

## Never-Ending Stories: A Teaching Unit for English Language Learners

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### 0. Background

#### *A. Description of the Program*

This teaching unit is prepared for an intermediate ESL class in an elementary school in Honolulu, Hawaii. The program's goal is to support students with skills that will help them in their mainstream classes and to increase their competence in English to interact with native speakers. Upon successful completion of this program, students will move, full time, into mainstream classes.

#### *B. Description of the Students*

The students are in 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and their English proficiency level is high-intermediate. For the most part, students have immigrated to the United States with their families and they have been living in Hawaii for at least a year. Students' ethnic backgrounds vary (e.g., Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, Brazilian). Since they are also in the mainstream class and are interacting with native speakers, they have higher listening/speaking skills than reading/writing skills. They need to develop literacy in English as a second language and

to learn to work effectively in groups using both written and spoken language. The students are motivated in learning English since they want to join the mainstream classes as native English speaking students do.

#### *C. Description of the Course*

The goals of the course are to increase the students' reading comprehension skills, creative thinking, and story writing. Each class session is 60 minutes, and the class meets three times a week. Since the ESL class is an extra, after-school class. The atmosphere of the class is informal, and the teacher tries to encourage active participation.

#### *D. Recent Work*

Before this unit begins, the students have learned about the structure of a fictional story and the vocabulary to describe parts of a story. They have read some short stories and have written short stories using pictures.

### Lesson 1

#### **I. Getting ready to teach the lesson**

##### *A. General topic of lesson*

Fairy Tales and Follow-up stories

##### *B. Goals*

General unit goal: Students will be able to understand short stories and create their own stories as sequels to the existing stories.

Goal of this lesson: Understanding fairy tales and brainstorming for follow-up stories.

##### *C. Student learning outcomes for this lesson*

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. comprehend fairy tales
2. brainstorm ideas to invent stories

*D. Vocabulary and other key language to be taught in this lesson*

Vocabulary related to the description of a fictional story, simple and casual expressions often associated with fairy tales.

*E. Materials*

Fairy tales: *The princess and the pea* (Appendix A), *The little match-seller* (Appendix B), *Rumpelstiltskin* (Appendix C), *The Emperor's new suit* (Appendix D); four English monolingual dictionaries; Handouts: Question sheet for comprehending the story and thinking about follow-up story (Appendix E), Instruction for writing a follow-up story (Appendix F).

**II. Teaching the lesson***Activity 1: Warm-up (10 minutes)*

1. T asks Ss if they know what a fairy tale is.
2. T asks Ss about their favorite fairy tales.
3. T asks Ss if they have ever thought about what happened after these stories.
4. T reminds Ss what they learned from the last lesson (elements of a story: setting, plot, climax, characters, etc.)
5. T introduces the topic of the lesson: Fairy Tales and Follow-up Stories

*Activity 2: Introducing the fairy tales (10 minutes)*

1. T arranges Ss in groups (4 groups and 4 members in each group)
2. T introduces each fairy tale briefly.
3. Ss in groups will pick one of the stories for their group to work on.

*Activity 3: Reading and comprehending the stories (15-20 minutes)*

1. Ss read their selected story loudly in turns in their groups
2. T gives a dictionary to each group when they finish reading the story one time.
3. Ss look up the words they do not know.
4. Ss discuss the stories to answer the comprehension questions given to them on a handout (Appendix E).
5. T walks around in the class and sees if there is any need from each group.
6. T discusses the answers to the questions altogether as a class. Ss can ask if there is any part they do not understand.

*Activity 4: Introducing the idea of follow-up stories (10 minutes)*

1. Ss are given instructions for creating a follow-up story on the same handout as above (Appendix E).
2. T explains each guideline and makes sure students understand them.

*Activity 5: Discussing the follow-up story in groups (10 minutes)*

1. Ss answer the questions on the handout.
2. Ss discuss in groups their ideas for a follow-up story.

*Homework assignment:*

Ss free-write a follow-up story and bring it to the next class.

## Lesson 2

### I. Getting ready to teach the lesson

#### A. General topic of lesson

Thinking/writing about a follow-up story.

#### B. Goals

1. General unit goal: Students will be able to understand short stories and make their own stories as sequels to the existing stories.
2. Goal of this lesson: Practice creative writing with group members to extend a given story.

#### C. Student learning outcomes for this lesson

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. tell their own follow-up stories to their group
2. share their stories in groups to create one complete follow-up story to a given fairy tale

#### D. Vocabulary and other key languages to be taught in this lesson

Vocabulary related to the description of a fictional story, simple and casual expressions often associated with fairy tales. Vocabulary related to time sequence (*e.g., then, once, later, in the meantime, now, the next day, etc.*)

#### E. Materials

Students' own follow-up stories (homework from Lesson 1)

### II. Teaching the lesson

#### Activity 1: Warm-up (5-10 minutes)

1. T asks Ss if they enjoyed reading the fairy tales in the last class and creating follow-up stories.
2. T asks Ss if there was any difficulty when they came up with a follow-up story.
3. T asks Ss how long it took to write about follow-up story.
4. T briefly reviews the fairy tales that the class read in Lesson 1.
5. T asks students to get back to their groups (same as in Lesson 1).

#### Activity 2: Making the first draft of the follow-up story in groups. (30 minutes)

1. Ss in groups take turns to read aloud their individual follow-up stories.
2. Ss discuss each others' follow-up stories.

Ss in groups combine the stories to make a complete story.

Ss can come up with more than one follow-up story if they do not want to combine their ideas to one follow-up story.

#### Activity 3: Presentation of the extended stories (the original fairy tale and the follow-up story). (20 minutes)

1. A representative from each group stands up and reads the group's fairy tale (from Lesson 1) and the first draft of the follow-up story.
2. Other Ss ask question about the follow-up stories.

#### Homework assignment:

Ss will think about how they can make their group's follow-up story more fun and well-made. Each student has to bring one suggestion for their group writing in the next class.

### Lesson 3

#### I. Getting ready to teach the lesson

##### A. General topic of lesson

Peer review of follow-up stories

##### B. Goals

1. General unit goal: Students will be able to understand stories and make their own stories as sequels to the existing stories.
2. Goal of this lesson: Presenting the final version of the extended stories and practicing peer review.

##### C. Students learning outcomes for this lesson

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. present their groups' complete extended stories in the class
2. comment on other groups' stories.
3. revise the stories based on others' comments

##### D. Vocabulary and other key language to be taught in this lesson.

Vocabulary related to making comments (*e.g., suggest, recommend, etc.*)

##### E. Materials

Peer review sheet (Appendix G)

#### II. Teaching the lesson

##### Activity 1: Warm-up (5-10 minutes)

1. T asks Ss what the most difficult part was in writing the follow-up story.
2. T asks Ss if they enjoyed the group work on creative writing.
3. T asks Ss if they are satisfied with their group's follow-up stories.
4. T asks Ss to get back to their groups (same as in Lessons 1 and 2).

##### Activity 2: Working on the final version of the extended stories (15 minutes)

1. Ss share their suggestions to make their group's follow-up story more interesting.
2. Ss work together to improve the final version of their extended story.

##### Activity 3: Presentation of the complete extended stories (20 minutes)

1. T asks Ss to take notes when they listen to other groups' presentation
2. Ss in groups come to the front of the class, and read aloud their complete stories

##### Activity 4: Discussing other groups' stories and making comment. (15 minutes)

1. T hands out the peer review sheet (Appendix G).
2. Ss in groups discuss other groups' extended stories and make comments using the peer review sheet.

**Homework assignment:** Ss will tell the original story and new follow-up story to their family and bring their parents' signature to next class.

## Appendix A

*The princess and the pea\**

Once upon a time there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess; but she would have to be a real princess. He traveled all over the world to find one, but nowhere could he get what he wanted. There were princesses enough, but it was difficult to find out whether they were real ones. There was always something about them that was not as it should be. So he came home again and was sad, for he would have liked very much to have a real princess.

One evening a terrible storm came on; there was thunder and lightning, and the rain poured down in torrents. Suddenly a knocking was heard at the city gate, and the old king went to open it.

It was a princess standing out there in front of the gate. But, good gracious! what a sight the rain and the wind had made her look. The water ran down from her hair and clothes; it ran down into the toes of her shoes and out again at the heels. And yet she said that she was a real princess.

Well, we'll soon find that out, thought the old queen. But she said nothing, went into the bed-room, took all the bedding off the bedstead, and laid a pea on the bottom; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them on the pea, and then twenty eider-down beds on top of the mattresses.

Retrieved March 19, 2007 from <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/PriPea.shtml>

\*Editor's Note: In the original design of this unit, the folktales were at a more comprehensible level of difficulty. The versions that appear here are used to make the lessons clear. It is understood that individual teachers will select story versions appropriate to the level of their students.

## Appendix B

*The little match-seller\**

It was terribly cold and nearly dark on the last evening of the old year, and the snow was falling fast. In the cold and the darkness, a poor little girl, with bare head and naked feet, roamed through the streets. It is true she had on a pair of slippers when she left home, but they were not of much use. They were very large, so large, indeed, that they had belonged to her mother, and the poor little creature had lost them in running across the street to avoid two carriages that were rolling along at a terrible rate. One of the slippers she could not find, and a boy seized upon the other and ran away with it, saying that he could use it as a cradle, when he had children of his own. So the little girl went on with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold.

In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and had a bundle of them in her hands. No one had bought anything of her the whole day, nor had any one given her even a penny. Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along; poor little child, she looked the picture of misery. The snowflakes

fell on her long, fair hair, which hung in curls on her shoulders, but she regarded them not.

Lights were shining from every window, and there was a savory smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve - yes, she remembered that. In a corner, between two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sank down and huddled herself together. She had drawn her little feet under her, but she could not keep off the cold; and she dared not go home, for she had sold no matches, and could not take home even a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat her; besides, it was almost as cold at home as here, for they had only the roof to cover them, through which the wind howled, although the largest holes had been stopped up with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost frozen with the cold. Ah! Perhaps a burning match might be some good, if she could draw it from the bundle and strike it against the wall, just to warm her fingers.

Retrieved March 19, 2007 from: <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LitMat.shtml>

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## Appendix C

*Rumpelstiltskin\**

Once there was a miller who was poor, but who had a beautiful daughter. Now it happened that he had to go and speak to the king, and in order to make himself appear important he said to him, "I have a daughter who can spin straw into gold."

The king said to the miller, "That is an art which pleases me well, if your daughter is as clever as you say, bring her tomorrow to my palace, and I will put her to the test."

And when the girl was brought to him he took her into a room which was quite full of straw, gave her a spinning-wheel and a reel, and said, "Now set to work, and if by to-morrow morning early you have not spun this straw into gold during the night, you must die."

Thereupon he himself locked up the room, and left her in it alone. So there sat the poor miller's daughter, and for the life of her could not tell what to do, she had no idea how straw could be spun into gold, and she grew more and more frightened, until at last she began to weep.

But all at once the door opened, and in came a little man, and said, "Good

evening, mistress miller, why are you crying so?"

"Alas," answered the girl, "I have to spin straw into gold, and I do not know how to do it."

"What will you give me," said the manikin, "if I do it for you?"

"My necklace," said the girl.

The little man took the necklace, seated himself in front of the wheel, and whirr, whirr, whirr, three turns, and the reel was full, then he put another on, and whirr, whirr, whirr, three times round, and the second was full too. And so it went on until the morning, when all the straw was spun, and all the reels were full of gold.

By daybreak the king was already there, and when he saw the gold he was astonished and delighted, but his heart became only more greedy. He had the miller's daughter taken into another room full of straw, which was much larger, and commanded her to spin that also in one night if she valued her life. The girl knew not how to help herself, and was crying, when the door opened again, and the little man appeared, and said, "What will you give me if I spin that straw into gold for you?"

Retrieved March 19, 2007 from: <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/Rum.shtml>

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## Appendix D

*The Emperor's new suit\**

Many, many years ago lived an emperor, who thought so much of new clothes that he spent all his money in order to obtain them; his only ambition was to be always well dressed. He did not care for his soldiers, and the theatre did not amuse him; the only thing, in fact, he thought anything of was to drive out and show a new suit of clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day; and as one would say of a king, "He is in his cabinet," so one could say of him, "The emperor is in his dressing-room."

The great city where he resided was very gay; every day many strangers from all parts of the globe arrived. One day two swindlers came to this city; they made people believe that they were weavers, and declared they could manufacture the finest cloth to be imagined. Their colours and patterns, they said, were not only exceptionally beautiful, but the clothes made of their material possessed the wonderful quality of being invisible to any man who was unfit for his office or unpardonably stupid.

"That must be wonderful cloth," thought the emperor. "If I were to be

dressed in a suit made of this cloth I should be able to find out which men in my empire were unfit for their places, and I could distinguish the clever from the stupid. I must have this cloth woven for me without delay."

And he gave a large sum of money to the swindlers, in advance, that they should set to work without any loss of time. They set up two looms, and pretended to be very hard at work, but they did nothing whatever on the looms. They asked for the finest silk and the most precious gold-cloth; all they got they did away with, and worked at the empty looms till late at night.

"I should very much like to know how they are getting on with the cloth," thought the emperor. But he felt rather uneasy when he remembered that he who was not fit for his office could not see it. Personally, he was of opinion that he had nothing to fear, yet he thought it advisable to send somebody else first to see how matters stood. Everybody in the town knew what a remarkable quality the stuff possessed, and all were anxious to see how bad or stupid their neighbors were.

Retrieved March 19, 2007 from: <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/EmpNew.shtml>

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## Appendix E

### **\*Questions for the original story:**

1. Who are the main characters? Who is your favorite character and why?
2. What is the setting of the story?
3. What is the most interesting part of the story?
4. What is the climax (high light, most exciting part) in the story?
5. Is there any part that you want to change?



### **\*\*Thinking about a follow-up story\*\*** |



6. How did the story end?
7. Is there any thing that the story didn't tell you?
8. Is there any thing you want to know about what happened to the characters after the end of the story?
9. Can you imagine something that happened after the end of the story?

## Appendix F

### Instructions for writing the follow-up story:

1. Follow-up story has to be closely related to the original story so that it seems as one complete story.
2. You can make new characters in the follow-up story, but you also should not forget the original characters. Also, the main character will be the same.
3. The story has to have a climax, the most exciting part.
4. The whole flow of the story has to be natural.
5. Make it interesting as the original, make something happen in the new story.
6. Before writing, think about all the possible stories that you can think of.
7. The end of the story has to be look like the end.

### Some more tips

8. If it is still hard to think of the story, imagine yourself as one of the main characters in the story.
9. Think about other stories that you know. Think about what happens and how it ends.
10. Talk more with group members and think together. Share the ideas.

## Appendix G

### Peer Review Sheet

\*Give kind, helpful, and specific comments.

\*Make good suggestions about what and how to improve the story.

Reading Group #:

Writing group's #:

1. What is the best part of the story?
2. How is the story overall? What is your impression?
3. Is there any part that you don't understand or that is vague?
4. What part of the story would you like to change?
5. Do you have any recommendations for the story?
6. Is there anything you want to know about the character or story?
7. More comments:

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