

# Hansel and Gretel

*A musical Journey*

**An Educator's guide to:**

## Hansel and Gretel

*Amusical*

*Journey*

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Enjoy this classic tale of a young boy and his sisters' struggle of a lifetime. Abandoned by their father and stepmother, in the middle of the forest, they must learn to fend for themselves. Their journey is met with many obstacles one in particular is the doorstep of a very unusual house. It's not until we meet the present home owner does our story truly unfold. Will working together and never giving up be enough to help Hansel and Gretel find a home and happiness? Or shall all their hard work be a vision of the past?

Hansel and Gretel was first collected and recorded by the Grimm brothers in the early part of the nineteenth century. The tale is similar to many children and ogre tales that have been known throughout Europe for many centuries. The version the Grimms collected came from storyteller Dortchen Wild in the town of Cassel. Wild later became Wilhelm Grimm's wife.

Many scholars attribute the story's success to the children's opera written by Humperdinck in 1893. The opera is a lighter version of the tale since it completely omits the children's abandonment in the woods by their parents. However, the opera was a tremendous success from its first production in Munich. It is still produced on occasion a hundred years later and several recordings of performances are available for listening and viewing.

The earlier literary tales which bear the closest resemblance to Hansel and Gretel are of French origin. First, Charles Perrault's "Le petit Poucet" (1697) closely resembles Hansel and Gretel in its first half since the parents abandon the children in the woods. A year later, Madame d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" appeared in her *Les Contes nouveaux, ou les fetes a la Mode*. Her story tells of three princesses who are abandoned by their parents in the woods and find their way to a giant's house. Finetta, the heroine, leaves trails of items to find her way out of the forest, but is foiled on her third attempt when pigeons eat the peas she drops along her path. Later, she burns the giant in his giant oven.

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One of the earliest versions of the tale translated into English appeared in 1853 in an anonymous collection of the Grimm tales published by Addey and Co. A copy of that version can be found in Iona and Peter Opie's *Classic Fairy Tales*.

Hansel and Gretel is still one of the best known fairy tales today, only eclipsed by the likes of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast*. One of my favorite modern versions is the picture book illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky, the Caldecott winner for his *Rapunzel*, with the text adapted by Rika Lesser. I had the privilege of viewing some of Zelinsky's paintings in person one summer while visiting Simmons College. The work is beautiful and fortunately modern technology allows the published book to appear almost as sumptuous as the real paintings. Lesser's poetical version of the tale is also a treat.

## Study Guide



**TH.1.2.3.** (3-5) Students should understand that theatre is a social function and theatre etiquette is the responsibility of the audience.

1. It is important that they know about theatre etiquette, or manners.
  - Sitting quietly during the performance
  - Being respectful of those around you
  - Clapping at appropriate times (Curtain call or after a song they liked)
  - Always turning off cell phone and pagers during the performance
  - Listen to direction from their teacher or theatre staff

**But the No.1 rule is “To have fun and enjoy the magic of ones imagination”**

2. Ask your students to discuss the difference between television and live theatre. Discuss with them how a play or musical is brought to life and how it differs from a taped television show. Use these vocabulary words to help them understand.

SCRIPT	MUSICAL SCORE
ACTOR	REHEARSAL
MEMORIZING LINES	CREATING CHARACTERS
DIRECTOR	BLOCKING

3. Have the students learn the following vocabulary words and listen for them during the play. See how many words they can recall and how the characters use them in the context of the play.

<b>BREAD CRUMB</b>	<b>STEP PARENT</b>
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<b>GUMDROP</b>	<b>FOREST</b>
<b>TRAIL</b>	<b>DETERMINATION</b>
<b>POVERTY</b>	<b>BAKING</b>
<b>INGREDIENTS</b>	<b>ESCAPE</b>

4. Read to your students the story of *Hansel and Gretel*. Discuss the elements of the story that would make it a Fairy tale. Explain to them that there are many different versions of these stories and that the version that they see will not be exactly like the book.



**LA.E.** (preK-2) The student knows the basic characteristics of fairy tales, fables and stories.

5. Have the student look and listen for patterns during the play. See how many patterns they can recall and how they were used in the context of the play. Encourage the students to be aware that they may occur in music, dance, scenery, costumes and dialogue. Students may also notice architectural patterns in the play.



**MA.D.1.1.1** (PreK-2) The student describes a wide variety of classification schemes and patterns related to the physical characteristics and sensory attributes, such as rhythm, sound, shapes, colors, numbers, similar objects and similar events.



**MA.D.1.2.1** (3-5) The student describes a wide variety of patterns and relationships through models, such as manipulative, tables, graphs, and rules using scientific symbols.

1. Have your students draw a picture or write a letter to the cast of *Hansel and Gretel* telling them what they learned about not giving up. Have them tell the cast some of their favorite parts of the production.
2. Discuss the difference between fairy tales, fables, and parables. Have the students discuss the difference between the play and the fairy tales they have read. What were the similarities? What were the differences? Why was the story a fairy tale?

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3. Have the students discuss why they thought Hansel and Gretel's father and Stepmother left them in the woods. Ask you students to pick a character in the play and tell what they might have done different if they were in that situation. Ask your students to discuss why it is important to always try your best. Discuss why it is important to never give up on something that they are trying to accomplish.
4. Ask your students to create and write an alternate ending. Have them use specific example from the play such as; What if Hansel didn't get away and escape from the Witches house or what if the house was made of vegetables and not sugar and candy, would the children still have wanted to live there?



**TH.D1.1.2** (preK-2) The Students analyzes, criticizes, and constructs meaning from formal and informal theatre, film, television and electronic media.

5. Have the students write a review of the play, their likes and dislikes. To help explain how to do this. Pick a well known movie that is out at the time you see the show. Bring in a review about that movie from your local paper. Don't forget a review can also encompass many things, not just the actors. Discuss the set, costumes, lights maybe even the music from the production.



**LA.A.2.2.7** (3-5) The Student recognizes the use of comparison and contrast in the text.

6. Discuss how the stage and book version of Hansel and Gretel are alike and different. Which one did they like better.
7. "Don't give up", this expression has great meaning, it is a great moral with profound meaning. What are the morals or social duties impressed upon the students by the story of *Hansel and Gretel*? (You should always try to do something to the best of your ability, and never stop until you succeed at it.)
8. Discuss how the characters in the story are similar and different than them selves. Could any of them see this happening to them?



**LA.E.2.2.4** (3-5) The student identifies the major theme of the story or notification text.

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9. Act out a fairy tale of your own. Assign a director, actors, narrator, etc.
10. A good way to get the kids excited and involved is to take the alternate endings, from question 4 up above, and act out those out. That way they already have an idea of how the character may act and talk.



**TH.A.1.2.3** (3-5) the student creates imaginary characters, relationships, and environments, using basic acting skills (e.g. breath control dictation, concentration, and control of isolated body parts).

11. A good way to start this exercise is with animals. Have the children pick their favorite animal and act it out solo in front of the class. Then have all the animals get into an imaginary pen. Tell them to interact with each other as their animal. For example how would a cat and dog react if they were in the same pen together? Or a snake and a mouse. Once they have understood that lesson, then move on to creating human characters and their emotions.

SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS (ONLINE) AVAILABLE:

<http://fln.ed.gov/standards/sss.htm>

ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANICA 2004. 2004

WIKIPEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA – wikipedia.com

THE SURLALUNE FAIRY TALE SITE: <http://surlalunefairytales.com>

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