

Folk Tales

Some common characteristics of a Folk Tale are:

- They have no specific time frame but are considered to have happened in the distant past ("Once upon a time," "Long, long ago," etc.).
- Folk Tales have good and bad characters.
- The first characters are unsuccessful because they are foolish or unkind, while the final character is smart or loving and is successful.
- Everyday people and/or animals are the characters in Folk Tales.
- May involve magic of some kind—wishes are granted, magic objects are found, etc. (Folktales with magic are called "fairy tales.")
- Animals, plants, and sometimes even machines have many human characteristics, such as the ability to think and talk.
- Folktales often feature a monster or an evil character that the hero(es) must overcome.
- The good characters in Folk Tales have a problem to solve. The characters often use trickery to defeat the monster or complete a quest (task).
- Many things occur in threes (three main characters, three magic objects, three tasks to complete, and so on).
- Phrases are repeated in Folk Tales. For example, : "Mirror, mirror, on the wall...".
- The stories are short enough to be told aloud in one sitting, with the plot moving along at a fast pace.
- One or more of the characters usually learns a lesson.
- Folk Tales have happy endings.

Folktales

All cultures have stories that are shared. In many cases a story from one culture will be similar to the story of another culture. This is because people share a lot of the same experiences and move from place to place. These stories are known as folktales which are circulated orally among a people. Folktales are part of the larger category known as folklore which includes the traditional art, literature, knowledge, and practices of a culture that are shared usually through oral communication and example.

In folktales the characters are not well developed nor the location clearly described. What is more important to the story is that there is usually conflict between good and evil with good usually being rewarded and evil being punished. Often, the purpose of these stories is to teach a lesson or to describe characteristics of one's culture. The stories are also entertaining.

These stories can have different forms which are sometimes similar to one another. These can include:

- Fairy Tales: These entertaining stories, which reveal a lot about human nature, are about characters that have magical adventures. Animals in the stories can speak. They always end happily with the "underdog" usually triumphing or good overcoming evil. Wishes come true as a result of a test or struggle.
- Myths: These are stories that contain action and suspense and seek to explain the origins of life and elements of nature. They are usually about the gods and supernatural beings which existed before or shortly after humans first appeared on the earth.
- Legends/Epics: These usually refer to individuals, heroes or kings who lived in the period before written records. While they may be based in some ways on fact, they have been embellished over time.
- Tall Tales: These exaggerated cultural stories revolve around the pioneer spirit and a person who performs superhuman feats. While these can be based on real characters, they often deal with invented or exaggerated incidents and traits.
- Fables: These short, simple tales, which teach a lesson, have few characters (often animals). There is a moral which can be pulled from the simple story to represent a larger lesson in life.
- Religious Stories/Parables: These are religious stories that communicate values.

Elements Of Folktales to consider while reading & writing...

Characteristics

Folktales were the oral tradition of adults. Stories about peoples' lives and imaginations and as they struggled with their fears and anxieties in these tales around the campfire, they became better able to struggle with them in reality. While many of these tales weren't told specifically for children it is almost certain that they too would listen and enjoy as well as develop respect for certain elements described in the stories.

Themes

Usually universal truths, lessons, and values related to people, their actions, and/or material goods that is valued by the group that creates the folktale. These tales tell what happens to those who do not obey the groups traditions.

1. Reflect basic values and concerns of different cultures
2. Good and evil
3. Right and wrong
4. Age vs. youth
5. Justice and injustice
6. Beauty vs. ugliness
7. Stinginess vs. generosity
8. Fairness vs. unfairness
9. Rich vs. poor
10. Wise vs. foolish
11. Happiness, kindness, friendship, loyalty
12. Love and loyalty can transform -
13. Discuss basic values of people
14. Problems of young adults
15. Security
16. Fear of leaving home
17. Fear of not having children
18. Fear of not being loved or giving love

Characterization

Characters are flat. Either very good or very bad with most characteristics exaggerated. The hero and heroine are usually young. The heroine is usually fair, kind, charitable, and caring. The hero is usually honorable, courageous, unselfish, and caring. Both usually have special powers.

Setting

Place is described easily and briefly (humble cottage, magic kingdom) that fits the typical geography of the culture or it is not mentioned but assumed. Time is in the past (usually long-ago) imbedded within the history of the culture. Time is fantasy time (Once upon a time sets the stage and They lived happily ever after closes the tale.) any time or any place, timeless or placeless, or long long ago.

Plot

Is full of action and follows specific and simple patterns. The plot starts right out with fast moving action that grabs the listeners interest and keeps it. Conflicts are usually resolved with great deeds or acts of human kindness related to good and bad/evil.