

Write On! Tell Me a Folktale

Folktales Through the Ages

Our idea of Santa Claus was born from a Dutch **folktale** about a real man known as Saint Nicholas. He was a rich man who lived around 280 CE in the area we know as Turkey. He spent his money on the poor and sick, bringing them food and other things they needed.



The story of Nicholas's generosity traveled through Europe to the Netherlands. There they called him *Sinter Klaas*. When the Dutch people came to America, they brought the folktale with them and we began calling him Santa Claus.

Usually a folktale is a story passed on from generation to generation within a culture or group of people. In the case of Santa Claus, the story crossed cultures and continents. Folktales are usually made up. They are sometimes based on the supernatural. They may teach a lesson. They are always entertaining.

Are you familiar with any folktales from Latin America or Africa? Have you heard of the Smiling Rabbit? It tells of a rabbit that tricked a jaguar. The jaguar got so mad that he flung the rabbit to the moon. That is why when the moon is full and red, you can see a rabbit bending over holding his stomach with laughter.

Have you heard any American folktales such as the Gingerbread Man? It is a story about a naughty gingerbread boy who runs from his parents. He gets eaten by an alligator. This story is a lesson to children to mind their parents or bad things could happen.



Writing a folktale can be fun.

In this lesson, you will learn to write a folktale of your own.

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Different Types of Folktales

The first thing you have to do is choose what type of folktale you would like to write. There are three major types:

- **Fool's Tale:** A clever character outsmarts a foolish character.
- **Tall Tale:** A hero/heroine solves a problem by using his/her special abilities which usually relate to size and/or strength. It can also describe a place or object by using **exaggeration** (to enlarge beyond the limits of truth; overstate).
- **Animal Tale:** A story about an animal with special powers or qualities.

Example

Here is a tall tale. It is about the weather conditions in the state of Arizona, as retold by S.E. Schlosser.

The Arizona Weather

Well, some folks don't like the weather in Arizona, but I ain't one of 'em. Why, the air in Arizona is so fine, tourists stop over the state line just to fill their tires with it. Course, Arizona does get rather hot. But since we started shippin' in ice from California, our hens don't lay hard boiled eggs no more.

As for folks who hate rain, why Arizona is just the spot. We haven't seen a drop of rain in Arizona since Noah illegally parked his ark at the top of Mount Ararat. It's so dry, we have to take our frogs to the pool to teach 'em how to swim. And never you mind saving up for a rainy day, cause you'll never get to spend yer money.



So there it is in a nutshell. Why I like Arizona. Arizona is full of fine air and fine days. Makes it great fer all them tourists who get a hankering to drive to that Grand Canyon one of our old timers dug up while his wife wheeled the dirt away.

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This is an example of a tall tale. The details of the weather in Arizona have been exaggerated. They really don't teach their frogs to swim in pools, and an old timer didn't really shovel out the Grand Canyon. These sentences make the reader laugh. At the same time it shows how dry Arizona is.

Brainstorming: Coming Up with Ideas

Now you are going to write your own folktale. Like the tall tale you just read, your folktale will be only three paragraphs long. First, choose the kind of tale you would like to write.

- ✓ For a **fool's tale**, think of a joke you have heard that you could expand into a story. The main character has to believe something that is silly.
- ✓ For a **tall tale**, think about a solution to a problem or something you would like to describe using exaggeration.
- ✓ For an **animal's tale** think about explaining why something is the way it is, or of something you want to teach a child. For example, why does a red moon look like there is a laughing rabbit on it?



Check it Out!

What's the Story and Hey, What's the Big Idea, in the Reading on the Move lesson series can also help you with writing your story.

Find it on the Internet at

www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm

Have you picked the kind of tale you would like to write? Make notes on these lines.

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Once you have an idea, complete this graphic organizer. It will help you answer some questions and sort out your thoughts.

<p>How many characters will be in your story? Try to keep it to one or two.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>What place or thing will you describe?</p>	
<p>What special traits or talents does your character have?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>What special conditions does the place or thing have?</p>	
<p>Name your characters, if there are any. Try to name them based on their characteristics, such as Thumper the rabbit or Popeye the sailor.</p>	
<p>What action will take place? What is going to happen?</p>	
<p>How will it end?</p>	

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Finishing Up

What you have written is called a **rough draft**. It is a great start. It may have mistakes in it. Some sentences may not sound right to you. Now is the time you can make it better.

Go back and read each sentence. This is your chance to correct mistakes. Are the words spelled correctly? Did you use capital letters and punctuation? Did you remember to use paragraphs and indent?

Is your story as good as you can make it? Did you give it a title? If you can, type it on a computer and print it out. If you do not have a computer, use your best handwriting and copy it over on a piece of paper or on the following lines. Before you do that, you may want to complete the checklist at the end of this lesson.



Check it Out!

All About Sentences in the Reading on the Move lesson series can also help you with writing your story.

Find it on the Internet at

www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm

Folktale Checklist

- I have an opening that introduces my characters or place.
- There is a body and conclusion that have action.
- Many details describe my characters/place and their special traits/conditions.

Writing Traits Scored in this Lesson

	Great Job 5 points	Almost There 3 points	Keep Working 1 point
Sentence Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences start in different ways. • Sentence length varies. • The piece flows smoothly when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sentences start in different ways. • Most of the sentences vary in length. • Most of the paper flows smoothly when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are too many short sentences. • All sentences start the same way. • The writing does not flow smoothly.
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a consistent tone. • The audience wants to read more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tone is fairly consistent. • It could be made more interesting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tone is unclear and inconsistent. • The piece is not interesting to read.

Words to Know

folktale: a story specific to a common group of people

exaggerate: to enlarge beyond the limits of truth; overstate

rough draft: the first copy of a piece of writing

