



Things are Looking Grimm, Jill

Dan Bar-el

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Consider the following question as you read *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*:
How can a sense of humor be a useful tool?

Story

When Jill sets off to rescue the women of Grimm, she meets a lot of very odd people and discovers the value of listening to her mother!

Author

When not hitching a ride on a broomstick with a passing witch or teaching marmots to play guitar, Dan Bar-el is an early childhood educator, a writer, a storyteller, and a very funny guy. *Things are Looking up, Jack*, his first book about hapless King Jack and reckless Princess Jill, was published by Orca in 2003. His picturebook, *Alphabetter*, is due out from Orca in Fall 2006. Dan lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Curricular Integration

For more ideas, check out the teacher guide for *Things are Looking up, Jack* found on the Orca Book Publishers' site.

Language Arts

- Prior to reading *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*, the teacher might want to familiarize the students with the characters and stories of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, as they are integral to the storyline.
- Choose a favorite Mother Goose rhyme to memorize and recite aloud in pairs or small groups.
- Read *Things are Looking Up, Jack* and then compare and contrast the events to those in *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*. Represent findings in a Venn diagram or some other graphic format.
- Many fairy tale characters are found in *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*. For example: Cinderella, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Rapunzel, Cinderella's fairy godmother and the elves and the shoemaker. Have students choose one and create a comic strip of something they do in the book.
- Charles Perrault is often thought to have introduced the genre of fairy tales to the world. His version of the Mother Goose stories was first published in 1697 and included such favorite tales as Little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella. The Brothers Grimm first published their collection of fairy tales in 1812. Today there are many,

many versions of these tales from countries around the globe. Have students, working in pairs or groups of three, find two different versions of a traditional Mother Goose rhyme or fairy tale.

- Using two versions of the same story, have them compare and contrast their literary characteristics. For example: “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Lon Po Po.”
- There are many “fractured” fairy tales and Mother Goose rhymes that are exciting to read and experience. These tales alter the original story in some way. Gather as many as you can and compare them to the original versions of the story. Discuss the appeal of each type of story. Have students read these aloud.
- Have students write their own version of a Jill story. They may choose to write a traditional or a “fractured” one. Include one or more traditional fairy tales or Mother Goose characters in the story. Illustrate a key part of the story.

Art

- Through drawings, the characters of Mother Goose and Grimm come to life. Connect the real Mother Goose characters with the ones in *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill* in a “before and after” drawing. For example: Humpty Dumpty/ Sir Humpty and Jill/ Princess Jill.
- At the beginning of *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*, we read of Jill’s prowess as an athlete. Have a discussion about what being good at something looks like, then ask students to draw themselves doing an activity they feel they are very good at.
- Assign groups to create large drawings of the Mother Goose characters that appear in *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*. Use these drawings as starters for writing poetry. Enlarge the poems to fit the pictures and display them along a hallway or other venue.
- In Chapter 9, Fairy Godmother attempts to make some lemonade appear. She has some difficulty with this task. Create a series of sequencing pictures that show her different attempts.
- Have students draw Iron Hans using charcoal or pastel as the medium.

Social Studies

- Create a map of Mother Goose’s kingdom. Include the following: compass rose, map key, royal forest, castle and cobblestone path, to name a few.
- Using map skills, students can draw maps illustrating different tales. For example:

Hansel and Gretel's trip through the forest, Little Miss Muffet's story or Snow White and the Seven Dwarves' journey. Encourage them to include details from the stories as well their own material.

- In each fairy tale or Mother Goose story, there is an artifact or object that relates to the story. For example: Little Miss Muffet has her tuffet, Goldilocks has the beds or bowls of porridge and Humpty Dumpty has his wall. In our world, find artifacts or objects that identify a culture, society or celebration. Write about one and share with your class.

Drama

- Conduct a mock trial of Iron Hans or in support of the elves getting more money for their work, for example.
- Divide your class into groups and have each one represent a character from *Things are Looking Grimm, Jill*. For example: Rapunzel, Prince Herbert or Fairy Godmother. Create short skits that show what the character might be doing either directly from the story or somehow related to it.
- Become a local newspaper reporter and follow the escapades of Jill as she tries to save the women of Grimm. Write a newspaper column or front page story. Then act out the story and possible interview.

Selected Resources

Fiction

- Auch, Mary Jane. *The Princess and the Pizza*.
- Bar-el, Dan. *Things are Looking up, Jack*.
- Beuchner, Caralyn. *Fanny's Dream*.
- Briggs, Raymond. *Jim and the Beanstalk*.
- Brooke, William. *Teller of Tales*.
- Celsi, Teresa. *The Fourth Little Pig*.
- Cole, Babette. *Prince Cinders; Princess Smartypants*.
- Hartman, Bob. *The Little Wolf Who Cried Boy*.
- Holub, Joan. *Cinderdog and the Wicked Stepcat*.
- Kellogg, Steven. *Chicken Little*.
- Krensky, Stephen. *The Missing Mother Goose*.
- Levine, Gail. *Ella Enchanted*.
- Mason, Jane B. *Who's the Fairest?*
- Miriam, Eve. *Inner City Mother Goose*.

Munsch, Robert. *The Paper Bag Princess*.

Napoli, Donna Jo. *Prince of the Pond*.

Oppenheim, Joanne. "Not now" *said the Cow*.

Palatini, Maggie. *Piggie Pie*.

Ross, Tony. *Mrs. Goat and her Seven Little Kids*.

Scieszka, Jon. *The Frog Prince Continued; The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales; The Book That Jack Wrote*.

Smith, Linda. *Sir Cassie to the Rescue*.

Stanley, Diane. *Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter*.

Tate, Nikki. *Jessa be Nimble, Rebel be Quick*.

Nonfiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification numbers appear in parentheses where applicable.)

Babbitt, Natalie. *Ouch! A Tale from Grimm*. (398.2)

Blades, Ann. *Wolf and the Seven Little Kids*. (398.2)

Blake, Quentin. *Quentin Blake's Nursery Rhyme Book*. (398.8)

Crews, Nina. *The Neighborhood Mother Goose*. (398.8)

Gosling, Gabby. *The Top Secret Files of Mother Goose*. (398.8)

Grimm, Jacob. *Grimm's the Golden Goose; Grimm's Fairy Tales; The Classic Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*. (398.2)

Lottridge, Celia Barker. *Mother Goose: A Canadian Sampler*. (398.8)

Lowell, Susan. *Little Red Cowboy Hat*. (398.2)

McCaughrean, Geraldine. *Grandma Chickenlegs*. (398.2)

Montgomery, Michael G. *Over the Candlestick: Classic Nursery Rhymes and the Real Stories Behind Them*. (398.8)

Williams, Jay. *The Practical Princess*. (398)

Online

Mother Goose Rhymes

www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Dell/3942/

Just Who Was Mother Goose?

www.librarysupport.net/mothergoosesociety/who.html

Nursery Rhymes by Mother Goose

www.apples4theteacher.com/mother-goose-nursery-rhymes/index.html

Crimes from Mother Goose

www.ccle.fourh.umn.edu/rulesmemphis.html

A Rhyme a Week: Nursery Rhymes for Early Literacy
curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/wil/rimes_and_rhymes.htm
Rhyme Time with Mother Goose: a Webquest
www.rblewis.net/technology/EDU506/WebQuests/rhymes/rhymes.html
Nursery Rhyme Riddles
www.apples4theteacher.com/mother-goose-nursery-rhymes/riddles.html
Interactive Grimm Fairy Tales
www.grimmfairytales.com/en/main
Grimm's Fairy Tales: From Folklore to Forever
www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/index2.html
Festivals of Light Around the World
www.everythingsl.net/lessons/light_festivals.php

A Letter from the Author

Dear Reader,

So you've read *Things Are Looking Grimm, Jill*. Good for you and well done. Or perhaps you are about to read *Things Are Looking Grimm, Jill*, in which case all I can say is hurry up, because I won't continue this letter until you've caught up with the rest of the group.

We're waiting.

Finished? Excellent. Where was I?

Oh, yes – about the writing of the book. It's meant to be funny. I can't stress this enough. I've had far too many letters from readers of my first book, *Things Are Looking Up, Jack*, inquiring as to whether the humor was intentional or was I, the writer, just slow.

This book is a satire of fairy tales. Brothers Grimm fairy tales, as you, my intelligent reader, have likely figured out by the title. With all those swooning girls waiting for gallant princes to save them, these stories make a perfect foil to a feisty independent character like Jill.

They say that fairy tales go far back in time, much farther than when they were actually written down. They say that fairy tales can connect to our dream world and that we understand them at a level deeper than, consciously, we may realize. I don't know who "they" are exactly, and I would like to think that "they" have actual names, but nonetheless I do agree with them.

I think that fairy tales try to teach lessons to children. Some might even say that fairy tales try to brainwash children. Cinderella—Barbie—Cinderella—Barbie—you are getting very sleepy.

There have been other satires of fairy tales written in the past. Perhaps it is because fairy tales reflect a world that a lot of us have no use for anymore and by making fun of them, we may take away some of the power they hold over us. My satire deals specifically with how fairy tales are still used to sell us stuff that we may actually not need and to the detriment of those less fortunate than us.

Personally, I think we need new fairy tales, where girls and boys can be anything they want to be, and where everyone truly lives happily ever after, and where kissing a frog is just plain funny.

With a wink and a chuckle,

Dan