

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Using Fairytales for In-Depth Analysis Project

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

This fairytale project is a multi-step, semester-long project in which students work individually to conduct an in-depth examination of a classic fairytale. Students choose a classic fairytale, such as *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Snow White* or others from an approved list and work through different steps to produce a final analytical paper that examines the historical development, cultural significance, and social impact of their chosen fairytale.

The first part of the project is to conduct interviews with four individuals about their perceptions and understanding of a specific fairytale. Students may choose to interview people they know, but they must also interview someone they do not know. The primary criteria for selecting interview participants is to identify people who are different from each other in some way—either by age, gender, nationality, education level, or any other characteristic that makes them different from the other interviewees. Students are not provided with any type of script for their interviews, but they must be sure to cover specific background questions such as age, current area of residence, cultural background, education level, and religious history. Students must also record the participant's version of the fairytale and determine where the interviewee originally heard or read the fairytale. These interviews provide the basis for the comparative analysis paper that will be produced as the final project.

As students are collecting interviews, they are also working through a series of smaller writing assignments that are building blocks of the final paper. In one short paper, students analyze the historical origin of the fairytale. The historical paper should include information about the original author, original date of publication, notable changes to the fairytale over time, and alternative versions of the fairytale. This paper should also include information about any scholarly articles that have been written about the fairytale. In a second paper, students build on some of the elements from the historical paper and delve into a comparative analysis about the differences between the original and current versions of the fairytale. In this paper, students discuss why the changes are significant and what factors may have influenced or prompted the changes.

Research and writing takes place outside of the classroom; however, students also engage in class discussions to explore and analyze their fairytales and their findings. To do so, students are grouped together to engage in small group discussions about the fairytales. Each group is tasked with examining a specific element of the fairytale such as the characters, the setting, or the basic plot. After each group has had time to discuss their assigned component, the class comes back together to discuss the fairytale as a whole. One or two different fairytales are discussed during each class. To encourage equal participation, students rate each other's participation in the smaller groups and these ratings directly impact students' participation grades.

The culminating project includes three parts: a presentation, a paper, and a portfolio. For the presentation, students use PowerPoint slides to introduce the fairytale, outline the key elements of the fairytale, and provide an overview of their analysis. The analysis should cover changes that happened to the fairytale over time and what the fairytale says about society. The final paper is an in-depth analysis about the origin of the fairytale, how it has evolved, its social or historical significance, cultural variations of the fairytale, and what the student discovered about the fairytale's place in society. Finally, students compile an electronic portfolio that includes their interview materials, short papers, presentation, and final paper.

How to Ensure Participation in This Innovative Teaching Practice:

Students rate each other on their participation and students' grades are negatively impacted due to lack of participation.