

## WHAT ARE FRACTURED FAIRY TALES?

By Mary Lou Williams, M. Ed.



According to the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, "Fractured fairy tales are traditional fairy tales, rearranged to create new plots with fundamentally different meanings or messages...fractured fairy tales, with a reforming intent, seek to impart updated social and moral messages." But there are certainly other ways to fracture a fairy tale besides changing its plot. You can change the characters, introduce new characters, mix characters from different stories, change the point of view, set the story in a different time and/or place, write a sequel, write a prequel, introduce anachronisms and modern idioms. A fractured fairy tale must still be somehow recognizable itself, but elements within have to be "fractured" or broken apart, often mended with crazy glue. The best way to understand fractured fairy tales is through well-known examples that employ the different forms of fracturing.

*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, by Jon Scieszka, is *The Three Little Pigs* told from the point of view of the big, bad wolf. It seems that the big, bad wolf only wanted to borrow a cup of sugar. He had a bad cold, which caused him to huff and puff. The three little pigs just misconstrued everything. The award-winning 1988 musical, *Into The Woods*, by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, ties together the stories of Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel, and Cinderella. The second act is a sequel; it is about what happens after "happily ever after."

Other kinds of tales can be fractured as well as fairy tales. A story from the Old Testament is fractured in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, a

musical by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice, in which anachronisms abound. Pharaoh is played by an Elvis Presley impersonator who sings "The Song of the King" in Elvis-inspired rock and roll that brings down the house. Notable in the music is the variety of styles, including parodies of French ballads, country western, 1920s ragtime, Caribbean, and disco. Two other musicals, *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, fracture the New Testament in a similar way. In perhaps his most famous routine, *Noah*, Bill Cosby fractures the story of Noah and the Ark. At one point a skeptical Noah asks, "Am I on Candid Camera?" Garrison Keillor fractures the story of "The Prodigal Son" by telling it from the point of view of the prodigal son's brother. "Where's my fatted calf?" he wants to know.

*Pygmalion*, the George Bernard Shaw play that the musical *My Fair Lady* is based on, is a fracturing of the Greek myth of Pygmalion, the sculptor who creates a statue of his ideal woman. He falls in love with her and Aphrodite brings her to life for him. In his barbed attack on the British class system, Shaw changes the time and place of the story, and the sculptor becomes the phoneticist, Henry Higgins. *West Side Story* is a fracturing of *Romeo and Juliet* in which the warring families of the lovers in Verona become warring ethnic groups on the west side of Manhattan.

A fractured tale is like the improvisation of a well-known song. It goes off in a different direction, strays from the familiar notes, but never loses the tune.

## AMNESTY RECOVERS LIBRARY MATERIALS

Each year the Lee County Library loses materials. Some, of course, are lost and will never be recovered; however, the vast majority are still in the possession of the original borrowers and could be returned if borrowers made a small effort.

For the first time in over 8 years, the Lee County Library System offered a one-time amnesty opportunity for patrons to return overdue materials without any penalty or fines. The first day of amnesty marked the beginning of "National Library Week" and continued until April 30.

The purpose of amnesty was not only to promote the return of library materials but also to bring back into good standing those patrons who had amassed huge fines and had forfeited their library privilege rather than pay them.

According to Heather O'Connell, LCLS Community Relations Coordinator, circulation staff processed a staggering number of returns:

- More than 1,800 lost items valued at \$34,637.07 and 21,000 overdue books, DVDs, and CDs valued at \$395,768.50.
- The amnesty brought the total value of overdue items down from \$584,177.17 to \$188,408.67.
- As of May 1, nearly 5,900 patrons had brought their accounts back to good standing.

We had a 56% response rate among patrons whose accounts had been blocked for outstanding late items; now they can go back to enjoying all the library has to offer.

Lee County Library System is pleased to have regained library materials during our successful amnesty campaign, and those materials are now available to other users.

Hildegard Adinolfo  
Library Circulation Coordinator