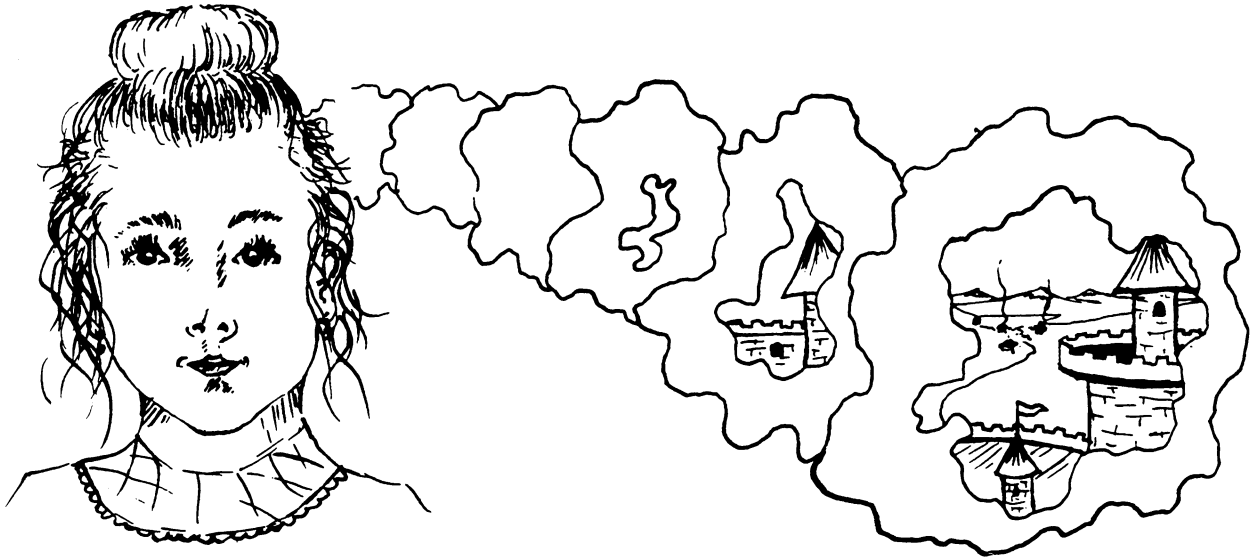


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Introduction

There was this witch who really wasn't very creative. I mean really! First, she fell for the bone-as-a-finger ploy Hansel perpetrated. Then, she made the fatal mistake of buying into Gretel's oven-testing ruse. A quick study of the situations leads one to believe she should have enrolled in Creative Problem Solving 101 at Grimm Uni.

Had there been such a course available to the witch, Rumpelstiltskin, Jack's Giant, and the Town Council of Hamelin, its goals might have read as follows:

- Students will:
- Generate many ideas of high quality
 - Seek a wide range of ideas and alternatives
 - Seek original ideas
 - Develop ideas thoroughly
 - Seek solutions to problems
 - Learn specific strategies for problem-solving

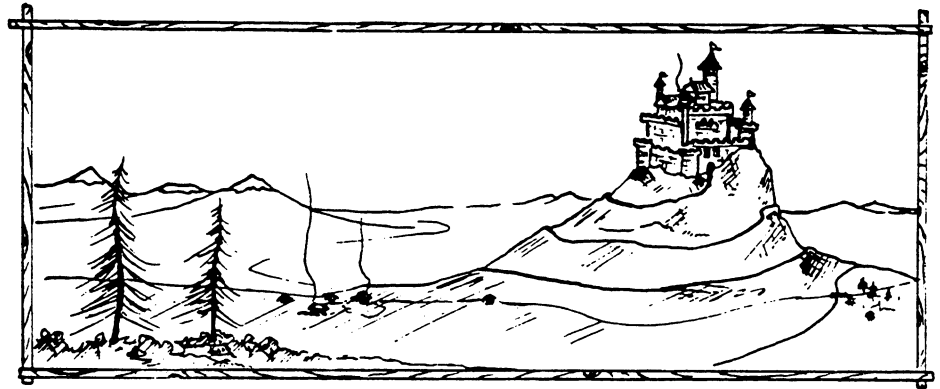
Fairytales offer a superb content base for developing creative productive thinking skills and creative problem-solving processes. First, there exists an almost universal knowledge of fairytales. Students do not have to engage in in-depth research in a new content area in order to participate in class activities. They are free to focus on the process skills to be learned. Further, most students are reasonably equal in their knowledge of fairytales; thus, no one student or group of students is particularly advantaged because of prior knowledge. Secondly, fairytales provide a “safe” content focus. Because students tend to connect fairytales with play, they feel freer to explore “wild ideas” associated with them more readily than they might greet the idea of “fooling around” with history for example. Fairytales are inventive by nature and fit nicely into the content-process matrix. Finally, fairytales provide a content base which is open to countless new, additional ideas and applications for creative teaching and learning. Scarcely a week passes without the appearance in the media or a new cartoon, satirical newspaper column or advertisement which alludes to fairytales. New, fresh interpretations suggest the universal appeal of fairytales and offer unlimited future resources and project ideas.

The ideas presented in this book are by no means intended to be viewed as all-inclusive. Because fairytales offer so many tantalising possibilities for the development and enhancement of creative thinking, creative teachers *and* their creative students will undoubtedly think of countless novel adaptations of these kernel ideas to spark interest in creative writing, creative dramatics, creative problem-solving and creative discussions.

The strategies presented in this book are particularly effective when utilised at the beginning of the school year. The aim is to teach basic process skills in the creative production of ideas and creative problem solving to students who can then transfer these skills to new situations and content as they progress through the school year. The strategies may, however, be equally well employed in a unit devoted to the exploration of fairytales, in a creative problem-solving course or in enrichment classes.

Classroom environment, of course, plays a critical role in fostering creative thinking among students. The emotional climate of the classroom is crucial. Laughter is heard frequently in classrooms where creative minds are at work. It is the music of joyous, shared experience. Words of praise, encouragement and acceptance also echo throughout classrooms where creativity flourishes. The physical environment is equally important. Creativity thrives in an atmosphere which is visually stimulating. Imaginative posters, display boards and interest centres serve not only to remind students to employ the process skills being taught, but also contribute significantly to a stimulating atmosphere conducive to creative thinking. Creativity is contagious. Enthusiasm for an original idea is as often communicated nonverbally as it is verbally. Students should see more than the backs of other students’ heads. Allow students to sit in a circle, facing one another, so the shared joy of creative moments may be fully communicated.

A final note. There may be the immediate assumption that fairytales and, specifically, the strategies in this book, are for children only. The frequent and skilful use creative writers, cartoonists and advertisers make of fairytales belies such a notion. Further, the author has too often witnessed the sheer delight and enthusiasm with which secondary school students and adults approach the writing and thinking exercises included in this book to believe that the magic of fairytales and the joy of using one’s mind creatively exist only in the “Once upon a time” phase of life known as childhood. Hopefully, readers will not place age restrictions on the ideas encountered here. It would be much preferable to utilise the strategies as creative stimuli for unlocking the sense of wonder and creative potential which is too often *only* associated with childhood.



In the Kingdom of Ideas

BRAINSTORMING

There is a kingdom where creativity reigns and criticism occupies a lowly position. In this kingdom, students learn early both the rules *and* spirit of brainstorming. The rules of brainstorming were set forth by that goodly knight, Osborn (1963). In the Kingdom of Ideas, the Province of Brainstorming, the rules are:

- Criticism is ruled out
- “Free-wheeling” is welcomed
- Quantity is wanted
- Combinations and improvements are sought

Students may quickly learn the *rules* of brainstorming, but may be less effective in internalising and employing these guidelines in the *spirit* intended. Students need frequent reminders, encouragement and practice in order to greatly increase the quantity and quality of ideas generated in brainstorming sessions. Many students will quickly adopt a mode of not censoring other students’ ideas, but will continue to place limits on their own creative potential through the use of self-criticism. They limit their own creativity, and ultimately their group’s creativity, if they withhold ideas they perceive to be “unworkable” or too “frivolous”.

Teachers need to stress the highly dynamic and interactive nature of the rules of brainstorming. Ruling out criticism of both others *and* self leads to an atmosphere in which good ideas grow and multiply. One person’s “wild” or “freewheeling” ideas sparks another person’s thinking which, if verbalised, ignites yet another person’s imagination. Thus, not only are more and more ideas brought forth, but unusual combinations and adaptations emerge.

A Princely Tip: Employ the talents of an artistically talented child in the classroom. Ask the student to make a poster high-lighting the rules of brainstorming—illustrated with fairytale characters—which can be prominently displayed in the classroom as a permanent reminder to students of the four essential guidelines.