Section 1
Using good examples

Using fairy stories

Fairy stories provide a wealth of opportunities for developing children's story writing. The content is familiar to children and the stylised language makes the story comfortable, predictable and enjoyable, even when told and retold.

Fairy tales tend to have a distinctive narrative plot. Recurring themes can be identified, such as the struggles between rich and poor, good and evil, and wise and foolish. The number three is an important number in many fairy tales. Stories often have three characters or a single event may be repeated three times. Fairytale endings where everything turns out for the best are common.

Fairytale characters typically represent the archetypical opposites of good and evil, wise and foolish, or hero and villain. They may include humans, animals or other creatures often with magical powers.

Castles, cottages and woods are common settings. Information about when events took place is often vague (once upon a time, long ago). The style of traditional fairy stories is strongly influenced by their origins in oral storytelling. The box on the left summarises their key structural and language features.

Through shared reading of a range of complete fairy stories and the extracts on photocopiable pages 10–13 and on the CD-ROM, children will gain valuable experience of the key conventions of the fairytale genre (which they can draw on in their own texts).

As well as perennial favourites, try to include less well-known stories, for example 'The Golden Goose', 'Snow White and Rose Red' and 'Mrs Goat and Her Seven Little Kids'.

Fairy tales and the Primary Framework

The Literacy Framework states that developing understanding of and having opportunities to write narrative texts is a fundamental aspect of children's literacy development. The framework provides detailed guidance for teaching and learning about fairy tales at Key Stage 1 (Year 1: Narrative Units 2 and 3, Year 2: Narrative Unit 3).

The activities in this book address objectives from all 12 strands of the Literacy Framework but with a particular focus on strands 7–10 (Understanding and interpreting texts, Engaging with and responding to texts, Creating and shaping texts, Text structure and organisation).

Fairytale features

Structure
Fairy tales tend to have a distinctive narrative plot:
- beginning – a setting and characters are introduced
- middle – a dilemma or conflict is introduced, and a chronological series of events occur that resolve the situation
- end – the narrative is drawn to a close.

Style
Most fairy stories use:
- the third person and the past tense
- temporal connectives ('once', 'finally')
- rich descriptive vocabulary
- repetitive language patterns and repeated refrains
- formulaic openings and endings.