to add expression by varying his tone and the rhythm of the story. Discuss how the storyteller uses facial expressions to show emotions.
- Ask the class to discuss what they particularly enjoyed about the storyteller version of the story.
- Have a look at the storytellers’ notes for more information about the storytelling techniques used in the video.

**Drama**
- In the story, Finn and Angus boast to each other. Remind the children of some of their boasts: *I am the greatest giant of all!, There is no one who can beat me!* Hold a class discussion about what the children think a giant could do to show they are the greatest giant of all.
- Ask the children to work in pairs taking the roles of the two giants roaring boasts to each other. Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible and to make their boasts specific, such as, ‘I can lift ten cars’. Tell the children to put expression into their boasts and mime them where possible. Ask each pair to agree on their favourite boast and to share it with the class.

**Writing**
- Ask the children to work in groups and discuss how Oona and Finn tricked Angus. You may want to provide children with copies of the story map available on www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/tradtales as a prompt. Ask them to work together to think of another trick Oona could have played to convince Angus that Finn was the greatest giant of all.
- Once each group has thought of a new trick, ask the children to work individually to write a new part of the story describing their trick. Encourage the children to think about the different characters in the story and to remember how the storyteller told the story, using rich and interesting language.
- Ask each child to read their new part of the story to the class. Encourage them to think about the storyteller’s performance and to read with expression.

**Links to the wider curriculum**

**Mathematics and ICT**
- The columns of basalt that form the Giant’s Causeway are mainly hexagonal in shape. Explore tessellation using 2D and natural shapes.

**Geography**
- Locate the Giant’s Causeway using maps, Google Earth or other internet sources.

**Art and design**
- Use pictures of the Giant’s Causeway as inspiration for block printing to create the distinctive stone shapes and ink washes for the sea.

**PSHE and Citizenship**
- Hold a class discussion on boasting. Talk about the importance of self-esteem, but not showing off.

For more ideas on how to use this book in the classroom use the *Traditional Tales Handbook.*
Twelve Dancing Princesses

Written by Geraldine McCaughrean and illustrated by Bee Willey
Teaching notes written by Pam Dowson

Background to the story

- Traditional tales have been told for many years. They help to keep alive the richness of storytelling language and traditions from different cultures. These tales, many of which will be familiar to the children, are rich in patterned language and provide a springboard for their own storytelling and writing.
- This story is based on a German fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm about two hundred years ago. In this rags-to-riches story the hero must use his intelligence to gain his reward. It is a sequential tale, as each night the twelve princesses take the secret passage to a magical castle to dance the night away.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Ask the children if they know the story. Ask: Do you know any other stories about princesses? Are they usually good or bad characters?
- Ask: What other characters might you expect to find in a story about princesses? For example, kings, queens, knights, princes, witches.
- Look at the cover of the book and read the title together. Ask: What do you think might happen in this story?
- Read pages 2 to 3 together. Ask: Does the old lady remind you of any characters you have met in other traditional tales? What do you think she might do in this story?
- All the words in this story are decodable. However, we’ve listed some of the more challenging words on the inside front cover of the book, to help build familiarity with these before children read the story for themselves.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story. Remember to give them lots of encouragement and praise as they read.
- Check that the children understand the meaning of the word determined on page 9. Ask: Have you ever been determined to do something?
- On page 18, ask the children to read aloud the phrase He gobbled down the turkey. Ask: Why has the author chosen the word gobble here? Help them to see the two meanings, i.e. the sound a turkey makes and a way of eating quickly.

Returning to the story

- Ask the children to explain how the magic cloak helped Tramper. Ask: How do you think Tramper felt when he found out why the princesses wore holes in their slippers? Why do you think Tramper waited until the third night to tell the King the answer to the mystery?
- Tell the children that there are several different spellings of the /oa/ phoneme in this book. Ask them to find examples, such as road, holes (page 2), cold (page 3), followed (page 20).
- Ask the children to think of interesting words to describe the characters, e.g. Tramper might be confident, clever or poor; the princesses might be kind or beautiful; the elves might be sneaky or mischievous.
Storytelling and Drama

- Ask the children to think about the main events of the story and how Tramper solved the mystery of the princesses’ slippers. You may want to give the children copies of the storymap available on www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/tradtales to refer to.
- Ask the children to work in pairs taking the roles of the Tramper and the King. Show the children pages 28 to 31 of the book and ask them to imagine that they are having the conversation that is shown. Tramper must tell the King what has happened, what he has discovered about how the princesses wear holes in their slippers and how he managed to solve the mystery. The King does not believe Tramper at first. Tell the children they need to think about what Tramper would say, how the King might react and how Tramper could convince him he is telling the truth.
- Ask the children to work in their pairs to role-play the situation.

Writing

- Look again at Chapter 4 ‘The magical wardrobe’. Ask the children to imagine what might have happened next in the story if Tramper had not been able to find his way back through the wardrobe into the castle. Briefly list the children’s ideas.
- Model writing an alternative, such as ‘Tramper ran ahead of the princesses back to the castle, but to his alarm he could not find the path.’ As a whole-class activity work together to write the next two or three sentences for the alternative part of the story.
- Ask the children to choose their own alternative to what might have happened and write the new episode in the story independently. Encourage them to think of how Tramper would feel and react, as well as what events might happen.
- If appropriate, ask the children to read their new sections of the story to the class.

Links to the wider curriculum

Science
- Investigate properties of shoes. Test for stability on various surfaces or how waterproof shoes are. Make a graph of the results.
- Find out about different types of shoes made for different purposes, e.g. football boots, ballet shoes. In what ways do they differ?

History
- Find out about some real princesses, using books or the internet.

Art and design
- Design some silk slippers for the princesses. Choose one design to create as a collage.

ICT
- Make a poster for the palace notice about solving the mystery of the worn slippers.

Music
- Compose some dancing music and create a dance to go with it.

For more ideas on how to use this book in the classroom use the Traditional Tales Handbook.
Stage 8

The Tale of Little Red Riding Hood

Written by Tony Bradman and illustrated by Sole Otero
Teaching notes written by Pam Dowson

Background to the story

- Traditional tales have been told for many years. They help to keep alive the richness of storytelling language and traditions from different cultures. These tales, many of which will be familiar to the children, are rich in patterned language and provide a springboard for their own storytelling and writing.
- This very old tale has many versions. In every society, adults tell children stories to teach them about life. This story serves as a warning, to be careful who you trust and not to talk to strangers. It is a journey story of good versus evil and of cleverness overcoming danger.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Ask the children if they know any of the characters in the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Which would they say were good and which bad?
- Look at the cover of the book and read the title together. Ask: What do you think might happen in this story?
- Do they know where the story is set? Are there any clues on the cover?
- Read pages 2 and 3 together. Ask: Does this sound like the Little Red Riding Hood you know? What are the differences?
- All the words in this story are decodable. However, we’ve listed some of the more challenging words on the inside front cover of the book, to help build familiarity with these before children read the story for themselves.

Reading the story

- Ask the children to read the story. Remember to give them lots of encouragement and praise as they read.
- Look at page 7. Notice the repeated $s$ grapheme in YESSSS! Ask the children to think about how they might pronounce this word. Encourage them to look at the illustration to show how Little Red Riding Hood feels here and how this would affect how she speaks. Ask them to read this sentence out loud, with appropriate emphasis. Ask: Do you think the text and illustration on this page help make the story feel more modern?
- Check that the children understand the meaning of the word nestling (page 22).

Returning to the story

- Look at pages 18 and 19 and ask: How do you think Little Red Riding Hood felt at this point in the story? What was she thinking?
- Ask: What modern additions have you noticed in this version of the story? Encourage them to think about the mobile phone, the picture of the Big Bad Wolf on a website, the woodcutter’s truck and the newspaper headline. Ask: How do the modern aspects of the story help Little Red Riding Hood escape from the Big Bad Wolf?
- Ask the children to find the grapheme $ph$ as they read, for example phone (page 5) and Phew (page 13). Discuss that in these words the $ph$ grapheme is an alternative spelling for /f/.
Storytelling and Drama

• Help the children to identify which characters speak in the story. Establish that they are Little Red Riding Hood, her mother and the Big Bad Wolf. Together, find examples of where each character is speaking and ask the children to discuss how they think each character would speak and how they would sound. For example, Little Red Riding Hood’s mother would sound worried and unsure, Little Red Riding Hood would sound happy and confident. Talk about how characters feelings will change throughout the story, and how to reflect this in the way they speak.

• Tell the children to work in groups of four. Provide them with copies of the story map available on www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/tradtales to retell the story. Three children should act as the characters of Little Red Riding Hood, her mother and the Big Bad Wolf and one child as the narrator, joining the dialogue together.

Writing

• Look together at page 21, where Little Red Riding Hood imagines a newspaper report of herself being eaten by the Big Bad Wolf. Draw attention to the snappy headline. If you have discussed newspaper reports previously as a class, recap the main features. Alternatively, you may want to provide examples of newspaper stories for the children to look at and discuss the common features or look at online news websites.

• Read the opening sentence Little Red Riding Hood imagines on page 21, “Once upon a time,” they’d say, “Little Red Riding Hood went to see her Granny, bumped into the Big Bad Wolf, and didn’t live happily ever after.” Work together to construct a sentence to follow this summary of events in the newspaper report, going back to the beginning of the story, e.g. ‘Little did Little Red Riding Hood know when she left home that fateful morning what lay in store for her.’

• The children should now work independently or in pairs to write the rest of the report. Encourage them to include quotes from interviews, with Granny and the woodcutter. Encourage the children to think about the style of their newspaper reports; sentences can be concise, they should include information about events and use exciting descriptive words.

• When the children have completed their newspaper reports, encourage them to illustrate them. Create a class display or a class newspaper featuring the reports.

Links to the wider curriculum

Geography/Mathematics
• Create a map showing how to get from Little Red Riding Hood’s house to Granny’s cottage. If appropriate, encourage children to draw the map to scale.

Art and design
• Make a simple card cut-out wolf character. Draw, colour and cut out a granny disguise outfit, with tabs, to fit on to the wolf.

Music
• Listen to Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf. Each character in the story is represented by a particular instrument. Can the children identify the wolf?

PSHE and Citizenship
• Discuss talking to strangers. Talk about people that the children could talk to if they were worried.

For more ideas on how to use this book in the classroom use the Traditional Tales Handbook.
Background to the story

- Traditional tales have been told for many years. They help to keep alive the richness of storytelling language and traditions from different cultures. These tales, many of which will be familiar to the children, are rich in patterned language and provide a springboard for their own storytelling and writing.
- Anansi is a well-known character in African, particularly Ghanaian, and Caribbean tales. He is a cunning trickster who is sometimes a spider but sometimes becomes a man. In many tales, he uses his tricks to outwit animals.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the story

- Ask the children if they have heard of Anansi. Do they know how he is linked with storytelling?
- Ask the children if they know any of the Anansi stories. After reading this story, you could help the children to discover more Anansi tales in books or on the internet.
- Look at the cover of the book and read the title together. Ask: What do you think might happen in the story?
- Read pages 2 to 3. Ask the children to read out parts of the text that tell us about Anansi’s character. How do they feel about him?
- All the words in this story are decodable. However, we’ve listed some of the more challenging words on the inside front cover of the book, to help build familiarity with these before children read the story for themselves.
Returning to the story

- Ask: What did Anansi have to do to become the King of Stories?
- Anansi says that he will use his skill, his wit and his cleverness to catch the Hornets, Snake and Leopard. Do the children agree that Anansi is skilful, witty and clever? Can they give examples of where he shows this?
- Ask: How do you think the other animals felt about Anansi being the new King of Stories?

Storytelling and Drama

- Tell the children that when Anansi became the King of Stories the first story he told was about how he got his stories. Provide the children with copies of the story map available on www.oxfordprimary.co.uk/tradtales as prompts for the key points in the story. Ask the children to work in small groups to retell the story as Anansi. Talk about the character of Anansi, encouraging them to think whether he would boast about how he got his stories and how he would tell people about how clever he had been.
- In groups the children should then take it in turns to tell a part of the story; they may want to change storyteller after each event shown on the story map. Ask them to help each other to use interesting words in their storytelling and encourage them to use their facial expressions and change their tone to show emotions.

Writing

- Read pages 6 to 9, and talk briefly about what Anansi did to capture the Hornets. Ask the children to imagine the incident from the Hornets’ point of view. Ask: What did they see and hear? What did they think and feel?
- Model writing a paragraph in the first person, as a Hornet describing what happened. Remind the children to give their writing a strong opening and to use a range of connectives, e.g. ‘When the rain first started to patter onto our nest …’
- As a class, tell the story from the Hornets’ point of view.
- Ask the children to work independently and choose to write in role as either Leopard or Snake, explaining and describing how Anansi captured them. Encourage them to say what they were thinking and how they felt. When they have completed their descriptions, ask them to share them with the rest of the class.

Links to the wider curriculum

Mathematics
- Measure the dimensions of various objects, as Anansi did when measuring Snake.

Geography
- Find the locations and more information about Ghana and the Caribbean.

Art and design
- Make papier-mâché spiders and display them on woollen webs.

ICT
- Create repeated patterns based on traditional Ghanaian Kente cloth designs.

Music
- Listen to Afro-Carribbean music. Create a soundtrack for the events in the story.

PSHE and Citizenship
- Talk about using tricks to get your own way. Discuss whether this is this fair.

For more ideas on how to use this book in the classroom use the Traditional Tales Handbook.