

LESSON PLAN

Once Upon a Time

This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.



LEVEL: Grades 3 to 6

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts

Overview

In this lesson, students become aware of the idea of stereotyping and the role that stereotypes play in the stories and movies that they enjoy. They learn how media techniques can affect how we feel about a character and how that can contribute to stereotyping, and consider how stories may be different when told from different points of view.

Learning Outcomes

Know: Students will learn the following essential domain knowledge:

- Media representation: Visual and text techniques in media representations affect how we see characters and groups, which can result in *stereotyping*

Understand: Students will learn the following key concepts/big ideas:

- Media are constructions: Media makers make choices that influence the meaning we take from a text
- Media have social and political implications: Media influence how we see people and groups
- Audiences negotiate meaning: Different people can interpret the same text in different ways

Do: Students will *understand* how media makers' choices influence how we experience a work and *engage* with different media representations. In an optional activity, students *use* appropriate technology to create a media work that expresses their learning.

Preparation and Materials

Obtain a copy of *The True Story of The Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka from your school or public library, or prepare to show this video of Scieszka reading the book aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Q01X8JU3GU>. There is also an animated version of the book which you may show if you have access to it.

If you or your students are not familiar with the original fairy tale “The Three Little Pigs” you may wish to have a copy of it available.

Procedure

Start by asking students whether or not they know the fairy tale “The Three Little Pigs.”

If no students know it, tell them the story. If some or all students are familiar with it, have them collaborate to get down the key parts of the story:

- Three pigs each built a house for themselves.
- The first pig built a house made of straw. The second pig made a house made of wood. The third pig made a house made of brick.
- A wolf came to the first house and said “Little Pig, little Pig, let me in.” The pig answered, “Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin.” (Some students may know different versions of this refrain. Note that there are many different versions of the story.)
- The wolf took a deep breath and blew it at the pig’s house. Because it was made of straw the house blew away and the wolf ate the pig. (Some students may say the pig ran away to the next pig’s house. Again, note that there are many different versions.)
- The wolf then went to the second pig’s house and said “Little Pig, little Pig, let me in.” When the pig refused he blew again, and because the house was made of wood the wolf blew it down.
- The wolf then went to the third pig’s house and said “Little Pig, little Pig, let me in.” When the pig refused he blew again, but because the house was made of brick he could not blow it down.
- So the wolf tried to sneak in through the chimney. However the pig built a fire (or boiled a pot of water) that the wolf fell into. The wolf either died or ran away, depending on the version.

If it hasn’t come up yet, point out to students that there are many different versions of the story where some details are different (for instance, what happens to the wolf at the end) but the main events are the same.

Now read *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* to your class or show the filmed reading.

DISCUSS:

- How does this story make you feel?
- Who is telling this story?
- How is the wolf's story different from the one you know?
- Do you believe the wolf?

Particularly with younger children, it might be most effective to read or watch the book once, then introduce the above discussion questions, and then read or watch the story a second time before discussing them.

When students have shared their answers, ask:

- Think about how the story made you feel. What parts of the book make you feel that way?
- Look at how the wolf is drawn on page two and on pages six to seven (where he is baking the cake.) How does that make him more or less scary than in most versions of the story? (Glasses and a suit make him look less scary. Cooking is also something we don't associate with scary people.)
- Look at the picture on pages eight to nine (where he is walking to the first pig's house.) How does that make him seem more or less scary? (He is very small and we are looking down on him from above, which both make him seem less scary.)
- Do you think it's fair that the wolf was put in prison? Why or why not?

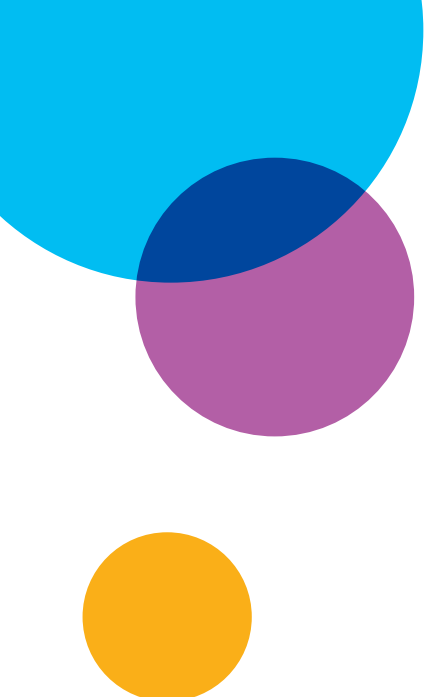
Remind students of the Wolf's words at the beginning of the book:

"Nobody know the real story because nobody has ever heard my side of the story." If this is the wolf's version of the story, whose version is the regular one? (The pigs'.)

Now ask:

What things are in the pigs' version of the story that were left out of the wolf's version? (The pigs building their houses; the pigs saying "Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin.")

What things are in the wolf's version of the story that were left out of the pigs' version? (The wolf wanting to bake a cake for his granny; the wolf asking for sugar; the wolf having a cold.)



Explain to students that this is an example of *bias*, which means including things, leaving things out, or saying things in a certain way to favor one side or another. The wolf is saying that the pigs' version of the story is *biased* against him.

Now ask: Do students agree with the wolf? Why or why not?

Highlight pages 26-27 (6 minutes and 15 seconds in the video) and point out that real reporters try hard not to be *biased* when they're writing news articles. If we were reporters covering this story, how could we find out which parts of each story are true? (Interview people who saw it happen; ask a doctor about the wolf's cold; look for the cup that the wolf wanted to put sugar in.)

Now ask: If this story was the only thing you knew about pigs and wolves, what would you think about them?

If the usual version was the only thing you knew about pigs and wolves, what would you think about them?

Divide the class into two groups. Tell one group that they are going to write from the Wolf's point of view and the other that they are writing from the pigs'. (You may want to divide the class into smaller groups. If so, have half of the groups write from each point of view.)

Have each group make a T-chart (or help younger students make one) with "Wolves" in one column and "Pigs" in the other:

"Wolves" and "Pigs" according to B.B. Wolf

"Pigs" and "Wolves" according to T.L.Pigs

Have the "Wolves" group write down everything they know about wolves and pigs from this version of the story (for example, wolves love their grannies) and have the "Pigs" group write what they know based on the regular version. They should be able to come up with five items about each animal.

When students have finished their lists, have them share with the class and compare. How similar and different were they?

TRUE STORIES

- Have your class fairy tales such as *Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Make sure that each story has at least two characters who are opposed to one another (Riding Hood and the Wolf; Cinderella and her stepmother; Jack and the giant, etc.) Encourage students to share fairy tales that they are familiar with, including ones that are not traditional European fairy tales.
- Work with the class to identify the different possible *points of view* in each story. Some may have just two possible points of view, while some may have more (for instance, in *Jack and the Beanstalk* the possible points of view are Jack, his mother, the person who sells him the magic beans, and the giant.) Use this as an opportunity to allow students to share fairy tale stories that not all their classmates may be familiar with.
- Divide the class into groups.
- Each group is to choose a story from those that the class has brainstormed.
- Each group is to act out the story that they have chosen from a different point of view. For example, they could perform *Cinderella* with Cinderella as a well-meaning, but somewhat flawed character and the wicked step-mother and step-sisters as victims. They could portray the giant in *Jack and the Beanstalk* as a nice guy minding his own business who is robbed by Jack, the juvenile delinquent.
- To ensure effective group work, assign each group member to one of five roles:
 - Facilitator/Timekeeper—keeps the group on track
 - Recorder—writes down (or, for younger students, summarizes out loud) what the group has done
 - Storyteller—lays out the parts of the original story so all of the group members know it
 - Advocate—takes the role of the point-of-view character in explaining their side of the story
 - Interviewer—asks the advocate questions to find out their side of the story
- Each group member should only be responsible for their role. Have students change roles at least twice during the work period so that each student gets to play both one of the creative and one of the organizational roles.

- Have students perform their versions of the story for the class. When each one has finished, ask the class whether they think this version or the original version of the story seems less biased and why.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Choose one or more of the groups' stories and have the class work together to make a picture-book or a video version of it to share with parents or other students.
- As a class, research wolves and compare your findings to how wolves are portrayed in fairy tales.