

Cinderella Lesson Plan

Overview:

In this lesson plan, students will investigate the well-known story of Cinderella through its Middle Eastern variants. This lesson plan provides a two-fold approach to the texts highlighting multiculturalism and globalization. Thus, the lesson plan will focus on both the differences between the stories, as well as the universality of the story and its message. Through the investigation of the Cinderella stories, students will gain comparative and analytic skills while deepening their knowledge of the Middle East and its connection to their own worldview.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Consider the Cinderella story that they are familiar with.
2. Read the Middle Eastern stories of Cinderella (available to loan from the CSAMES collection).
3. Compare and analyze the differences among the texts.
4. Discuss the similarity of theme.
5. Write a Middle Eastern Cinderella story.

Activity:

1. Ask students what they can tell you about the Cinderella story.
 - a. What happens in the story?
 - b. Where does the story come from?
 - c. Where have they seen or heard the story?
2. Create a large chart for the board or give students individual worksheets from the template paired with this lesson plan. If students are able, fill out the worksheet for the Cinderella story they know (based upon the most popular version of Cinderella written by the French author Charles Perrault in 1697 and adopted by Disney and others). If students need refreshing, read them the Cinderella story they are familiar with before they begin reading the Middle Eastern variations. (Another alternative would be to assign one of the reading groups in step four to be responsible for the Perrault version of Cinderella if the class is large and another reading group is necessary.)
3. In order to provide students with the means to understand the universality of the story and its reach across the globe, provide students with some historical information regarding the story, its origins and its variations across the cultures of the world. (See the Cinderella Background Information Unit, along with the Annotated Resources on Cinderella for more information.) Stress the fact that one of the Cinderella stories they will be reading, *The Egyptian Cinderella*, is considered to be the first Cinderella story.

4. Organize reading groups and assign each group one of the four Middle Eastern Cinderella stories. Using the Cinderella Worksheet, encourage students to fill out the worksheet answering the close reading questions.
 - a. Group One:

Climo, Shirley. *The Egyptian Cinderella*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989.

A Grecian slave girl, Rhodopis, is rescued by the Pharaoh from her life of servitude in Egypt. In this Cinderella story, Rhodopis' shoe is carried by a falcon to the very lap of the Pharaoh, who wants to make its owner his queen. Climo's story is based upon the first recorded Cinderella story from the first century BC. (Available on loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - b. Group Two:

Climo, Shirley. *The Persian Cinderella*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999.

In this Persian Cinderella story set during the Iranian New Year, Settareh steals the heart of the Prince. Despite the interference from her jealous stepsisters, Settareh succeeds with the help of a magic pot and a misplaced anklet. Climo's tale is based upon the story "The Anklet" from *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*. (Available on loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - c. Group Three:

Hickox, Rebecca. *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*. New York: Holiday House, 1998.

Maha, the Cinderella character in this book, is the daughter of a Middle Eastern fisherman destined to serve her stepmother and stepsister. After a lucky encounter with a talking, red fish and a lost sandal, Maha finds her way to a henna bridal party and into the bride's brother's heart. Hickox's version of the Cinderella story is based upon an Iraqi story called "The Little Red Fish and the Clog of Gold." (Available on loan from the CSAMES library.)
 - d. Group Four:

Silverman, Erica. *Raisel's Riddle*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

In this Cinderella story, the young Jewish protagonist Raisel manages to attend the Purim festival with the help of a beggar woman. She captures the heart of the rabbi's son with a riddle, emphasizing the importance of learning. (Although Silverman's Cinderella story is set in Poland, it is a Jewish protagonist whose story can be viewed as a general Jewish Cinderella story.) (Available on loan from the CSAMES library.)

5. Have students share their findings with the other groups, so that all of the students are able to fill in all of the portions of the worksheet. Then compare and analyze the differences among the texts.
 - a. What differences do you see among the stories? (Go through the various portions of the worksheet.)
 - b. How are the stories different? Where are they located?
 - c. How are the characters different? (Cinderella, her stepmother, father, step sisters, etc.)
 - d. Is there always a magical element to the stories?
 - e. Are the endings always the same?
6. Discuss the similarities of theme.
 - a. What do you think is the message of the stories?
 - b. Why are there similar variations of the story throughout the world?
7. Ask students to write their own Middle Eastern version of Cinderella based upon the criteria of the worksheet.