

Fairy Tales in the Classroom

Today in my 4-6 year olds class, we listened to a fairy tale about a queen who lost her crown to a dragon, who was chased by a young princess, who then crashed into the dragon, who gave the crown back crying that he was lonely, and was then invited by the princess to come live with her family (the king, the queen and the wizard) in their castle.

All lived happily ever after. Before we listened to the fairy tale, I pulled out the character cards and talked about them and had the children play games with them: "Who's missing?" (If I took a card away) or "Who's new?" (if I added a card to the group). After that, we listened to the story. I asked them to remember what happened when and who was in the story at that time.

When we were finished with that, I moved them over to where I had set up my puppet theatre. It is made of red & black velvet with a gold lame curtain. It hangs down from a steel pipe coat rack, which adjusts nicely to the height of the performers, though I would be the only one on stage today.

I had each character in the fairy tale come out and say hello (luckily I had enough puppets) and the kids would say "Hello, King!" and



the king would ask some of them a question (What's your name? Favorite color, sport, etc.) and then say good-bye and all the kids would say "Good bye, King". In the middle of the character presentation, a zebra sauntered onto the stage. I poked my head around the side, narrowed my eyes and said, "Hey, wait a minute, is there a ZEBRA in this story?" And all the kids shook their heads and said "No!" "I didn't think so. GOODBYE, ZEBRA!" Before we were through with the main character intros, I pulled this with a frog, an elephant, a lion, a tiger, and a shark.

At the end, I introduced the Princess. She was a crowd favorite especially when she managed to hypnotize the dragon that was about to eat her. Last week we learned the phrase "Where are we going?" to a rather catchy tune, so after the Princess climbed on back of the dragon, she asked that question in the same singsong voice. The kids also learned the names of some places to go to and they told the Princess where she and the dragon should go. It turns out they went on a long and glorious ride that ended up in the zoo. Oh goody, all the previous animals could come back and say hello in context!

We said hello and goodbye to a fox, an elephant, and a frog. Then everyone got tense when the tiger came out because he looked hungry, but with just a few "la-la-la's", the Princess had him snoring. This calmed little Hirokazu as well as he was sit-

ting there with his hands covering his ears waiting for a big growl and snap, but when it didn't happen, he relaxed his hunched shoulders and smiled.

The Princess invited all to come up and touch the tiger. No one would because everyone knows that Princesses have magic powers and that mere mortals like they were would be foolish to even try such a thing, but the Princess was very kind and patient and the Tiger did look down for the count, so a few brave souls came up to pet him. After they sat down, he woke up and quietly went away.

Before long, out came a very cute zebra (the very same one from before) and the Princess hopped on his back. Again she asked, "Where are we going?" and I let the children dictate the answer. They wanted the Princess and the Zebra to go to the beach. Well, I pulled out Mr. Shark and placed him so that only his top fin showed and started to hum the theme from Jaws. Hirokazu by now knew the drill. This Princess could handle any creature, man or beast, so he relaxed and sat back to see what would happen next. Whaddya think happened? Why the shark ate her in one fell bite of course! The kids went crazy. I am evil. Sometimes. Hee.

Kim Horne has been teaching kindergarten and elementary students in Japan since 2000. She lives in Ogaki, Gifu and is an active member of ETJ and JALT. Kim can be reached at kim_horne@hotmail.com.