

# Book Links

UNPACKING A STANDARD:  
FOLKTALES, FAIRY TALES, AND THE  
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS  
BY JULIE GREEN

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Fairy tales and folktales are wonderful ways to look at classic stories from all around the globe, and they are also terrific opportunities to explore the Common Core State Standards by looking at the texts' strong themes, characters, and settings. Below are suggested titles, from picture books to novels, to help implement standards R.L.1.3 through R.L.6.3, which ask students to be able to describe characters, setting, plot, and the details of stories. With so many excellent new editions of classic and fractured tales, teachers will find plenty to choose from. For more about the Common Core State Standards, visit [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

## **RL.1.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.**

**Clever Jack Takes the Cake.** By Candace Fleming. Illus. by G. Brian Karas. 2010. 32p. Random/Schwartz & Wade, \$17.99 (9780375849794). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this original fairy tale, Jack bakes a special cake for a princess' birthday. Unfortunately, on his way to deliver his present, he encounters a cast of characters and situations that leave him with nothing but a story by the time he gets to the party. As teachers read the story, students can listen and draw a corresponding picture that shows a map of Jack's journey and what happened to the cake along the way. Students can then draw a curved line in sequential order from the first event to the last so that by the end of the story, they will have a circle. After their map is finished, they can share it with a partner, retelling the events of the story.

**Fairly Fairy Tales.** By Esme Raji Codell. Illus. by Elisa Chavarri. 2011. 32p. Aladdin, \$16.99 (9781416990864). PreS–Gr. 2.

This fractured fairy tale begins with a little boy who wants a bedtime story. Each double-page spread introduces three elements of a familiar story and one out of the ordinary. "Sticks? Yes. Straw? Yes. Bricks? Yes. Solar panels? Noooo!" But turn the page, and the words "Well, maybe" accompany an imagined scene from "Three Little Pigs," which incorporates the solar panels. This format continues throughout the book, each

with a different tale. Discuss with students how changing one small part of a story can create many new ideas. Students can carefully look at each of the "Well, maybe" pages and point out all of the details in the pictures that seem to differ from the original tale. Either orally or on paper, have students "rewrite" the familiar fairy tales, keeping in mind that their stories will conclude with the events depicted on the "Well, maybe" pages.

**Yummy: Eight Favorite Fairy Tales.** By Lucy Cousins. Illus. by the author. 2009. 128p. Candlewick, \$18.99 (9780763644741). 398.2. PreS–Gr. 3.

This winning title retells eight classic fairy tales with colorful and dramatic illustrations. The spare scenes consist almost entirely of the characters, set against plain backgrounds. After reading the stories aloud, assign small groups of students to each of the eight stories in the book. Students can reread the stories and ask themselves where these stories take place. First, students can make a list of the words that help describe the setting. For example, with "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," their list might consist of: hillside, grass, river, green, and so on. Students can then work together to use this list and illustrate the settings in which they envision the characters in the book.

## **RL.4.3. Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).**

**Mirror Mirror: A Book of Reversible Verse.** By Marilyn Singer. Illus. by Josee Masse. 2010. 32p. Dutton, \$16.99 (9780525479017). 811. Gr. 2–5.

Each spread in this fun compilation features two rhyming poems, each from a different fairy-tale character's point of view. For Little Red Riding Hood's story, for example, one rhyme is written from Red's point of view, and the other is from the wolf's. Pairs of students can choose a fairy tale and read it together, selecting the parts of the text that would help them determine the characters' moods. While one student reads one point of view, the other student can act out the story's action before the students switch roles.

**The Orphan: A Cinderella Story from Greece.** By Anthony L. Manna and Soula Mitakidou. Illus. by Giselle Potter. 2011. 40p. Random/Schwartz & Wade, \$16.99 (9780375866913). 398.2. Gr. 1–4.

In this Cinderella story with a twist, an orphan's fairy godmother is actually her deceased mother. Read this title aloud to students, look carefully at the fairy godmother's actions, and discuss how her motivations and behavior might be different from the fairy godmothers in other Cinderella tales. Have students think of different people the fairy godmother

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could be, besides a mother, and how that might change how the orphan behaves in the story. What if the fairy godmother were a child? What if she were a beloved pet? What if the godparent were male?

**Seven Fathers.** By Ashley Ramsden. Illus. by Ed Young. 2011. 32p. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter, \$16.99 (9781596435445). K–Gr. 3.

In this story, a traveler looking for a place to sleep for the night arrives at a house, where he is greeted by a man who directs the traveler to his father. This process of referral continues throughout the whole story, and every time the traveler asks if he can sleep there tonight, he is directed to the father, and then the father's father, and so on until he is finally rewarded with a feast and a good night's sleep. While the story is simple, the themes are not. As you read the story, ask the students to think about how they would react if they were tired and hungry and kept being sent to talk to someone else. At the end of the story, discuss with the students why they think the traveler in the story ended up with such a feast. What was it about his behavior or what did he prove about himself that helped him earn a delicious meal and rest?

**RL.6.3. Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.**

**The Arabian Nights.** By Wafa' Tarnowska. Illus. by Carole Henaff. 2010. 128p. Barefoot, \$24.99 (9781846861222). Gr. 4–8. 398.2.

This enchanting book is actually a series of stories within a story. In an attempt to stop one man's reign of terror on their city, a courageous woman decides to marry him. In order to persuade him to stop his evil deeds, she begins to tell him the tales of the Arabian Nights. By the end of the book, after hearing all of the stories, the man has changed his outlook on life. While reading the stories with students, record the character traits demonstrated by the people in the stories. At the end of the entire book, revisit the lists. Students can use the lists to make arguments for why the man from the beginning of the story had a change of heart about people and life by the end of the tale.

**Where the Mountain Meets the Moon.** By Grace Lin. Illus. by the author. 2009. 288p. Little, Brown, \$16.99 (9780316114271). Gr. 3–6.

In this magnificent adventure, a Newbery Honor Book, Minli, whose name means "quick thinking," is on a quest to find the Old Man of the Moon, who, it is told, may impart the true secret to good fortune and help her reverse a curse on her family's land. Even though she has her own mission, Minli is never too busy to help others along her journey. Students can pretend that they are the judges who will determine if

Minli's question will be answered by the Old Man of the Moon or not. After reading the story, have students write a letter to the Old Man of the Moon to convince him that Minli is an exemplary person whose questions are worthy of answering. In their letters, students can include which of Minli's specific deeds or characteristics would deem that to be true.

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