

Creative Assignments:

Creative Folktales

The assignment this week is to write a new folk tale with a Wrexham setting.

Your story could be set in Wrexham town - or outside the town in the Wrexham countryside. Where you set it is entirely up to you. It could be based around where you live, or somewhere you've visited – or even an imaginary place in or near Wrexham!

There are several different types of folk tale to choose from – which I'll explain – so you've got lots of choice about the sort of story you'd like to write (or draw). Essentially there are three main types:

Myths are the first. They tend to be about big, exciting and epic themes and are set in a very different time or world to now. An example of a myth might be how the mountain behind Wrexham came to be there. Perhaps the hills were thrown up by two dragons fighting? Or by a race of warrior giants building huge ramparts to guard Wales from invaders! Or why is the River Dee so wiggly in shape?

Legends are a little bit different. Legends are generally about events that took place a long time ago, but which are based in part on a historical or semi-historical event – like the Battle of Crogan at Chirk Castle; or King Arthur and Camelot; or the tale of Robin Hood. They tend to be associated with a particular place, or historical figure, or event.

Folk stories, on the other hand, are fictional and come from a story-

telling tradition. They can be funny, or scary. Or often a little bit of both! They're easy to write too, because they tend to follow a simple structure.

Here are some pointers to help:

1. Once upon a time...
2. The plot is always simple
3. The story has no specific time – just long, long ago, or once upon a time
4. The story has no specific location – just “the castle”, or “the mountains”, or “the forest”
5. The characters are simple – the old king, the wicked queen, the beautiful princess, the ugly frog, the handsome gardener – and they don't usually have names as such. For example, a princess is called “the princess” all the way through any story featuring a princess.
6. There is a lot of repetition – the five tasks, the ten brothers, the six swans etc
7. The story generally involves a mishap or piece of misfortune which needs to be overcome
8. The main character often has to perform a task or series of tasks to get to a desired outcome
9. The desired outcome or ending often has a 'meaning' – helping someone; good overcoming evil;



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things always work out in the end...

10. And don't forget, the last line is always "they lived happily ever after..."

Folk stories fall into various categories – they can be fairy stories, with the hero getting a little help (or hindrance) from goblins or pixies or fairies; they can be fables about animals tricking each other or accepting challenges; or they can be the classic good overcoming evil (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs; Little Red Riding Hood; Cinderella etc etc)

I've written a folk story which illustrates some of these guidelines (they're not rules – you can write what you like, how you like!). I was inspired by a story (which might be true) about French archers being imprisoned in the dungeon at Chirk Castle. Read it here [\[link\]](#). What will your inspiration be?

Hints and tips

What's your idea for a folk story? What's going to be your setting? Where is it going to be based? We've created a gallery of images and ideas to help inspire you on the Ty Pawb website and Facebook page –

you can see them here [\[link\]](#). Or you can just use your imagination...

Here's a list of the things you might want to consider for your story:

Location

Are you going to base the folk story in a building? In a church, castle, town or village? Or in your house or garden? Or in the countryside? How about in a lake, wood, river, forest? Or on a mountain, or some wild windswept piece of moorland? Wrexham is blessed with all these settings and more!

Time

Folk stories tend not to be set in a specific time, other than in the past. Hence the classic opening "Once upon a time..." But a new folk story could include modern things, like a car, or a mobile phone...

Characters

Pick a main character who is going to be the hero in your story – the person who is the source of most of the action in the story. Depending on your story, you might need a few other characters – or maybe some animals? Who is going to be at the centre of your story? A boy? A girl?

A grumpy king? An ugly frog? Perhaps a princess and a clever

cat? Or perhaps your pet hamster on a little adventure?

Objects

Objects are often very important in folk stories. Shoes or boots can develop a mind of their own, or a broken vase can lead to all sorts of trouble. Rubbing a lamp, or dancing three times round a well at midnight, can make magic things happen – like a fairy or an elf appearing. People often get turned into objects (or animals) too, generally by a wicked witch or a grumpy wizard. And lost objects can cause mischief too – heroes frequently have to head off on exciting or dangerous adventures to retrieve lost crowns, or jewels, or rings.



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Plot

Folk stories have a simple plot, often revolving around a mishap or accident and/or a series of tasks to make things better or to achieve a certain objective. So, it could be a lost ring and the ways in which the hero tries to get it back. Or a country boy trying to win the hand of a beautiful princess. Or a talking pig having to perform a series of tasks before a wicked witch will turn it back into the farmer he was before.

Repetition

Repetition is a key part of many folk stories, and links back to the fact that stories were often told rather than read. Write your story (or draw your drawings) so that it can easily be read aloud. The repetition is often a series of tasks that the hero has to undertake – each time she or he succeeds at one, another one has to be done. Or they are making something and at each stage in the process have to find a different object. A key part of the repetition is that it makes the story easy to memorise and to tell – and the storyteller can embellish the story each time they tell it by adding another element to it. In the folk story I've written, there's lots of repetition

Hooks

A fun thing to include in the story are some 'hooks': where someone reading the story out loud can add embellishments of their own. So, in a story about

someone walking in the woods, there might be a list of the birds they saw (robin, wren, thrush) and each time the story is told, the narrator adds another bird (an eagle, or a swan, or even a dodo). Lists are always fun to add to!

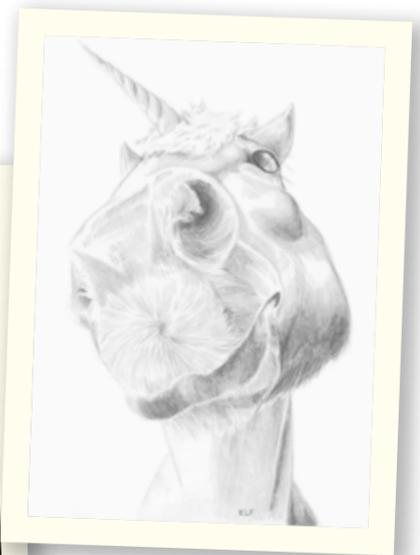
Beginning your story

Have a think about what your story is going to be about and who is going to be in it. And what happens to them.

Then when you're ready, "Once upon a time" is always a good way to start a folk tale. Introduce your main character and where they live, or where they are doing something (walking; exploring; driving; cycling; canoeing?). Who else is in the story? What are they doing? Before you know it you'll have a story written! And if you get stuck, a good trick is to start the next sentence "And suddenly..." What happened suddenly? Did a fox appear and start talking? Or a fairy sprinkle some magic dust? Or the hero realise she's lost something? Or a dragon fly overhead? What do you think?

Ending your story

The story ends when the hero has done what he or she needed to do – found the ring, saved the prince or princess, fought off the evil dragon, tricked the witch, escaped from the dark forest – and of course "then they lived happily ever after..."



And here's a really quick checklist:

Who – who's your hero? Is she a princess? Or is he farmer's son? Who else is in the story?

Why – why is the hero happy? Or sad? Or lost? Or looking for something?

Where – where is the story based?

When – when did it happen?

What – what happens? What objects are important in the story?

How – how does the hero get to the end of the story so that everyone can live happily ever after?

