

## **Lesson Title: Fairy Tales in Art and Language**

**Grade Level: 4 - 12**

**Connections: Language Arts, Visual Arts**

Students examine works of art and engage in classroom and independent activities that encourage creative writing of poetry and drawing. Students also learn traditional bookmaking techniques and make their own journal to create and collect their work.

### **National Standards:**

#### **National Language Arts Standards -**

Develop and use an expanding knowledge base and essential processes for effective communication through reading, writing, listening, viewing, and speaking

Construct meaning and apply critical and analytical thinking strategies when engaged in reading, writing, listening, speaking, or viewing

Understand, accept, and appreciate cultural diversity through a great variety of reading and language experiences

Imagine and value worlds other than their own

#### **National Visual Arts Standards -**

Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes

Uses knowledge of structures and functions

Chooses and evaluates a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

Makes connections between visual arts and other disciplines

### **Performance Objectives:**

Uses the writing process to produce poetry

Given text to read, analyzes, infers, and synthesizes meanings

Demonstrates an understanding of a bookmaking technique

Selects media, technique, subjects, and symbols that communicate intended meaning in their art work.

### **Work of Art:**

**Frank Stella, American, b. 1936, *The Witch of the Garden*, 1986. Oil, oil stick, urthane, acrylic and fluorescent alkyd on aluminum, 10'7 x 12'8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 42 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.**

### **Vocabulary:**

**Abstract-** Art that emphasizes design and simplified investigation of forms; subject matter may be recognizable or may be color, line, and shape itself.

**Cone-** A solid figure with a circular base tapering to a point.

**Cylinder-** A circular body with two flat bottoms.

**Geometric-** Referring to mechanical, human-made shapes such as squares, zig-zags, circles, spirals, checkerboard patterns, bands, and the like.

**Non-objective art-** Art that has no recognizable subject matter such as trees, flowers, or people. The actual subject matter might be color or shapes.

**Onomatopoeia-** The formation of words in imitation of natural sounds, such as buzz or hiss.

**Pattern-** Where a combination of lines, colors, and shapes are repeated for decorative effects.

**Relief-** Sculptural surface which is not freestanding but projects from an attached background.

**About the Art and Artist:**

Frank Stella began working in a studio in New York City in 1958 after graduating from Princeton University, where he studied art history. He was influenced by abstract expressionism and later by hard-edge flat painting. In the 1960s, he was both attacked and praised for his black paintings. These were large rectangles with bands of black paint separated by thin stripes of bare canvas. Later, he began painting with bright colors and exploring the use of canvasses of different shapes such as Us and Ls. These led to colorful and expressive sculpture-like paintings of fabric and metal. Stella continues to experiment with materials and techniques.

During the 1970s, Stella started making reliefs, using the technique of overlapping and interlocking jigsaw shapes built out from the supporting wall. In *The Witch of the Garden*, Stella uses forms like cones, discs, and cylinders that seem to float in space and collide into each other. He originally used canvas rectangles as backgrounds for the metal cutouts, and later replaced them with aluminum ones. This is where he got the idea that paintings could be constructed. It soon became difficult to tell if works like *The Witch's Garden* were paintings or sculptures.

After he constructed *The Witch of the Garden*, and other "paintings" like it he gave them titles from fairy tales. He believed that these "paintings", like fairy tales, had supernatural, unexpected, and childlike elements. The title of this painting is from an Italian fairy tale (see attached) of the same name.

**Questions for Looking Together:**

1. Is this a painting or a sculpture? Why do you think so?
2. What is the mood of this painting? What did the artist do to achieve this effect?
3. Stella called this painting *The Witch's Garden*. Why do you think he called it that? What title would you give it? Why?
4. The artist believed this work of art was similar in some ways to fairy tales. Describe the general idea of a fairy tale. How are many fairy tales alike? Can you think of ways this relief is like a fairy tale?

**Activities:**

1. Read aloud the Italian folktale "The Garden Witch" to the students. After reading it, look for parts of the story in the work of art.
2. Read Hansel and Gretel. Discuss how the ending of it is similar to the story, "The Garden Witch." Discuss the elements many fairy tales have in common. For example: witches, magic, good vs. evil, a bargain, and happy endings.
3. Have students write their own fairy tales individually or in groups. Ask students to do a scribble drawing - a quick sketch of lines, shapes, and patterns to illustrate their story. Have

them color it in with bright crayons, colored pencils, or markers. Make sure they give it a title.

4. Have students use a compass, protractor and a ruler to construct various geometric shapes. Have them alter the shapes in various ways by dividing and cutting them into different sections. Ask them to fill some pieces with color, some with patterns and arrange the shapes to form an interesting composition on a large piece of heavy paper or cardboard. Have them make the composition 3-dimensional by folding some of the pieces and pasting only parts of them to the cardboard background. When they are almost finished, have them cut away some of the background to achieve the effect of floating, moving shapes. This can be an individual or class project.
5. Have students complete the language and visual arts worksheet activities (see attached) on their own. These activities can be completed in a journal they make themselves. (See the lesson plan "Make Your Own Journal")

## **Draw it Yourself!**

*The Witch of the Garden*, ca. 1986

Frank Stella, b. 1936

The artist who made *The Witch of the Garden* actually made it first and then named it. He probably thought it was a good match because the shapes look like things that might be found in a witch's garden.

1. Think about a fairy tale that you know. Use elements from the story to create a drawing or design. For example, if you pick *Cinderella*, you might include items like a pumpkin, a glass slipper, or parts of them. Combine the objects with other shapes. This will be an abstract drawing- that is, one that has parts that are recognizable and parts that are not. Sketch your idea in your journal.
2. Select a shape from *The Witch of the Garden*. Sketch it in your journal. Then turn it into something unexpected.

## Write it Yourself!

*The Witch of the Garden*, ca. 1986

Frank Stella, b. 1936

Some paintings are very easy to understand and others are more complicated and intriguing. The title of this painting tells us that it is about a witch in a garden, but you may see other ideas in its swirl of shapes and colors. Some poems are mysterious and strange. They may not be so easy to understand but they may fascinate us anyway. Here's an example of such a poem:

from **beware: do not read this poem**

tonite, thriller was  
abt an ol woman, so vain she  
surrounded herself w/  
    many mirrors

it got so bad that finally she  
locked herself indoors & her  
whole life became the  
    mirrors

one day the villagers broke  
into her house, but she was too  
swift for them. she disappeared  
    into a mirror  
each tenant who bought the house  
after that, lost a loved one to  
    the ol woman in the mirror:  
    first a little girl  
    then a young woman  
    then the young woman/s husband

the hunger of this poem is legendary  
it has taken in many victims  
back off from this poem  
it has drawn in yr feet  
back off form this poem  
it has drawn in yr legs  
back off from this poem  
it is a greedy mirror

you are into this poem from  
    the waist down  
nobody can hear you can they?  
this poem has had you up to here  
    belch

this poem ain't got no manners  
you cant call out from this poem  
relax now and go w/this poem  
move and roll on to this poem  
do not resist this poem  
this poem has your eyes  
this poem has his head  
this poem has his arms  
this poem has his fingers  
this poem has his fingertips

this poem is the reader & the  
reader this poem.

Ishmael Reed

1. Look at *The Witch of the Garden* by Frank Stella. Let your imagination play with the colors and shapes. The poet Ishmael Reed used unusual punctuation and rhythms in his strange poem. First, he started telling a story and then the story was interrupted by a series of warnings to the reader.

Write a poem that tells a story using strange words and even unusual punctuation !?\*( )<>! and spelllllling if you want. Experiment with ways to tell your story. Use **strong** sense words and **power** words. Compare one thing to another using similes and metaphors. Interrupt your story to talk to the reader or give advice. Write something about the poem you are writing inside of the poem you are writing. Don't forget to give your poem a title. Have fun-- see how fascinating you can be! If you need help getting started, here is a first line: Beware of this painting...

## **The Garden Witch**

### *An Italian Folktale*

There was once a cabbage patch. It was a time of famine, and two women were out looking for something to eat. "Friend," said one of them, "let's go into this garden and pick cabbages."

"But someone is surely guarding it" answered the other woman.

The first one went to see. "There's not a soul around. Let's go in."

They went into the garden and each picked an armful of cabbages. They carried them home, prepared a good supper, and the next day returned for two more armfuls.

Now that garden belonged to an old woman, who came home and discovered that her cabbages had been stolen. "I'll take care of that," she said to herself. "I'll get a dog, and tie him to the gate."

The friends saw the dog, and one of them said, "No indeed, I'm not going in this time for cabbages."

"Don't be silly," replied the other one. "We'll get two cents worth of hard bread and throw it to the dog. That way we can do what we wish."

They bought the bread and before the dog could go "Bow-wow!" threw it to him. He dived into the bread and remained perfectly quiet. The friends got their cabbages and left.

The old woman appeared and saw what had happened. "So you let them pick cabbages right under your nose! You're not fit to be a watch dog." In his place she put a cat.

The two friends returned for cabbages and spied the cat. They bought two cents worth of milk, and before the cat could go "Meow" they gave her the milk and she kept quiet. The old woman appeared and found neither cabbage or thieves, and had it out with the cat.

"Now who will I put here? The rooster! This time the thieves won't get away from me."

"No, indeed, I'm not going in this time," said one of the two friends.

"There's the rooster!"

"Throw him some grain," said the other, "and he won't crow."

While the rooster was quiet, they cleaned out the cabbage patch. The old woman appeared and had it out with the rooster. This time she dug a hole and covered herself up with dirt, leaving only an ear above ground.

The next morning the women returned, looked all around, but saw no one in the garden. Going in, they didn't notice anything unusual, but going out one friend noticed the ear sticking out of the ground and exclaimed, "Oh, look at this wonderful mushroom!" She bent over and began tugging on the mushroom. She pulled and pulled with all her might. She gave one final jerk, and out jumped the old woman.

"Ah-HA!" cried the witch, "So you're the ones who picked my cabbages! Just let me get my hands on you now." She seized the woman who had yanked her by the ear while the other woman ran away.

"Now I'm going to eat you whole," said the old woman.

"Wait," said the woman, "I'm expecting a baby. If you let me go, I promise that, boy or girl, when it's sixteen, I'll give it to you. Do you agree?"

"I agree!" replied the witch. "Pick all the cabbages you like and be gone. But remember your promise."

Two months later, she gave birth to a baby girl. "Ah, poor daughter!" sighed her mother. "I'll nurse and raise you, and you'll be eaten alive!" And she wept.

When the girl was almost sixteen, she was out buying oil for her mother one day and met the witch. "And whose daughter are you, lass?"

"Signora Sabedda's"

"You've really grown up. . . I'm sure you're delicious. . . When you get home ask your mother about her promise."

The girl went to her mother and told her everything. "And she told me to say, "What about your promise?"

"My promise?" repeated the mother, and burst into tears. "If you run into the woman again, tell her you're still quite small ."

But the girl was already sixteen and ashamed to say she was quite small. So the next time the witch crossed her path she said, "I'm a big girl already."

"Well, come along with your grandmother who has so many beautiful presents for you," said the witch and seized the girl.

She took her home and locked her up in the chicken coop and stuffed her full of food to fatten her up. After a short space of time, she decided to see if the girl was fat, and said, "Let me have a look at your little finger."

The girl picked up a mouse that had his nest in the chicken coop and showed the witch the mouse's tail instead of her finger.

"My goodness, you're thin, still too thin, my little one. Keep on eating."

But a little later, the temptation to gobble her up was just too much, so the witch led the girl out of the chicken coop. "My, you're the picture of health! Let's heat up the stove now for me to bake bread."

They made up the bread. The girl heated the oven, swept it out, and got it all ready.

"Now put the bread in," said the witch.

"Granny, I don't know how to put the bread in. I can do everything else but that."

"I'll show you how. Slide the bread over here to me."

The girl passed the bread, and the witch put it in the oven.

"Now pick up the large slab that closes the oven."

"How do I lift the slab, Granny?"

"I'll do it myself!" said the witch.

When she bent over, the girl grabbed her by the legs and shoved her inside the oven. Then she picked up the large slab and closed the oven, with the witch inside. She ran home immediately to tell her mother, and the cabbage patch was now all theirs.

Reprinted from : Calvino, Italo. Italian Folktales. New York:Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, English translation 1980.

