

# Using Fairy Tales Across the Curriculum

with the

Whatever After

Series



grades  
2-5

for educators

STEM • ELA • SEL • ART and more!

## **Welcome to the magical world of Whatever After!**

A fresh, modern spin on a classic fairy tale, from bestselling author Sarah Mlynowski!

Mirror, mirror, on the basement wall.... Once upon a time siblings Abby and Jonah were just normal kids. The next minute? The mirror in their basement had slurped them up and magically transported them inside a fairy tale. Working together to save princesses and rescue princes, Abby and Jonah's adventures lead to new twists in classic tales that leave them scrambling to fix key details of the stories before their parents discover they're missing from their beds. Will they make it home in time? Will everyone still live happily ever after?

## **Why teach with fairy tales**

Fairy tales are not only fun and engaging, they offer valuable opportunities for students to grow their powers of imagination, cultivate key social-emotional skills, and develop critical thinking. Spanning centuries and continents, fairy tales are a key member of the world's literary canon, and yet, they're accessible to students of all ages, many of whom are already familiar with these tales due to popular culture exposure. Using familiar material immediately gives students a level of confidence on which to build as they analyze key literary features of a story and think critically about the lessons embedded in these tales.

In addition to academic learning, fairy tales provide rich opportunities for social-emotional learning. Created as stories that teach a lesson, fairy tales invite students to reflect on the choices characters make, the validity of cultural stereotypes, and the life lessons behind the stories. These observations become a springboard for cultivating self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Fairy tales give students an enchanting space in which to learn, play, and grow.

## **How to use this guide**

Activities in this guide can be used in any order and with any book from the Whatever After series. Have even more fairy tale fun by also reading the original fairy tales featured in the series, as well as multiple versions of the same tale.

## Let's discuss!

1. Who are Abby and Jonah? What details can you find in the text about each character?
2. If you could explore a fairy tale world, which one would you choose? Why?
3. The setting in a story is when and where it takes place. What do you know about the setting of this story?
4. How do Abby and Jonah "mess up" the storyline of the fairy tale they visit? Can you find some examples of a time when their actions or choices affected the story? Do you like the original version of the fairy tale or the new version that Abby and Jonah help create? Why?
5. What did Abby or Jonah learn from the fairy tale? How did he or she apply that lesson to life outside the magic mirror? Have you ever learned something from a story that helped you become a better person or see a new solution to a problem?
6. What are some fairy tales you have read? What elements do many fairy tales seem to have in common? If you were to explain to someone what a fairy tale is, what would you say?
7. In many fairy tales, the hero or heroine must accomplish nearly impossible tasks. What examples of this can you find in the text? What are some obstacles you've had to overcome in your life? How did you feel once you had overcome that challenge?

## Ready, set, write!

1. Retell a classic tale from a perspective other than the main character. This could be a secondary character like the woodsman in Little Red Riding Hood or the villain like the stepmother in Cinderella.
2. Compose a haiku clue about a well-known fairy tale character. For example:  
*Hair, hair, everywhere*  
*Alone and waiting up high*  
*When will her prince come?*  
Answer: Rapunzel
3. Write a different ending to the story. Does everyone still live happily ever after?
4. Imagine the fairy tale story took place in your city at this very moment in time. Write about the ways the story would change and the ways it would stay the same.
5. Create a reading quiz based on details in the fairy tale. Write an answer key too!

**Educator tip:** Use the Story Map reproducible in this guide to help students identify and keep track of key elements of the story.

# Activities

## Fairy Tale Role Play (SEL)

Role playing is a great way to help students develop empathy. As a group, identify several points in the story when characters face a daunting task or difficult choice and list them on the board. Next, ask students to put themselves into that character's shoes. How might that character be feeling? What might that character be thinking about as he or she prepares to make that choice? What other options might have been possible? Have students pair off, and invite one student to role play a situation from the board while the other student listens and asks questions that a caring friend might ask. Have students each take a turn role playing a character and being an attentive listener.

## Whatever Words (SEL)

Allowing time for self-reflection and free-flow writing boosts students' self-awareness. Create simple sparkly journals using glitter cardstock and plain paper folded in half and stapled to create a booklet. Share with students that journals are a magical place where they can write whatever comes to mind. Set the stage for a relaxed writing session by playing soft music, dimming classroom lights, and writing some journaling prompts on the board. Prompts could include: "If you could travel through a magic mirror, where would you want it to take you?"; "If you could have a magical power, what would it be?"; and "If you snuck out of bed late at night like Abby and Jonah, what would you do?"

## If Tales Had Tech (STEM)

How could technology help a character in the story solve his or her problem? Begin with a discussion of the ways technology helps people solve real world problems. What types of technology do students use every day? What challenges do these tools solve? Next, have students consider a challenge faced by a character in the story and imagine a technological invention that could help. Perhaps Snow White could have used a "food safety scanner" to check for poisoned apples. Have students sketch out their inventions, label the key features, and then construct a model using recycled materials.

## What Time Is It Anyway? (STEM)

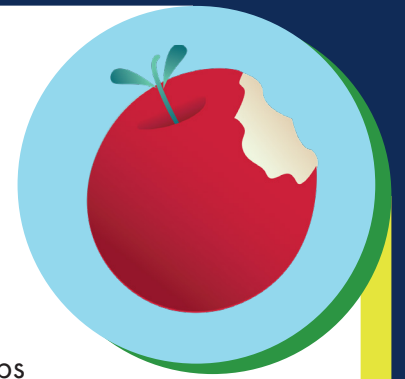
When Abby and Jonah get pulled through the magic mirror into a fairy tale story, they experience time differently than at home. Sometimes it's daytime in the fairy tale realm while it's nighttime at home. In the real world, it's science, not magic, that explains why some places experience daytime while others experience nighttime at the exact same moment. Invite students to explore this concept using a flashlight and globe or online simulations. Introduce the concept of time zones and then have students compare their daily schedule to that of someone living in a different part of the world. First, have students create a chart with four columns: time of day, activity, time of day in (location of choice), and likely activity. Ask students to complete the chart based on their daily schedule and then select a city in a different time zone to use in completing the second half of the chart. What might kids in Taipei be doing while kids in Chicago are eating breakfast?

## Before and After Boxes (ART)

As Abby and Jonah change the story in the fairy tales they visit, the paintings on Abby's fairy tale music box also change. Using paint, paper,



markers, and other supplies, have students decorate the outside of a shoe box to reflect the classic story elements of the fairy tale and then decorate the inside of the box to reflect the changed story that results from Abby and Jonah's adventures.



### **The Hero's Path (MOVEMENT)**

All central figures in fairy tales must overcome challenges in order to achieve their goals. Abby and Jonah are also tested. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a section of the book. Ask students to create a list of the challenges faced by the main character in that section (finding their lost dog, escaping from the band of robbers, etc.). Next, ask groups to write each challenge on a separate piece of paper and then add a physical movement representing that challenge. For example, escaping from the band of robbers could involve pretending to climb a ladder to represent the way Abby and Jonah had to climb out a high window to escape the basement where they were being held captive. Lay out the action pages in chronological order around the room or playground to create a course and then invite everyone to try out the hero's path!

### **Remix Radio (ELA)**

What would happen if Snow White ate an onion instead of an apple? Or if Cinderella had left her stapler at the ball instead of her shoe? Have students work in pairs or small groups, and invite them to change one detail of a classic fairy tale and then write a short radio play with the newly remixed fairy tale. Once the plays are complete, invite groups to record their "radio shows" using a smartphone or computer.

### **Build a Story Web (ELA)**

Beginning with a Whatever After book cover at the center of a bulletin board, invite students to read fairy tales and connect them to the central book by making thematic, character-based or setting-based connections. For example, a magic mirror could be a link between a Whatever After book and Snow White. Have students write the title of the story and the connection they found on an index card, then pin it to the bulletin board and add a string between the pin in the central book and their note card to build the web.

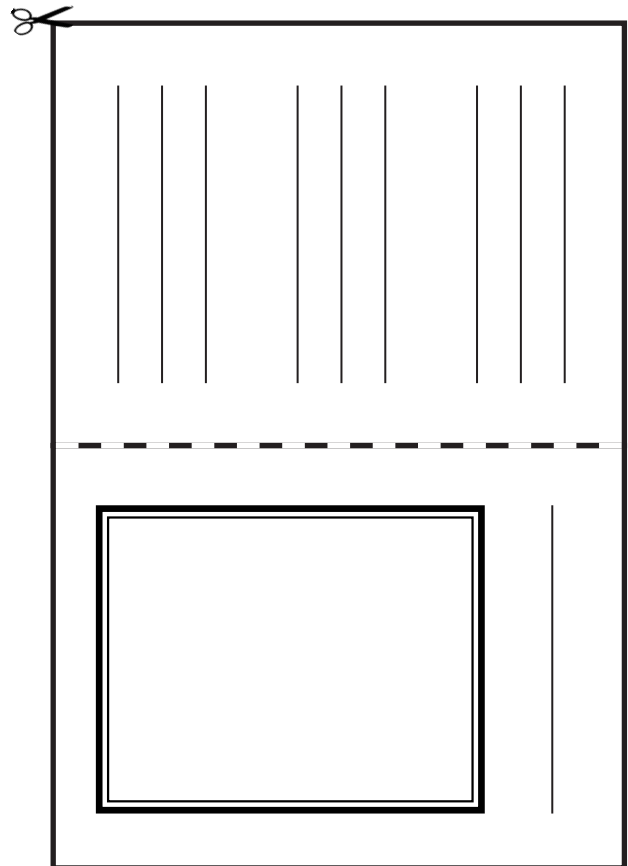
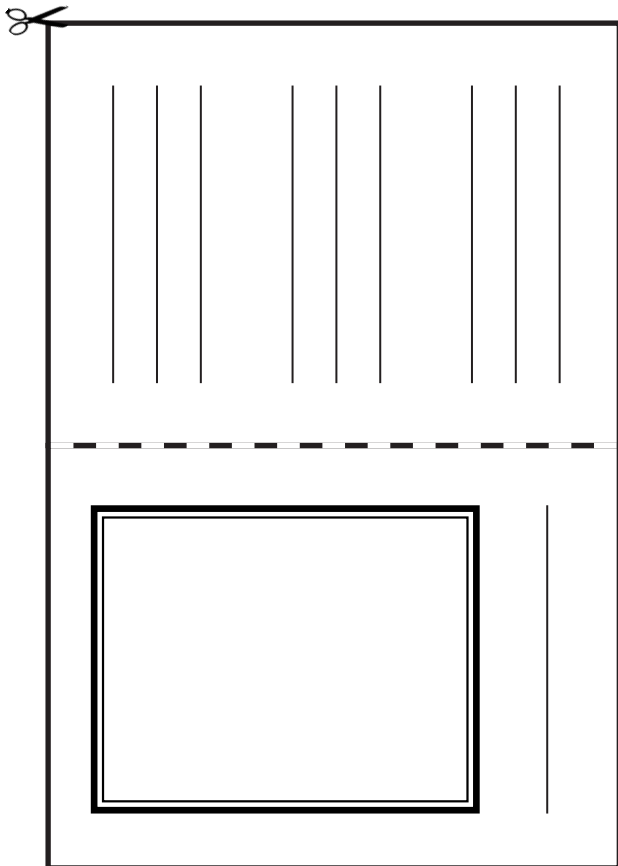
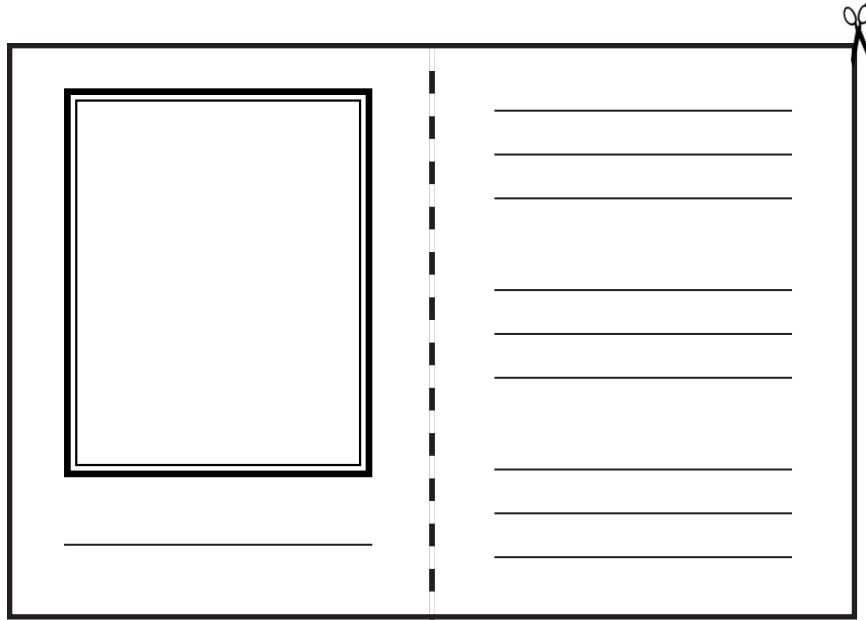
### **Fairy Tale Fan Cards (ELA)**

Celebrate well-known and lesser-known characters of the world of fairy tales with a deck of fan cards. Using the template in this guide, invite students to create three fan cards featuring one main character and two secondary characters from a fairy tale they've read. Next, try these fun activities:

1. Have students pair off, and challenge them to make up a story that includes characters from both students' card sets. What might happen if Rapunzel and Cinderella decided to open their own restaurant and the Snow Queen came in for lunch?
2. Place all the fan cards in a hat and have students take turns picking a card and acting out the character, giving clues as needed, until the class can guess who it is.
3. As a group, explore adjectives by inviting students to hold up a fan card if they think it fits the word. For example, the word "charming" might inspire students to hold up a princess or prince card. Invite students to suggest adjectives to the group.

# Fairy Tale Fan Cards

**Instructions:** Use the template below to create trading cards honoring your favorite fairy tale characters. On the front of the card, include the character's name and a portrait. On the back of the card, list 3 important details about this character. Next, cut out the cards along the solid lines and then fold them along the dotted lines. Use glue or tape to secure the sides of the cards.



# Story Map

**Instructions:** Use this story map to record important details from the story you've read.

**Main characters**

**Supporting characters**

**Title**

**Setting**

**Problem**

**Solution**

# Explore the **Whatever After** series!



## About the author

Sarah Mlynowski is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Whatever After* series, the *Magic in Manhattan* series, *Gimme a Call*, and a bunch of other books for tweens and teens, including the *Upside-Down Magic* series, which she co-writes with Lauren Myracle and Emily Jenkins. Originally from Montreal, Sarah now lives in the kingdom of Manhattan with her family.

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