

Into the Wild

by Sarah Beth Durst

Lesson Plan: Creating a Fantasy World

In *Into the Wild*, Julie Marchen flies on the back of a griffin, outwits ogres, and transforms into a mouse during her quest to save her Massachusetts town from becoming a fairy-tale kingdom.

Into the Wild is a fantasy story. In other words, it involves events that could never happen in the real world. In this lesson, students will lay the foundation for creating their own fantastic tale.

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GOAL: Through group brainstorming, create the basis for a fantasy story.

PROCEDURE:

1. Discuss what makes a story “fantasy.” As a basis for discussion, select 5 stories that the class has recently read or all know, including at least 2 fantasy stories. (If you don’t have 5, it’s okay to include TV or movies.) Ask the students to identify which stories include something that could not happen in the real world. These are the fantasy stories.

Next, ask what these fantasy stories have in common. Do all fantasy stories have wizards? (No, but some do.) Do all fantasy stories have fairies? (No, but some do.) Do all fantasy stories have knights slaying dragons? (No, but some do.) So what do they all have in common? **In all fantasy stories, at least one aspect of the real world is different from what you would expect.**

2. In groups, brainstorm ideas for what could be different. For example, in *Into the Wild*, the basic idea is that fairy-tale characters exist. Your idea could be that kitchen appliances talk. Or babies can fly. Or clouds are alive. (Note: we are looking for things that are impossible. Things that are not-yet-possible-but-could-be-someday are science fiction.) Record the ideas in a t-chart, like this:

In the real world...	In a fantasy world...
Fairy-tale characters are only in stories.	Fairy-tale characters live in your town.
Babies crawl.	Babies fly.
Clouds are lots of tiny water droplets.	Clouds are alive.

3. Each student should choose one single part of the world to change.
4. In his or her writer's notebook, each student should write down ideas for what his or her school day would be like if that one single part (and only that one single part!) of the world were different. They could describe waking up, getting ready for school, going to school, being in class, having lunch, recess...

EVALUATE: Students share their ideas.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES: The students now have a fantasy world. But a world, however magical, isn't a story yet. To create a story out of a world, the next step is to ask: what goes wrong? (See lesson plan: "Growing a Story.")