

L'Hiver de Léon in Wintertime

Lesson Plan

Léon in Wintertime

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Objective

To explore the world of fairy tales and their universal themes, while gaining a better understanding of the medieval era.

Target audience

Students aged 7 to 10.

Connections

Languages and literature
Personal development
Arts and culture

Film required for the activity

Léon in Wintertime (27 min 11 s)

Summary of lesson plan

This lesson plan gives students an opportunity to discuss several universal themes such as identity, family and the difference between friendship and love through the world of fairy tales, including the story in the film *Léon in Wintertime*. The characters and objects in the story – the king, peasants, storytellers, the illuminated manuscripts. etc. – also help students discover aspects of life at that time. In addition, the lesson plan is structured as one preparatory activity and two main activities, so that students can assimilate what they have learned more effectively.

Start and preparatory activity: Fairy tales

Approximate duration: 45 minutes

Begin this activity by asking your students to name their favourite fairy tale and explain their choice by including details about who told it to them or how they discovered it. Have them describe the main characters and animals in their fairy tale. Write down what they tell you on a chart pad to show the diversity of the fairy tale world. Then ask your students what they know about the Middle Ages, especially life in a castle and life in the country. Once they have told you what they know, point out the importance of the oral tradition in the transmission of stories of this time by using the questions below:

- What has helped people of our age to understand more about the Middle Ages?
- How have the stories of the Middle Ages come down to us? What role did storytellers play in this?
- Do you think that there is another way to make these stories widely known? (manuscripts)

During the week, suggest that your students read a fairy tale to gain a deeper understanding of these tales.

ACTIVITY 1: The child who saw the bear

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

Before beginning this activity, have your students sit in pairs and tell each other the story that they read this week.

Step 1: Explain that there is a fairy tale, *Léon in Wintertime*, whose hero, Léon, is part-bear and part-human. Ask them to take a few minutes to try and imagine what Léon might look like and then ask each student to create the character in modeling clay. Exhibit their creations in class so that they can compare them and then ask the following questions:

- What do you know about bears and what are your reactions when you see one? In your opinion, what qualities should a bear have?
- Is the character you created more like a bear or more like a child? What good and bad qualities would you like the bear to have? If you were this character, how would you experience the fact that you were different from other children? What would your parents look like? What adventures would you like your character to have?
- What similarities or differences are there among the characters that you have created?

Step 2: Watch the first few minutes of the film *Léon in Wintertime* with your students (from the beginning up to 3:39), and tell them they will see the remainder of the film in the next activity. Then begin the discussion using these questions:

- How is Léon the same as or different from the way you had imagined him?

- In the film, what does the storyteller tell the villagers about the ogre? How do they react to what the storyteller has told them? What images show you that the villagers are afraid? If you were in their place, how would you feel?
- Why did the filmmaker choose to give the film this title? What is the role of winter in this story?
- What other characters appear in this story (the ogre, Princess Molly Gingerbread, the elephant, the king, Léon and his parents)? What objects seem to play an important role in the story (apple, key, honey pot, gold coins)?
- Why do Molly and Léon say the same thing: 'That story about the ogre... it's just nonsense'? Would you have reacted in the same way? Why?
- How is Molly different from or similar to princesses that appear in fairy tales? How is Léon different from or similar to heroes in fairy tales?
- How do we know that this story takes place in the Middle Ages? How is life in the castle different from or similar to life in the village?

You can end this activity by having them guess how the story continues.

ACTIVITY 2: The story of a quest

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

Begin by showing some examples of illuminations and ask your students to comment on them briefly; then explain that these were used to decorate many manuscripts in the Middle Ages. Ask them to pay particular attention to the images in the film that resemble those made in medieval times. If possible, play some medieval music for them, so that they can discover how it inspired the music in the film.

Step 1: Continue watching the film from the point where you had stopped (3:39 to 5:20). Ask your students why, in their opinion, we see the images through the keyhole of a lock as Léon's mother is telling him how he came to be adopted by the couple of beekeepers. You can guide their comments to lead them to discover that the filmmakers wanted to make a film in the style of the manuscripts of the Middle Ages.

Step 2: Continue watching the film (from 5:20 to 8:10) up to when Léon begins to question whether or not it is normal for him to live with this human couple who do not look like him. Ask these questions:

- How does Léon see himself at the beginning of the story? What is his relationship like with his adoptive parents? How do they behave towards him? How does he react to all the name-calling by the village children (bear-face, fur on your chin)? If you were in his place, how would you react? What is good and bad about being different? Is he like his parents in a certain way (qualities)?
- How does the arrival of the hedgehog change Léon's life? What does the hedgehog say to Léon? What do you think of the hedgehog's behaviour? What does Léon do when he hears the hedgehog's words? What would you have done in his place? How do Léon's parents react after he leaves?

Step 3: Suggest a role-playing activity to your students by having them play different characters in the story to see the possible impact they have on the story. Note their names on paper: storyteller, ogre, king, Molly's father, elephant and hedgehog. Ask your students to team up by twos: one will pretend to be the character shown on the paper, the other can choose to play either Léon or the princess. Ask them to imagine the first time they meet: how do they react? What do they say to each other? After a few minutes, have students reverse roles. Ask some teams of two to present what they experienced in this game.[Variation: If you wish, you can also associate a quality and a defect with each character, note them down on paper and ask a student to play the character in this way.] Take this opportunity to demonstrate that each person will interpret a character in his or her own way, using his or her own experience.

Step 4: Continue watching the film until the end (8:10 to end) and wind up the discussion using these questions:

- Who are the two heroes of this story? How do you understand it? What are their feelings for one another?
- Which characters help Léon and the princess? How do they show that they are a friend or an enemy of Léon or the princess?
- Why are some characters (such as the storyteller and the ogre) bigger than the villagers? What effect does this size difference have on the viewers? On you?
- Which magic object in the film changes the outcome of the story (the golden apple)?
- Which images show you that the story takes place in the Middle Ages? What have you learned about this time in history? What do you think of these images, how the characters are made, the music, how our way of life is different from life in the Middle Ages?

Recap

Suggested duration: 60 minutes

Suggest that your students create a medieval fairy tale with another animal as the hero by using different artistic techniques to create their character.

Reflective sharing

Depending on their age, your students should be able to state several elements common to fairy tales. They should also be able to describe several aspects of life in the Middle Ages.

Filmography

Other relevant films

Aucassin and Nicolette

A film by Lotte Reiniger 1975 – 15 min 39 s

Audience: Ages 10 to 12

Connections: Languages and literature – arts and culture

<http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=10509>

Tragic Story with Happy Ending

A film by Regina Pessoa 2005 – 7 min 40 s

Audience: Ages 10 to 12

Connections: Languages and literature – social sciences – arts and culture

<http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=53705>

Sleeping Betty

A film by Claude Cloutier 2007 – 9 min 14 s

Audience: Ages 10 to 16

Connections: Languages and literature – arts and culture

<http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=54778>

Annex

Table to facilitate plot comprehension

	Draw or write down the word
Main character: the story's hero	
Turning point that changes the storyline	
Hero's goal Hero's deeds	1. 2.
Event that ends the hero's adventures	
End of story	

	Draw or write down the word
Hero's friend(s)	
Hero's enemy(ies)	
Magic object	
Story setting (where story takes place)	