Familiar fairy tale picture books transformed into teen novels

Offering students the opportunity to compare a picture book with a teen novel allows us to review familiar tales with students. Some teens may not know traditional fairy tales. Here is a tale.

Consider the possibilities for pairing stories for middle school and high school students. Challenge students to compare an illustrated fairy tale with a novel clearly based on a familiar tale.

Once a familiar fairy tale is changed into a novel for teenagers, it becomes a more complex story. Characters become more fully realized in these retellings. Readers learn the weaknesses on a young maiden.

“Little Red Riding Hood” but is devoid of talking wolves or other happenings typical of fantasy. On the other hand, Gail Carson Levine's Ella Enchanted maintains the cruel magic of a curse that she will not be tempted to eat children. By the time Hansel and Gretel appear at her house, she has carefully arranged her life to avoid evil. But the children tempt her and she knows that she will not be able to resist eating them. She sacrifices herself in her own oven rather than live with the knowledge that she has eaten children.

Offering students the opportunity to compare a picture book with a teen novel allows us to review familiar tales with students. Some teens may not know traditional fairy tales. Here is a chance to acquaint them with an aspect of cultural literacy they may have missed in their childhood. For teens who loved fairy tales when they were younger, reading and discussing familiar tales will feel comfortable or even nostalgic. This feeling may entice reluctant readers to explore novels with the kernel elements of a fairy tale.

The titles of picture books and teen novels that follow are grouped by nine popular tales, for easy comparison. The picture books are traditional versions, beautifully illustrated. No parodies or other cultural variations are included. This is a selected list of titles based upon my fondness and admiration for particular illustrators. Certainly there are still more titles available. The teen novels recommended are suitable for middle school and high school students with some variation in age levels, as noted in the commentary. Through comparing picture books and teen novels, we have one last chance to introduce fairy tales to older readers, to introduce readers to the beauty of book illustration, to encourage critical thinking, and to expand cultural literacy. Beauty, Beast, Cinderella, Hansel, Gretel, Jack, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, Rumpelstiltskin, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White can make all of that possible.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

- Picture Books
  Gr. K-3. Mercer Mayer’s dramatic and richly painted illustrations enhance the familiar romantic story of the love between an enchanted prince and a beautiful young woman.
  Gr. K-3. This sparse retelling combined with almost surreal illustrations creates a mysterious feel to the classic tale.

- YA Novels
  Gr. 5-10. This novel has mesmerized readers for years with its beautiful language, believable characters, and magically satisfying story.
CINDERELLA
\[ Picture Books \]
Gr. K-4. Winner of a Caldecott Medal, this French fairy tale follows a familiar story line enhanced by pastel illustrations that shimmer with delicate beauty, humor, and timelessness.

Gr. K-3. Adapted primarily from The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book and Andrew Tang's The Blue Fairy Book, Craft's lavish illustrations reflect an imaginary setting of seventeenth and eighteenth century France. The text is embellished elaborately with borders and illumination of the first letter on each page. Full-page illustrations rendered in oil over watercolor add romance and mystery to a familiar story.

\[ YA Novels \]
Gr. 6-10. Ashley Ella Toral is plagued with an embarrassing stepmother and twin stepsisters when all she wants is to spend New Year's Eve at the Ocean Crest Country Club with a special boyfriend. Clever and humorous trappings of the traditional Cinderella story will entertain teens who dream of romance but are hampered with everyday problems.

Gr. 4-7. Lucinda, a fool of a fairy, gives Ella the curse of unerring obedience. The result is a miserable childhood as Ella struggles against becoming a victim to whichever child discovers her curse. This novel has won important recognition as a 1998 Newbery Honor, a 1998 American Library Association's Notable Book, and a 1999 International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices.

HANSEL AND GRETEL
\[ Picture Book \]
Gr. K-3. Based on the first transcription and first printing of the Grimm tale, this winner of a 1985 Caldecott Honor, presents the tale of two children who outwit a witch to return to their grateful father. Zelinsky's beautifully shadowed illustrations complement the spare but dramatic text.

\[ YA Novel \]
Gr. 5-8. The Ugly One, with her twisted back and her eye for beauty, is the village midwife and healer. She learns to be a sorceress and to call demons while protected in a magic circle. One small mistake, one break in the circle, and she is snatched by a demon and becomes the Ugly Witch. Demon voices urge her to eat a child. To escape people she isolates herself in a forest until Hansel and Gretel appear to tempt her. This is a fascinating story from the witch's viewpoint.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK
\[ Picture Books \]
Gr. K-3. John Howe's version shows a terrifying, black-armored giant from whom Jack steals the hen, a sack of gold, and the golden harp. The classic English fairy tale is embellished with elegant visual sweeps of the beanstalk and the castle in the sky.


\[ YA Novel \]
Gr. 4-7. Seven years after his father's disappearance, Jack plants the beans and begins a search for his father. He finds a giant who's a wife beater and treasures that differ from those found in the traditional story. Jack wins back Flora, his true love, and comes to terms with the death of his father. This novel is a well-written adventure with a satisfying ending.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD
\[ Picture Books \]
Gr. K-3. This translation from the German presents a close retelling of the original story. In her art Zwerger brings out a surprising comic side to the tale while maintaining a somber background of muted earth tones.

Gr. K-3. The detailed, charming country feel of this Grimm fairy tale is due primarily to Hyman's signature illustration style of pretty borders and expressive characters. A Caldecott Honor.

\[ YA Novel \]
Gr. 7-9. A vagabond mother, an educational program on wolves, a terrorist for a father, and a grandmother who banishes Cassy from her home combine brilliantly in this psychological thriller. Winner of the 1991 Carnegie Prize, the novel's narrative subtly dances around and through the tale of Little Red Riding Hood.

RAPUNZEL
\[ Picture Books \]
Gr. 2-4. Dusikova's dreamy illustrations picture Rapunzel and the prince much younger than the characters in Hyman's retelling. Also, in this version Rapunzel does not give birth.

Gr. 2-4. This traditional retelling is enhanced by Hyman's beautifully detailed illustrations using full pages for important events and smaller pictures built into borders for lesser events.

Gr. 2-4. Winner of the 1993 Caldecott Medal, this distinctive book reveals definite Italian and French influences in the architecture, landscape, and characters' costumes contained in Zelinsky's exquisite oil paintings.

\[ YA Novels \]
Gr. 7-10. In the first of three books readers meet three young women: Megan, Alice, and Bella. In this book Megan is a modern-day Rapunzel. She falls in love with Simon, a young man who climbs the scaffolding into the Tower Room that Megan shares with her two best friends at an all-girls boarding school. The updated covers for paperback editions of this trilogy will appeal to teens wanting to read about romance.
Napoli, Donna Jo. Zel. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1996. Gr. 7-12. Once again Napoli humanizes a witch in a fairy tale. Most of the story is told through the viewpoint of Zel's "mother," a witch who sold her soul to the devil and stole another woman's child. The setting for this Rapunzel story is fifteenth-century Switzerland.

Rumpelstiltskin

- Picture Book

- YA Novel
  Napoli, Donna Jo and Richard Tchen. Spinners. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2000. Gr. 6-10. Questions about Rumpelstiltskin's past are answered in this newly created story of two spinners. One spinner is a beautiful young woman, the other is a deformed man, scorned by the one he loved.

Sleeping Beauty

- Picture Book

- YA Novels
  Geras, Adele. Watching the Roses. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998. Gr. 8-12. On Alice's eighteenth birthday she is attacked and withdraws to her bedroom where she lies as if in a coma, but readers learn about her as she writes in a diary. References to roses abound, and Alice must ultimately save herself from her "sleeping death."


  Yolen, Jane. Briar Rose. New York: Tor Books, 1993. Gr. 8-12. This fascinating and unusual story blends the tale of Sleeping Beauty with the tragedy of the Holocaust. After her grandmother's death, Becca discovers a mysterious box of memorabilia and begins a search for her grandmother's origins. The novel is part of a fairy tale series created by Terri Windling.

Snow White

- Picture Books


- YA Novel

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Works Cited


Fairy tales help to fuel the imagination of children, as it takes them into another world that is so different from ours, where there are, fairies, mermaids and magic. 2. Enhances Understanding of the Abstract. An abstract concept is the concept of an idea or thought. For example, in beauty and the beast, we see that the beast was cursed for being cruel, but later, he was transformed into a handsome prince. Your children can have a good mental work out, discussing what changes in his character enabled Belle to develop feelings for him and eventually break the curse. Step into the magical world of fairy tales and find your favorite characters under the flaps in this charming seek-and-find book. Inside, children will be enchanted by the beautifully illustrated fairy tale scenes, each with a rhyme inviting them to lift up the flaps and discover who is underneath. At the end of the book is a big fold-out page that reveals all the fairy-tale characters together, living happily ever after...more. Buckley's debut novel gets bogged down in labored world building and sometimes stilted prose, but the wild parade of magical folk in the gleefully fractured fairy tales (Snow White teaches school; the Three Little Pigs are policemen) may draw some fans. A second volume in the Sisters Grimm series, The Unusual Suspects, is also available. This is a beautifully illustrated picture book version of the classic fairytale The Frog Prince, and includes reading comprehension questions at the end. The classic fairytale also has a teaching guide with lesson plans available for Grade 1 students, and reading comprehension questions available at the end of the book. This is a magical tale of fairies and fairy circles in the Namibian desert, a collaboration between NaDEET and Free Kids Books, and all proceeds will go to NaDEET. Fairy Circles is a perfect... Reviews (1). Fairy Tales and Novels for Teens and for the Classroom. Once a familiar fairy tale is changed into a novel for teenagers, it becomes a more complex story. Characters become more fully realized in these retellings. Readers learn the weaknesses and strengths of main characters, such as Orasmyn and Belle in Donna Jo Napoli's Beast. Through comparing picture books and teen novels, we have one last chance to introduce fairy tales to older readers, to introduce readers to the beauty of book illustration, to encourage critical thinking, and to expand cultural literacy. Beauty, Beast, Cinderella, Hansel, Gretel, Jack, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, Rumpelstiltskin, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White can make all of that possible. Beauty and the beast. Picture Books. Fairy tales have been with us for so long that it's hard to argue their appeal. They're the stories that have woven themselves into our childhood dreams, and they've never really left us. And yet, they're also brimming with new potential. What if the prince who comes to save the day is actually a princess? If you're on the fence as to which amazing fantasy book to pick up next, you can also step into our 1-minute quiz below to get a personalized fantasy book recommendation, powered by Typeform. Original Fairy Tales. 1) The Hazel Wood by Melissa Albert (The Hazel Wood #1). Probably the most meta book on our list, The Hazel Wood is a fairy tale about fairy tales. Specifically, it's about Alice and the fairy tale book that her late grandmother wrote many years ago.