

# Literature Venns

**This activity encourages children to focus on the importance of setting in the development of story writing by asking them to explore the difference setting makes. They use the simple form of Venn diagrams to compare different versions of one story that have clear differences in the setting. By doing so, they will notice how the setting will affect other features of the story, including characterisation, events and language use. Another advantage of this activity is that it offers children time to talk about books together. They have the opportunity to listen to each other's views and have their own views valued too. Learning can be at its richest when children are involved in animated talk. The talk here can either be teacher-guided or child-directed. The activity will also encourage children's creativity in adapting traditional stories and their structures to new contexts. Venn diagrams provide a good structure for this activity, as, when children see**

**information about stories portrayed graphically in this way, it helps in understanding and recall. Venns can be used to compare poems or stories by the same author too. In reading, for example, two poems by Brian Patten, children can use the structure of the Venn diagram to brainstorm the differences and similarities in structure, theme and language.**

## What to do

- ① Read *Snow White in New York* to the children (or another updated traditional tale with a distinctive setting). While you are reading the story, ask the children to notice and record on whiteboards the differences between this version and others they know.
- ② Afterwards, briefly ask the children to comment on what they have noticed: they would have seen the difference in setting, the language the characters use, the way

## Literature links

This activity works particularly well with well-known narratives, such as 'original' and modernised versions of traditional stories or fairy tales. It is important that there are contrasts in the settings. *Snow White in New York* by Fiona French (OUP) is a good model, also *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivizas (Egmont), *Cinderboy*

by Laurence Anholt (Orchard). For older children, try Gillian Cross's *Wolf* (Puffin). This is a gritty, street-wise novel that has the Little Red Riding Hood story threaded through it. Children will relish the way all these authors manage to subvert the traditional versions of well-known stories and they will enjoy recognising the traditional features left in.