



Learning
Resource



CHILDREN'S FAIRYTALE COMPETITION

Judged by
Michael Morpurgo



Closing Date
**18 October
2021**

HULL LIBRARIES
...everything, and the books...





WELCOME



Calling all story lovers everywhere!

Yorkshire Festival of Story & Hull Culture & Leisure Library Service are delighted to announce the launch of our fantastic children's story competition judged by Michael Morpurgo.

This competition will celebrate the magic and wonder of the natural world by encouraging young people to let their imaginations run wild and create a new fairy tale about trees. It will provide a fun and interactive way for children to engage with the natural world and pave the way for a brighter future for the planet, inspired by stories of change and collaboration.

We're looking for fairy tales of up to 750 words that feature a tree or trees.

This competition is open to anyone aged 7–11 living in the UK. So if your pupils have a story in them, now is the time to start writing. We have a number of brilliant prizes, including book vouchers up to £100!

A tree will be planted for the winners and runners up in our Story Wood. Each tree will have a QR code linking to winning stories. These stories will be read by a professional storyteller. The winners will be announced by Michael Morpurgo at a free, online live event at [Yorkshire Festival of Story](#).

We created this pack to inspire creativity and develop your pupils' writing skills. The pack contains some great ideas for you to use in the classroom and tips and techniques to help your pupils create fabulous stories.

Competition judge Michael Morpurgo can't wait to read these amazing stories so don't forget to submit via the website by 18th October 2021.

www.settlestories.org.uk/whats_on/fairy-tale

Good luck!

PRIZES



1st Place

- £100 book token
- Tree planted in our Story Wood with a QR code linking to your story
- A personalised response to your story by Michael Morpurgo
- A signed copy of Michael Morpurgo's latest book 'When Fishes Flew'



2nd Place

- £50 book token
- Tree planted in our Story Wood with a QR code linking to your story
- A personalised response to your story by Michael Morpurgo
- A signed copy of Michael Morpurgo's latest book 'When Fishes Flew'



3rd Place

- £30 book token
- Tree planted in our Story Wood with a QR code linking to your story
- A personalised response to your story by Michael Morpurgo
- A signed copy of Michael Morpurgo's latest book 'When Fishes Flew'

Runners Up

3 runners up will receive:

- A personalised response to your story by Michael Morpurgo
- Tree planted in our Story Wood with a QR code linking to your story
- A signed copy of Michael Morpurgo's latest book 'When Fishes Flew'

All eligible entrants will receive a certificate.

The winners will be announced by Michael Morpurgo at a free, online live event at Yorkshire Festival of Story.



The charity behind Yorkshire Festival of Story - About Settle Stories

Settle Stories is the independent charity who produce Yorkshire Festival Of Story. Based in Settle in the Yorkshire Dales our mission is to collaborate with exceptional artists to create transformative experiences for people and communities.

For more than 11 years we have worked with school children to share the power of story and inspire the next generation of writers, artists, leaders and thinkers. We offer:

- Workshops: We run online and in-person workshops with leading performance storytellers in schools across the UK. Our workshops teach children about the ancient art of storytelling, the diversity of other cultures, and the power of words through experiences that are inspiring, educational and entertaining.
- Resources: Our website houses a wealth of free resources to inspire students. From virtual reality expeditions to 'how to' guides, and writing tips to bedtime stories.

Head to our [schools page on our website](#) to find out more. Or contact us to arrange something bespoke.

About Hull Culture & Leisure Library Service

Anyone can use our libraries, whatever your age. We have 12 libraries across the city of Hull that provide a wide range of materials for loan, computers and internet access and a fantastic range of events and activities. We offer an excellent support service for schools and also have a home library service for those who are unable to get to a library.

Joining the library is free, as are most of its services and events. You can even access some of our information resources from the comfort of your home.

Pop in to your local library or [explore our website](#) and prepare to be amazed!



Where do you get your ideas?

This is a common question for all writers, storytellers and artists. Ideas can come from anywhere: from books, playgrounds or from other people around you. Sometimes they are right under your nose!

When it comes to inspiration for writing fairy tales, you don't have to look far. Here are some ideas to get your children started:

- Tell an existing fairytale from the perspective of a tree or woodland, for example, Hansel and Gretel narrated by a tree outside the witch's cottage, or Little Red Riding Hood told from the perspective of the deep, dark woods.
- Use the classic fairytale structure to create an entirely new one. See our exercise on page 8 for more on this.
- Modernise a fairy tale by retelling it in the present day, perhaps using an environmental theme (such as deforestation) as the story's conflict.

To help your children get their brains whizzing even more, try these creative exercises in the classroom – or even better, go outside and do it.

1. Describe five characters you might find living in a tree or woodland.
2. Describe five things you might find on the forest floor.
3. Write about the craziest-looking tree you can imagine.



Facts into fiction

Sometimes facts can inspire astounding stories. Have a read through this list of amazing tree facts and see what ideas they spark.

- There are more than 60,000 species of tree in the world.
- In the UK, our most common native trees include oak, beech, and hazel, but we also have lots of non-native trees that have been introduced by humans over thousands of years, such as ginkgo, elm and monkey puzzle.
- Trees are sacred in many different cultures. For the Maori people of Aotearoa (New Zealand), kauri trees are very important. The biggest kauri tree, T ne Mahuta (Lord of the Forest), is regarded as a living ancestor.
- The oldest trees in the world are the Great Basin bristlecone pines, and they are around 5,000 years old.
- In the UK, yew trees have long been a symbol of death and are commonly associated with churchyards. In fact, more than 500 churchyards in England have yew trees older than the church buildings themselves.
- Trees provide excellent habitat and food for animals, insects and birds, as well as lichens, mosses and fungi. Oak trees can support up to 2,300 different species!
- In Norse mythology, the ash tree was known as the 'tree of the world' and the first human on Earth was said to have emerged from it.
- Trees are very important as they absorb and store carbon dioxide, preventing it from entering the atmosphere and contributing to global warming.
- The biggest trees in the world are the giant sequoias of California. The largest of these are as tall as a 26-storey building, and the width of their bases is bigger than that of a city street.
- Fairy tales and folk stories have featured talking trees for centuries, but scientists now know that trees are actually communicating in real life, sharing information with each other through a secret underground network of fungi called mycorrhizae.

Famous trees and woodland in literature



- *Winnie the Pooh's Hundred Acre Wood*
- Enid Blyton's *The Magic Faraway Tree*
- In the Brothers Grimm version of *Cinderella*, the fairy godmother is replaced by a talking tree
- The Ents in the *Lord of the Rings* series
- Grandmother Willow from *Pocahontas*
- The winter woodland that leads to Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
- Robin Hood's *Sherwood Forest*
- *The Giving Tree*
- The Whomping Willow from the *Harry Potter* series
- The woods that *Little Red Riding Hood* walks through

**What five things do you think of
when you think of trees?**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Fairy tale forest settings

Centuries ago, when people rarely left the safety of their villages or the well-travelled road, the woods were a place of great unknown, so it's not surprising that they often feature in fairy tales as a setting for both magic and danger.

There are lots of weird and wonderful woodlands and forests in fairy tales, but they can normally be grouped into several different types:

- **Enchanted forests:** Full of strange and wonderful creatures such as fairies, elves and unicorns, the enchanted forest is a place where magic rules and anything can happen. These forests are full of mixed broadleaf trees that allow dappled sunlight to filter through the leaves and open into clearings.
- **Deep dark woods:** Home of monsters, witches and wolves the deep, dark woods are thought to be inspired by the dense pine forests of Northern Europe, with trees packed close together and lots of shadowy places to hide. In these woodlands, characters often get lost or eaten, just like Red Riding Hood. They can also be places for a hero to prove their bravery and skill.
- **Refuge forests:** These forests provide a space of sanctuary for outlaws, exiles, and characters running away from something, like Robin Hood, who hides in Sherwood Forest. Such forests offer freedom and escape not only from the law, but also from the cruelty and judgment of human society – why do you think so many ogres, witches and monsters make their homes in the forest?
- **Dwellings in the forest:** Fairy tales are often set in a house, tower, hut or other dwelling hidden away in the woods. Think of the home of the seven dwarves, the witch's cottage that Hansel and Gretel stumble upon, the tower that Rapunzel is kept in, or the simple woodcutter's hut.

Ask your children if their story will feature a forest setting, and if so what kind of forest? Maybe their story won't be set in a forest at all, but will instead feature an individual tree living in a garden or city street.

Get them to write about their story setting or draw a picture of it.



Building characters

At the heart of every good story is a cast of strong characters. Get your children to think about what goes on inside their characters, rather than what they look like. In traditional fairy tales, 'Once upon a time' normally involved a damsel in distress waiting to be saved, and a 'happy ever after' was usually a fairy tale wedding. But these days, examples of strong women (real and fictional) are everywhere, and we can do something much more exciting with our fairy tale characters.

Ask your children to think about all the stereotypes they often meet in stories: the heroic prince and the powerless princess; the strong man and the weak woman; or the naughty boy and the sensible girl. Now rip them up and start again! Challenge your pupils to leave these assumptions behind and create strong, surprising, imaginative characters who aren't defined by their gender, physical appearance, colour or nationality.

What goes on inside a character is more important than their outside appearance.

Ask the children to think about and write down the following:



Name of character

What do they want?

What are their skills?

What makes them angry?

What makes them sad?

What makes them frightened?

What makes them happy?

Who are their friends and enemies?





Planning characters

Draw an outline of a body below. Write down words or phrases to describe how your character appears to others.

Name of character: _____

On the inside, write down what is going on inside your character. This includes their thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Story conflict

Every good story requires conflict to drive the action and keep the reader hooked. Use these three exercises with your children to inspire stories that have conflict in them.

Character conflict exercise

- What does the character want?
- Who or what is trying to stop them?
- How do they get what they want?

Treasure tale exercise

- Think of a treasure, what is it?
- Where is it?
- How does your character go about getting it?

Two characters, one task

- Think of two characters. One of them wants to do something and the other one wants to stop them.
- How does the second character try to stop the first character getting what they want?
- Why do they want to stop them?
- Who wins?



WRITING TIP: SHOW DON'T TELL. IF YOUR CHARACTER IS COLD, DON'T TELL US THEY ARE COLD, SHOW US. SAY YOUR CHARACTER PULLS HER HAT DOWN OVER HER EARS AND TURNS HER FACE AWAY FROM THE WHISTLING WIND.



Fairy tale structure exercise

Fairy tales always contain certain key elements, including a hero or heroine, a villain, magic and conflict.

Ask your children to write down some ideas about what each element might look like in their story:

- Hero/heroine
- Villain
- Magic
- Conflict



Structure

Fairy tales also have distinctive structures that you can use to build your story around.

- **Beginning:** Fairy tales usually start with 'Once upon a time', but your children could think of something new. The important thing is that the beginning introduces the main characters and setting, explains the problem they face, and grabs the reader's interest.
- **Middle:** The middle of the story contains the conflict. The conflict usually revolves around good vs evil, but it could be anything: a flood, a fire, a plague. It could tell the story of how a tree came to be the way it is, for example, 'how the birch got its silver skin', or 'why the willow weeps'. The middle should be used to describe the main events of the story and to identify how they changed the main character as a person.
- **End:** Fairy tales usually have happy endings. These often take the form of a 'happy ever after' wedding. But there are many other kinds of success that characters might find.



Ask your children to write down some ideas for the three parts of their structure.



Planning your story with a story mountain

Fill in each box with your ideas to help you plan out your story.

Dilemma

Disagreement

Problem

Events
Excitement

Sorting
things out

Build up

Resolution

Story Mountain

Opening

Ending

Characters

Setting



Rules of three And fairy tales

The best stories are those that are memorable. A really good way to achieve this is through a technique from folk and fairy tales called the 'rule of three'. The rule of three dictates that a trio of events, refrains or characters is considered more appealing or memorable to an audience than any other number. The rule of three is used to great effect in narratives of all kinds. For example, the Three Billy Goats Gruff, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, or the Three Little Pigs.

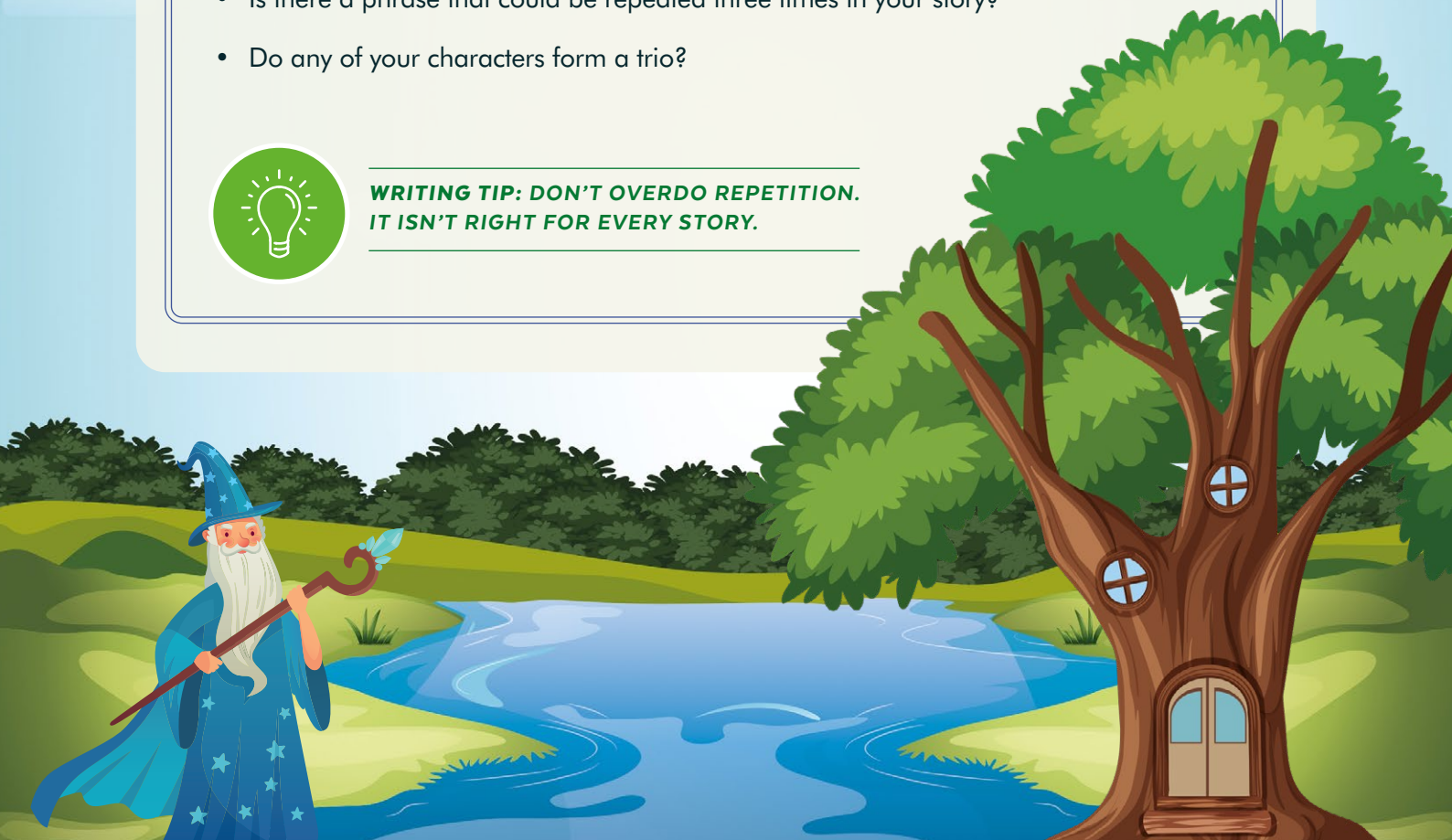
It doesn't have to be three characters; you can apply the rule of three to a phrase that is repeated throughout the story to help you build tension and structure, before finding a resolution or twist. For example in Goldilocks and the Three Bears there are three bowls of porridge. When Goldilocks tasted them, they were too hot, too cold, or just right. Similarly, the beds that she tried were too hard, too soft, and just right.

Ask the children the following:

- What are the three ways that a character can try and solve a problem?
- Is there a phrase that could be repeated three times in your story?
- Do any of your characters form a trio?



**WRITING TIP: DON'T OVERDO REPETITION.
IT ISN'T RIGHT FOR EVERY STORY.**





Language

Once you've planned the story you want to tell, it's time to put pen to paper! Finding the right words can be difficult. Try these exercises to help you.

Synonyms

Two words that mean the same thing are called synonyms. Replace overused words with alternatives. For example, instead of 'nice' try 'charming' or 'delightful'. Use a thesaurus to help you.

Think of synonyms for the following words:

- Big _____
- Bad _____
- Strong _____

Similes

Similes describe something by comparing it to something else, for example, 'the bird was soaring like a plane'. Similes help you to describe your characters, settings and action in exciting and more accurate ways. Have a go at completing these simile sentences:

- The girl ran like _____
- The fire glowed like _____
- The dog was fluffy like _____

Experimenting

Whilst it's important that the words you use to describe things are accurate, the more creative and unusual they are the better! Have a look through a dictionary and pick out three funny-sounding words, like 'cattywampus' or 'snickersnee'.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Is there a way you could incorporate one of them into your story?

Finishing your story

A good story takes time, and it's just as important to check spelling, punctuation and grammar as it is to look at the story's structure, setting and characters. When the stories are written, put them away and come back to them on another day with fresh eyes. In pairs, invite the children to check the following:

1. **Spelling, grammar and punctuation:** Are there any spelling mistakes or missing words? Is it all grammatically correct?
2. **Action:** Is there a clear conflict in the story? Does the action make sense?
3. **Language:** Check that there aren't too many adjectives and adverbs – remove all but the strongest or most unusual. Also check that you have avoided clichés or boring words.
4. **Characters: Are the characters believable?** Does the main character undergo a transformation of some sort?
5. **Opening and ending paragraphs:** Does the story capture your attention from the start? Is the ending satisfying?



WRITING TIP: USE THE ACTIVE VOICE.
FOR EXAMPLE SAYING, 'ANDY STOLE MY PURSE' (ACTIVE VOICE) IS STRONGER THAN 'MY PURSE WAS STOLEN BY ANDY' (PASSIVE VOICE).





Writing tips from Michael Morpurgo

- 1** Live an interesting life. Try and meet people and visit places if you can. Read a lot and widely and learn from other writers. Every book you read informs, builds confidence. With every book you read you are finding your own voice.
- 2** Write just a little every day. Have a note book handy wherever you go - a writer's sketch book – and jot down thoughts and ideas, memories, snatches of overheard conversations, moments of high drama, or quiet reflection. The more you do it the less inhibited you become, the less you worry about words. From these jottings will emerge the ideas for your stories and poems.
- 3** Take the time before you settle on the idea for your story. Find an idea that you care about, that you're really passionate about, then research around it, read around it and dream it out in your mind. Don't be in a hurry to decide but make sure it feels right.
- 4** I don't plan the plot though other writers do. What works for me is as far as possible to forget I'm writing it at all. I tell it down onto the page, as if I'm telling it to one person only, my best friend. Remember to be comfortable when you write. Get up and walk about every half an hour. If you dry up, go and do something else, put it out of your mind and come back fresh.
- 5** Remember to write for yourself, not for a market and give yourself time to develop your own style, your own voice. It takes a lifetime. Enjoy it!



HOW YOU CAN WIN

We are looking for fairy tales that are no longer than 750 words and that:

- **Have Imaginative ideas**
- **An exciting plot**
- **Use engaging language**
- **Have strong, relatable characters**
- **Feature a tree or trees**

Don't forget that the competition closes on 18th October 2021 at 6pm.

'All entries must be submitted online through the portal www.settlestories.org.uk/whats_on/fairy-tale where you will also find the competition terms and conditions. Postal entries cannot be accepted.

Thank you to:

