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**Universidad de Valladolid**

**ESCUELA DE EDUCACIÓN DE SORIA**

**Grado en Educación Primaria**

**TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO**

**Rediscovering Classic Fairy Tales for the  
Primary English Language Classroom  
(H. C. Andersen and *The Little Mermaid*)**

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**Soria, 30 de julio de 2014**

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**ABSTRACT.** Children's education is not an easy task. The goal of this research is to analyse the fairy tales, the first contact between children and the literature; it is also important to reflect on classic fairy tales' adaptations and their impact on children's life. Besides, it also adds a study of Hans Christian Andersen, one of the most known fairy tales writers and a rich riding about one of his stories: The Little Mermaid. The goal is to take advantages of each tale to educate children as literature students, English students and as persons too."

**KEYWORDS.** Children's education. Children's literature. Fairy tales. Hans Christian Andersen. Interpreting tales. The Little Mermaid.

**RESUMEN.** Educar a los niños no es tarea fácil. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar los cuentos de hadas, el primer contacto entre la literatura y el niño. También es importante la reflexión sobre las adaptaciones de los cuentos y el impacto que suponen en la vida de los niños. También incluye información sobre Hans Christian Andersen, uno de los escritores de cuentos de hadas más conocido, y una rica lectura de una de sus historias: La Sirenita. El objetivo es sacar el máximo partido a cada cuento para educar a los niños como estudiantes de literatura, estudiantes de lengua inglesa y también como personas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación primaria. Literatura infantil. Cuentos de hadas. Hans Christian Andersen. Interpretación de cuentos. La Sirenita.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Classic fairy tales are not only simple stories. That is known before reading nothing about them. We all knew some classic fairy tales, we ever have read or hear them. They are a part of our lives.

When we are children, the most difficult task is to teach us finding the sense of our lives. In this task the first influence is the family who has to transmit us the culture. As Bruno Bettelheim says (1997), in *Psicoanálisis de los cuentos de hadas*, in this cultural transfer literature is which gives righteously the information. Inside children's literature there is nothing more enriching and satisfying than fairy tales. The reason that is the case lies on the fact that those tales teach children to solve internal problems and show them solutions for everyday problems (Bruno Bettelheim, *Psicoanálisis de los cuentos de hadas*, 1997)

Nowadays, both teachers and pupil have easily available this simple tools: literature, books, tales...So, now it is important to use them in an enriching way for children. In this case we are going to try to stimulate and create a proper framework for the students to improve their linguistic and literary competences. Beginning from others' and our own interpretation and understanding of the literature and of each tale, we have to achieve children's learning.

Children can learn both literary competences and solving everyday problems with tales. Besides, when the teacher, who directs students learning, knows more and more about a tale, she can use it in the best way and take as much advantages as possible, always from an educative perspective.

## 2. JUSTIFICATION

Fairy tales are important, so I would like to write about the role they can play in children`s lives and how they can be used to help them to understand their feelings. Moreover, we are going to use classic fairy tales to learn English.

After all, we want to bring up children to be able to live in this world as happy as possible. I think by knowing ourselves and acquiring knowledge we can train happy and free people. Literature gives us knowledge and knowledge makes us free. When we are talking about children, classic fairy tales are the first contact between children and the literature. Besides, tales give children the opportunity to know the world they are living in and themselves, reflected in fairy tales´ stories and characters.

In this case I am also going to introduce another issue: The learning of English as a second language. A language which has taken a particular importance in our society in the last years.

To develop these topics, I have chosen the writer Hans Cristian Andersen, because he is my favourite classic writer. He is also one of the most world-wide highly appreciated author as far as fairy tales are concerned. Besides, I have chosen his fairy tale “The Little Mermaid” because I love the story and I think it is a good one to work feeling at class. Although the original version is unknown for most people, I have tried to use it to work with children.

# 3. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND CLASSIC FAIRY TALES

According to Valentina Pisanty (1995), people who usually listen to tales create a conception about tale's literary genre and in this way they can difference tales or another kind of narrations with a certain degree of automatism.

We usually introduce tales as a literary genre inside children's literature, but tales have not a specific kind of listeners. In the first instance, it is true that "each time a writer sends a message he tries to structure it taking into account the expected recipient" (V. Pisanty, 1995, p.10). In this case, tales are written for children but it is also possible to read them from other points of view, from an adult one for example.

According to Valentina Pisanty (1995), in *Cómo se lee un cuento popular*, many of these interpretations represent some clear disparities with the most apparent intentions of the texts. For example, "The Ugly Duckling" is a tale which has been recognized for generations as "an allegory of Hans Christian Andersen's own life" (Lurie, 2003, p.21)

## 3.1 FOLK TALES AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Fairy tales are a subgenre of folk tales, so it is important to start analysing folktales and its characteristics.

First of all, it is important to say that tales arise from the oral tradition. Before the first classical writers started writing these stories, as Román López Tamés says (1990) in *Introducción a la literatura infantil*, folk tales were transmitted orally, in prose and anonymously.

In the following paragraphs some common characteristics of folk tales are going to be described. According to Valentina Pisanty (1995), in *Cómo se lee un cuento popular*, it is necessary to analyse the thematic level on the one hand and the formal level on the other to distinguish folk tales' specific features.

On the one hand, it is necessary to talk about the tales' morphology. There are the following features, whose classification we can found in Pisanty (1995):

1. No descriptions: There are not objects' descriptions, they only are mentioned. "Any further description would give the impression that has been said only a fraction of what one might actually said" (Pisanty, 1995, p.36). Román López Tamés (1990), in *Introducción a la literatura infantil*, add that there are not place's descriptions or specific time frames.

2. Formulas and repetitions: They are very recurrent and they show as oral narrative structure's permanency. In fact in an oral culture, it was necessary to repeat constantly the knowledge, otherwise it would have been lost.

Between all formulas, the introductory formulas are the most commonly used. The majority of them star with the sentence "Once upon a time..."

3. Lack of characterization: Characters are simple and "they have not ambiguity, really good persons or radically bad" and it happens something similar with the beauty and ugliness or with social scale, we can find "the poor or the rich, a prince or a peasant" (R. López, 1990, p. 36)

In this point I would like to add the idea of identification. According to R. López (1990), in *Introducción a la literatura infantil*, it is a process that the child suffers when he reads or listens to a tale. It is related with our natural actuation of imitation, which offers us accommodation. The identification is the affectionate attachment between the child and another person, animal or object. It is an important factor in children's literature.

4. Full lack of the use of the first person narrator.

5. Space and time structure's indeterminacy: When the story starts saying "once upon a time..." it wants to lead the reader to a world without time (Seung in Pisanty, 1995).

When writers started writing the stories, some differences appeared. For example the appearance of descriptions.

On the other hand, it is necessary to talk about tale's contents. In tales there are both, supernatural or magic elements and everyday real elements.

Some recurrent real contents in tales are: to look for partner, marriage and conception; follow advices and achieve rewards; fight...but they lost importance as

social contents. According to Pisanty (1995) they transform in means to follow the action. She says that there are only contents which are modelling to define the tale's use.

Besides, it happens the same with magical contents: there are an obvious elements. Neither the writer nor the reader are not shocked or confused by these supernatural elements. And they are not the element or content which define tales as a literary genre. It is reader's acceptance attitude. In this way, magic elements are in the same level as real familiar and everyday elements.

According to Pisanty (1995), in *Cómo se lee un cuento popular*, "The rules of folktales literary genre foresee a naive reader who accepts, without any discomfort, the peaceful coexistence between natural and supernatural".

### **3.2 CLASSICAL FAIRY TALES' WRITERS**

All classical fairy tales' writers follow in some way these aforesaid characteristics, but there are also differences and special characteristics in many of them. Some of the most popular classical writers are the German Brothers Grimm (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm) who wrote, among others, "The Frog-Prince" or "Rapunzel"; The English writer Lewis Carroll, who wrote the marvellous story of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"; or the French Charles Perrault, who wrote the world-famous "Little Red Ridding Hood"; The Italian writer Carlo Collodi too, whose most famous tale is "Adventures of Pinocchio"; and finally, Hans Christian Andersen, the Danish writer who create the fantastic stories of "The Little Mermaid", "The Ugly Duckling", "The Little Match Girl" or "The Snow Queen".

According to Alison Lurie (2003), in *Niños y niñas eternamente*, the difference between Hans Christian Andersen and other classical writers, Grimm Brothers for example, is that the first one did not just write the stories he heard from his mother and grandmother, he also created his own new tales. Besides, he often introduced substantial changes when he told a known tale.



### 3.3 CHANGES AND ADAPTATIONS IN CLASSIC FAIRY TALES: IS THIS WHAT CHILDREN NEED?

Most of the classic fairy tales have been undergoing big changes. When people listen to the original version of a classic fairy tale, they sometimes be really surprised. But generally, people don't know original versions and most of them are also unknown for me.

Most of the opinions about the classical versions are negative (in reference to being or not proper for children). Gabriella Campbell (2012), in the article *Cómo ha cambiado el cuento (I)*, wrote that there are some books or stories that we shouldn't read before certain age. She thinks that they can be "inexhaustible sources of fear and nightmares". These narrations have adapted to the new times. Lurie (2003), in *Niños y niñas eternamente*, also says that despite Andersen's tales are great and poignant, most of them are sad, disturbing and sometimes even frightening. He argues in this way why most of classic fairy tales are not available in book shop nowadays.

I think that we have to analyse each tale individually before deciding that it is or not proper for children. For example, according to Gabriela Campbell, the original version of "The Three Little Pigs" is not too proper and it is somewhat awkward story: the wolf eats two of the pigs and then, the oldest pig eats the wolf.

I differentiate between two kinds of adaptations:

- On the one hand, we can adapt the plot. Most of the writers are changing the classic fairy tales eliminating every fear or bad elements, and adding always a happy ending. But, why these changes? Bruno Bettelheim (1997), in *Psicoanálisis de los cuentos de hadas*, says that modern stories avoid existential problems, although they are crucial for us. "Safe" stories no mention the death and aging. Whereas, Fairy tales "face the child in a properly way with basic human conflicts"(Bettelheim, 1997, p.14)
- On the other hand, we can adapt the complexity of the story. I am talking about vocabulary or the length for example. Classic fairy tales have complex descriptions and new difficult vocabulary for children. Lexical richness would

be very positive, but it is important to find a balance between children knowledge and text's difficulty.

In the first case we have to think about children's education and their personal development. According to Bettelheim (1997) tales can cheer children and can help them to know themselves and develops their personality n the same time. In the second case, we have to think in their academic learning.

It is important to find the best text to offer children, being an original one or an adaptation. As it was introduced in the beginning of this work some fairy tales have a strong influence in our lives and they are sometimes a part of our own lives. Bettelheim (1997), in *Psicoanálisis de los cuentos de hadas*, adds some very interesting ideas about that:

“Just as we do not know at what age a particular story will be important for a particular child, we cannot know which one of them we have to tell, when or why. Only the child can reveal it through the strength of feeling that reacts to what story evokes in his conscious and unconscious. (...) Soon we will realise that a particular story has become important for child, through his immediate response to it. (...) By telling fairy tales is always the best options are to follow child's interest”. (p. 23)

So, it is also really important, apart from finding the most suitable text or adaptation, letting children to find the tale they really like.

## 4. HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

### 4.1 BIOGRAPHY



Figure 1: Hans Christian Andersen in 1847, when he was 42 years old.

Hans Christian Andersen was born in Odense, Denmark, on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805. Lurie (2003), in *Niños y niñas eternamente*, compares Andersen with a character created by himself: The ugly duckling. When he was a child he was an ugly and clumsy boy. His father was a shoemaker and his mother an almost illiterate washerwoman. He lives a childhood of poverty and neglect.

In Odense (when he lived and worked the majority of his life) Andersen lived some really decisive experiences for his literary work, above all during his first fourteen years. Then, he moved to Copenhagen. “Andersen noted that their lifestyle in Odense was preserved ancient customs and superstitions, unknown in Copenhagen, which became in live stimuli for his imagination” (Johan de Mylius, 2005, p.21).

Apart from that, it is important to take into account another crucial factor: his experiences as part of the lowest social class. He wanted to remove the shackles of poverty, to rid of his social heritage and develop her potential as an artist.

Besides, residents who were in care home of Odense told Andersen lots of folktales. They were the starting point of the stories he wrote and invented later.

- **The arrival of Andersen to Copenhagen**

As I mentioned earlier, Andersen arrived to Copenhagen when he was only 14, in 1819. This change was an absolute precondition for Andersen's social promotion years later and his success in literary world too.

In Copenhagen he tried starting himself in the world of the theatre. But he haven't got any success. According to Johan de Mylius (2005), in *H.C. ANDERSEN*, he tried it as dancer, actor, singer and lastly as a playwright, but he failed. Nevertheless, the Director of the Real Theatre sent Andersen to Collage and he could learn.

He suffered thinking about his dependence on the others volunteer. He found the relation with people could help him to the success but he was failing again and again. We can see the humiliation suffering by Andersen reflected in *The Little Mermaid* (1837) (Johan de Mylius, *H.C. ANDERSEN*, 2005).

Despite all the bad experiences, he also could acquire culture and education.

- **Andersen started writing and traveling**

He published poems and theatre presentations since 1822, when he started as a writer with the work *Youthful Attempts*. His first literary success came with the work *A Walking Tour from Holmen's Canal to the Easter Point of Amager in the Years 1828 and 1829*.

Andersen started travelling more than any other writer in these years. Germany became in his second house and it helped in her international recognition. He also travelled to Asia and Africa.

From 1836 he had a large production of poem collections, theatre presentation, some opera libretti and travel books. His reputation came in 1830 when his novels were published and widely read in Germany. From 1839, his fame came with tales.

- **Andersen's fairy tales**

So, it was in 1839 when Andersen started being really known thanks to his tales; and from 1840 his novels and tales were also known in England and America.

Andersen published his first collection of tales: *Fairy Tales, Told for Children*, in 1835. Between 1835 and 1841 he published five additional collection of tales.

Andersen always saw himself as a poet and not as a fairy tale writer. He never knew that his tales were going to make him famous forever. One time, Hans Christian Ørsted (Andersen's friend) after reading the writer's novels and tales, said: "If your novels make you famous, your tales will make you immortal!" (Johan de Mylius, *H.C. ANDERSEN*, 2005, p.11).

At last, he had the reason. As Lurie (2003) says Andersen start his live as an ugly duckling and he became to a swan.

He was rejected by many woman during his live, and by many people of the aristocracy too. But he found a place lastly and according to Lurie (2005), in *Niños y niñas eternamente*, in the end of his life Andersen maintained a satisfactory relationship with a young boy.

## **4.2 HOW WAS ANDERSEN?**

Andersen's personality was directly linked with her live and his experiences. Andersen was described by himself and by his biographers in different ways:

Lurie (2005) says:

"As Jackie Wullschlager says, the most recent of his biographers, Andersen describes himself in a letter wrote to Charles Dickens as someone that had dropped out of the sky (...) a phenomenon of another world. A child, a stupid and true-born philosopher at the same time". (p. 22)

But he was not a strange stupid, he only was a child forever. He was selfish, he felt like a child without much awareness. A lot of biographers say that he has a bipolar disorder. He sometimes was a really happy and enthusiastic man and other times he was sad man who suffers.

As Lurie (2005) says:

"In the language of modern psychology, he suffered an acute bipolarity. Often, he was under the effects of uncontrolled joy or deed despair, wishing to be dead.

As he wrote when he was twenty nine: ‘my pain is unbearable when I suffer, but my joy when I feel happy is likewise inexpressible’. (p.22)

It is always difficult to know how someone we never met was Sometimes people who really know us don’t know how to describe us, and we don’t know how to describe ourselves many times.

In this case the best way to truly understand Andersen is by reading his stories, his fairy tales. And besides, we could also know ourselves writing and creating our own stories and tales.

### **4.3 ANDERSEN’S WRITING**

The way an author writes depends on his experiences and in consequence, on his own personality.

Some of the characteristics which are evident in Andersen’s writing are suffering and death. The main difference between this writer and the others is that most of his book have a sad ending that sometimes finishes with the death. Sometimes, the character who dies receive in the same time eternal life. “For example, when the little match girl died after a cold, her grandmother’s spirit took her to Paradise” (Lurie, 2005, p.24). We also can read the same idea in other texts: Tartar (1999), in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, says that “for Andersen, a turn away from carnality (sometimes taking the extreme form of mortification of the flesh and physical paralysis) becomes the prerequisite for spiritual plenitude and salvation”.

Clearly he was religious, and in fact, it is noticed in all the texts he wrote. According to Johan de Mylius (2005), his religious feeling was a religion of the heart and linked with the human nature and with the natural world as the place to miss God.

However, it also wrote happy ending stories. According to Lurie (2003) “The Snow Queen” tale is a good example.

Generally, love and romanticism don’t win in the end in Andersen’s tales. It is linked with his author’s experiences: he was not successful in love. “Again and again, the characters are rejected by their courted, and they share it with the unfortunate experience of the author” (Lurie, 2005, p.25).

Other recurrent topics in Andersen's tales are snobbishness and social ambitions. According to Lurie (2005) we can also see it in the objects and it is a consequence of Andersen's obsession with his social ascent. Related with this idea and the writer's self-centred personality, that I mentioned earlier, we remember his tale "Buckwheat" (1842).

About Andersen's way to write, we can read different opinions. Wullschlager was a biographer who spent many months analysing and studying this writer. Lurie (2005), in *Niños y niñas eternamente*, tell us some of his opinions:

"Wullschlager describe Andersen as a person with a wild imagination, inner rage, torturing anxieties and hypochondria, an insatiable ambition. But he also recognise the merit of his charm, his brilliance, originality and (...) the sophistication of the knowledge he has of himself"

These adjectives can resume the reasons of Andersen's tales success. In my opinion and after reading different points of view, the authenticity and personality are also important adjectives to describe Andersen's writing.

Andersen's work brought some innovations. There were style and content innovations in his writing. He used everyday language and he expressed feelings and ideas which in people thought were not available for children<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4.4 ANDERSEN'S LITERARY WORK**

In the following paragraphs I present Andersen's most important literary works arranged chronologically:

- In 1827 he published his first poem, "The Dying Child" in *Copenhagen Post*.
- In 1829 Andersen published successfully his first work in prose: *A Walking Tour from Holmen's Canal to the Easter Point of Amager in the Years 1828 and 1829*.
- In 1831 he published his first travel book: *Shadow Pictures of a Journey to the Harz, Swiss Saxony, etc. etc. in the Summer of 1831*.
- In 1832 Andersen wrote the opera libretti *The Bride of Lammermoor* and his first autobiography *Levedsbogen*, unknown until 1926.

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<sup>1</sup> Information taken from: <http://www.epdlp.com/escritor.php?id=1388>

- In 1835 he published his first novel *The Improvisatoren* and two of his first tales book: *Fairy Tales, Told for Children*. In the following years he wrote many theatre presentations and two novels which were translated into German, Swedish and Dutch.
- In 1840 his theatre *Mulatten* was played in The Royal Theatre of Copenhagen successfully.
- In 1843 he wrote a new tale's collection *Fairy Tales*.
- In 1845 his novel were published in English for the first time; and in 1846 his tales were available in English for the first time. In 1848 his tales were translated into French.
- His last tale's collection was published in 1872.

The reason of Andersen is one of the most-wide highly appreciate author is his work as fairy tales writer. So, it is important to add some of his most famous tales titles:

- *The Princess and the Pea (1835)*
- *Thumbelina (1835)*
- *The Little Mermaid (1837)*
- *The Ugly Duckling (1843)*
- *The Snow Queen (1845)*
- *The Little Match Girl (1845)*
- *The Red Shoes (1845)*
- *The Ice-Maiden (1861)*



## 5. THE LITTLE MERMAID

Andersen wrote more than hundred and fifty fairy tales, but nowadays, only few of them are re-edited. The reason, as I tell you earlier, is that people think they are inappropriate and sad.

Amongst all of Andersen's tales, I have chosen The Little Mermaid. I knew the story (and I loved it), but I didn't read the original before starting this work. The idea was to read it from personal experience; reading opinions and conclusions of different researchers; and lastly, to achieve my own opinion and conclusions to use this tale in English class.

### 5.1 UNDERSTANDING THE LITTLE MERMAID

There are different ways to analyse this story. It depends on the person who reads the story, the knowledge of the reader, the feelings of the reader, what the reader is looking for...

It seems that we can connect this tale with Andersen's life. De Mylius (2005), in *H.C. ANDERSEN*, name this tale many times. According to him this is one of the Andersen's narrations where the death has a principle role. Andersen's tragic feeling appears in his stories with humour. In The Little Mermaid we can see that Andersen's attitude to life gives energy to his stories: the little mermaid suffers when she dances, but despite all this, she dances lightly as any other never could.

As I mentioned earlier in the text, Andersen was religious. He tried to find inside himself and also beyond, he researched God. And we can see that in the little mermaid where the main character, in the same way as Andersen, wants an immortal soul. It is also possible to connect Andersen's life and The Little mermaid in the writer's social advancement. It was not totally successful movement. "He experienced the suffering and humiliation of leaving a world without being fully accepted in another superior" (De Milyus, 2005, p. 22) and we can see the same situation in The Little Mermaid, who achieved to go to the terrestrial world, but she doesn't achieve to prince loves her.

Following with the suffer feeling, Tatar (1999), in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, says something related about the little mermaid character. He describes this character as "the real virtuoso in the art of silent suffering". (p.214)

About the ending of this story –and its objective or teaching–, I have chosen two peculiar views. On the one hand, Lurie (2003), in *Niños y niñas eternamente*, says that she didn't see the mermaid as romantic as she was described; despite reading the story most of the people conclude it is a romantic story, where the mermaid offers his own voice and suffers for a prince. His point of view concludes that this story would like to warn us against the fight for an impossible loves. This author also adds that in this tale Andersen had predicted his future: he was rejected by people he loved; but in Andersen's case, "he never gave up her voice, and his tales are alive yet". (p. 31)

On the other hand, Gabriella Campbell (2012), in the article *Cómo ha cambiado el cuento (II)*, shows another view. The mermaid knows that if the prince loves her and they marry, she is going to achieve an immortal soul. So, she thinks that it is not clear that the mermaid really wants to achieve prince's love or if her only motivation is achieving an immortal soul. So she offers the possibility to see the mermaid acting in a selfish way, and not by love feelings.

Until here we have seen different interpretations. Lastly, I would like to add some ideas of one more view of "The Little Mermaid". These ideas are going to be based in *A Structuralist Approach*. In this case, the reading is less subjective. "The method is analytical, not evaluative" (Ulla Thomsen, 1988, p.141).

Ulla Thomsen (1988?), in *A Structuralist Approach in Splash, six views of "The Little Mermaid"*, tries to analyse the structures and the general laws which complete this tale. To better understand what this approach is, Ulla Thomsen (1988) explains:

"Structuralism contains a belief that the individual units of any system have meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another. The relation between the various items of a story may be ones of parallelism, oppositions, inversions, equivalence, and so on". (p.142)

It has different models to interpret, and in this case I am going to follow some ideas from the Actantial model and the S-model to explain this tale.

- Actantial model

Ulla Thomsen (1988) divides the story in the three wishes of the little mermaid: First, a human being; second, to marry the prince; and third, to achieve the immortality. So, she applies three actantial models.

In the first case, the subject is the mermaid and the wish to become into a human. So, the witch is the helper and the fish tale the opponent. The action goes from the witch (“*sender*”) to the mermaid (“*receiver*”).

In the second one, the subject is also the little mermaid and the wish to marry the prince. There is not helper, but she loses her voice (opponent). The action goes from the prince to the mermaid.

In the last one, the subject is also the mermaid; the aim the immortality. Her good deeds help the mermaid and the opponent is the prince’s marrying. The action goes from the God to the mermaid.

So, when the mermaid is inside her environment, the ocean, she acts in an active way, finding help; inside the water, she has a passive role. But, when she decides not to kill the prince, she is acting actively and thank to it, she achieves the objective of immortality.

- S-model

Ulla Thomsen (1988) finds some binary oppositions and she thinks that they form the basic dualism when the tale stats in this way:

Order in the Sea	Order in the Land
Mortality	Immortality
Lower world	Higher world
Lack of ability to cry	Ability to cry
Mer-people	Human beings
Nature	Culture
Girlhood	Womanhood
Childhood	Adulthood
No fragrance	Fragrance
No sexuality	Masculinity
Femininity	Sexuality

(*Splash! Six Views of “The Little Mermaid”*, p.143)

The movement goes from the life in the sea world to the life in the land world.

At the end of the tale, the binary oppositions that form the basic dualism are represented in this way:

Order of the Humans	Order of the Air Spirits
Innate immortality	Acquired immortality
Higher World	Highest World
Humans	Air spirits
Sexuality	Spirituality
Fragrance	Distributor of Fragrance
No demands	Demands
Masculinity	Femininity

*(Splash! Six Views of "The Little Mermaid", p. 144)*

Here, the movement goes from the life of humans to the life of the Air spirits. And from the life of the Air spirits to immortal life.

According to Ulla Thomsen (1988) this model asserts that there are two phases in each movement. Firstly, the annulation of the previous condition; and secondly, the movement which establishes a new condition.

## 5.2 MY VERSION OF THE LITTLE MERMAID

This is a version of The Little Mermaid adapted by me. It respects the original story of Andersen, but it is shorter and easier to understand than the original one. Teachers could use it in the third cycle of primary education

- The tale:

Far out in the ocean lived the Sea king with his six beautiful daughters. His grandmother also lived with them. The youngest sister was the prettiest, everybody called her the little mermaid. They lived in a beautiful castle, which is made by coral and **shells**.

Mermaids could go to the surface and see our world, outside the water, after their fifteenth birthday. The little mermaid was anxious for discovering the surface. Her sisters, all older than 15, were already allowed to rise to the surface of the ocean.

The little mermaid had a **garden** in the ocean, and there was a **statue** in the middle of it. It was a statue of a young man. She loved tending her plants and flowers. She also liked to ask her grandmother about the other world, the live outside the water. She listened to the descriptions and she tried to imagine this beautiful world.

One day, she asked to her grandmother about how many years humans lived. She only knew that mermaids lived three hundred years, and then, they became into sea **foam**. The grandmother said “They can’t live as much years as us, but they achieve an immortal **soul** when the die”. The little mermaid was astonished.

The little mermaid’s fifteenth birthday came at last. Her grandmother adorned her, she ordered eight great **oysters** to attach themselves to the tail of the princess. They hurt the mermaid but the grandmother said him that she had to suffer it to maintain his pride. She swam to the surface and she loved all that she saw.

She saw some **sailors** celebrating the prince’s birthday in a large ship. “How handsome the young prince looks!” she thought. It was very late but the little mermaid could not take her eyes from the beautiful prince.

Suddenly, a storm came up and the boat begins **to sink**. The little mermaid realized the danger men were in. They could not breathed under the water, they could die. So, she went to save the prince’s life in the danger angry sea.

In the morning, she laid the young prince in the sand of the beach. He seemed to her like the marble statue of her garden. She loved the prince. A girl appeared in the beach and the little mermaid saw himself forced to move. When the prince opened his eyes, he saw the other princess. He didn’t know that the little mermaid was who really saved him.

She used to go to the surface but she never saw the prince. She was increasingly sad, until she decided to tell the secret to some of her sisters. The sister helped to her

finding the castle of the prince. The Little Mermaid wanted to be part of this world, so she decided to visit the old woman of the sea. She was a witch.

The old lady knew what the Little Mermaid wanted. She offered to her two legs to look good for the prince and to be able to dance better than any other princess in the world. But, the mermaid would suffer each **step** that walked. In exchange, the old woman wanted the Little Mermaid voice, the prettiest one of the ocean. Besides, two things could happen: if she married with the prince, she would achieved an immortal soul; if the prince married with another girl, she would became into sea foam the next day of the marriage. She loved the prince, so she accepted and she went to the surface to drink the magic potion.

The prince found the mermaid lying in the sand. He took him to the castle and he decided that this girl could live with them.

The little mermaid had to accustom herself to suffer when she walked. She and the prince spent a lot of time together. She danced for him and, despite she was **dumb**, he felt love and affection for the mermaid.

One day, the prince's father said to him that he had to married with the daughter of a neighbouring king. He didn't want to marry with her, because he said that he only could love the girl who saved him that day after the storm. When the prince saw the daughter of the neighbouring king, he realized that she was the same girl who saved him! The little mermaid couldn't say to the prince that she was who really saved his life, because she hadn't got voice.

So, the prince loved this beautiful princess and they married in a ship. The Little Mermaid knew that she was going to die this night, she was waiting the moment. But, her sisters appeared in the surface of the sea to save her. Her sisters were as pale as herself, and their beautiful hairs had been cut off. They had given their hairs to the witch, the old lady of the sea, to help the mermaid. The witch gave to them a **sharp** knife and the little mermaid had **to plunge it into** the heart of the prince to recover a fish tail, to be a mermaid again and rescue his three hundred years of life.

She ran up to prince's bed. He was sleeping near the princess. The knife trembled in the hand of the little mermaid. She couldn't kill the man she loved. The

little mermaid threw herself from the ship into the sea, she waited to become into sea foam...

But she didn't feel herself dead, she felt she had a body. She could talk with a melodious speech but mortals couldn't hear her, she was also unseen by mortal eyes. She didn't know where was she.

She was among the daughters of the air, they became the mermaid in one of them. They did not possess an immortal soul but they could achieve one by their good **deeds**. The little mermaid, in the same way as the other daughter of the air made, would live three hundred years helping the others, and then, she would achieve an immortal soul.

The little mermaid saw that the prince and his wife were searching for her. She **took leave** of them and she went with the daughters of the air.

Now, when they see good boys and girls they feel really happy and they need few years to achieve the immortal soul, less than three hundred. Conversely, when they see bad children, they cry and they need more and more years to achieve the immortal soul.

## 7. ACTIVITIES

### a. **ACTIVITY 1:** Complete The Little Mermaid's dictionary. Sheet *Annex 1*

Pupils have to complete the table. In each case they will complete two or three grids, they could be: the word, the kind of word (noun, adjective or verb), the draw and finally, they could choose from writing a sentence, a definition or giving a synonym.

The objective is to help them in reading comprehension and in learning new vocabulary. They have to complete the sheet aided by the information and pictures are in. The words that complete the table are in bold type and bigger font size in the story. So, this is an activity which children should make during the first times they read the tale.

It can be interesting to read the tale by the teacher the first time. In this way children listen to the story and they also hear how a word must be pronounced. Besides, the teacher's intonation can help them understanding the story. Then, the teacher can ask them to read the tale aloud. In this second reading, the pupils can ask for the words which they don't understand, and they can find together some of the solution of the sheet number 1. Then, each child has to complete her sheet individually.

Finally, both the teacher and pupils have to correct aloud the activity. As you can see, the column number three offers different possibilities: sentences, synonyms and definitions. So, everybody can participate and they also practice oral communicative skills.

The teacher can take into account the following advices too:

- Try to ask all the children. The most difficulties from the most advanced pupils in English and the easier (for example, to say the word giving the picture) from the pupils who have more difficulties in this subject.
- Write and correct in the blackboard each word, sentence, definition or synonym. In this way, pupils can correct their mistakes and they also can copy their classmates' examples or ideas.
- It is possible the appearance of new unknown words. You can add rows and write them in the table.



**b. ACTIVITY 2:** Create your own new version of The Little Mermaid. Sheet  
*Annex 2*

The students have to continue the story from the moment when the mermaid swims to the surface and she sees a boat. They have a sheet to help them. They can choose one of the three options to develop the story, or they can invent their own rules too.

This activity works different aspects. On the one hand, the pupils develop their linguistic skills, their writing above all and the creativity too. On the other hand, they are learning an important characteristic of fairy tales: there are rules, there are common characters (princes for example), places (castles) or actions (someone's death), but in the same time everything is possible.

The teacher can take into account the following advices to develop successfully the activity:

- It is important to remind children that they have to forget everything that happened in the story after mermaid sees the boat. The teacher can read one or two times the story until this moment aloud.
- The teacher has to help them and she can go through the desks correcting mistakes too. She can encourage pupils to use dictionaries, they are very useful.
- After finishing the essay, it would be very interesting to ask children reading them aloud. In this case, they must always do so voluntarily. The teacher can congratulate the good job. She also can give advices to improve, but never despise pupil's ideas. They may be to your liking or not, but they can be important for the children.
- As I have said before, in fairy tales everything is possible, but we have to ensure they are doing a good job and avoid inappropriate aspects (for example, the appearance of racist or sexist comments in the writings).

**c. ACTIVITY 3:** The characters.

In this activity, pupils will work in pairs. One of them has to choose a character of "The Little Mermaid": The Little mermaid, one of his sisters, the Sea King, The Grandmother, the witch (or the lady of the sea), the sailors, the prince, the princess... Then, this child has to describe the character giving some clues: she has to include a

physical characteristic, something about his/her way of being and how is he/she feeling in that moment. Probably, this student is not going to achieve this information in the story, so she has to invent thinking about the story (what he/she believes about this character). Her partner has to achieve the character and the moment of the story. Next, they will change the roles.

*Example 1: "I am thinking about a character has a fish tale. She is a sensitive person. I think she is felling very worried". "Oh, I think she is the little mermaid and it is during the storm".*

In this case, the pupil can use a notebook to write the clues, new words used in descriptions, answers...After each character, if they are not thinking about the same character, they can talk about why each one are thinking in her answer.

*Following with example 1: "I have not described the little mermaid. I was thinking in one of her sister, when she goes with the knife to save the little mermaid".*

The teacher has to explain the activity orally and pupils are going to work, above all, speaking and fluency. Teacher can invent some examples before starting.

**d. ACTIVITY 4: *Knowing yourself and the others.* Sheet *Annex 3***

It has different parts:

- a) The teacher writes all classmates names in pieces of paper. Each child gets one randomly. Now, each one is going to think a minute about this friend.
- b) The pupils have to choose, helped by a list, two characters. Firstly, the character which identifies herself. After that, the character which identifies her friend.
- c) Then, the child has to draw in a page these two characters; and she has to answer the questions too.
- d) Finally, in big group (all the class) they will compare their answers aloud.

In this activity pupils are working a lot of things. Firstly, they are working the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences (two of the multiple intelligences identified by Howard Gardner). In other words, understanding and knowing yourself and the others. The characters of the tales could be very different and each one can offer to

children specific characteristics. Besides, thanks to questions they can reflect more on themselves.

Besides, they work their artistic competences. The teacher can give them ideas to achieve a good drawing. Children can use different painting techniques, collage technique, different materials... In this way they are also working their creativity.

Finally, in relation to communicative skills, they are going to work above all writing (answering the questions in the sheet) and speaking (exchanging ideas in big group).

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Thanks to this research we see that fairy tales can have a lot of advantages for children if they are used correctly. After the first oral versions and then, with the classical writers` versions we have a really good tool to teach literature, English as a second language and also to educate children as persons.

Most of them have been adapted and changed, but it is not always necessary to choose the newer version. They are protective and they always have a happy ending. Our aim is to prepare children for the future and it is more real to work with different tales, which have happy or sad ending. Besides, it is really important, above all when they are learning a new language, to choose an adapted version to guarantee an adequate difficulty level.

Regarding the selection of best tales to learn, each child will find his favourite one. We can choose and work during our classtime lots of things with any of them, but it is also interesting allowing to children to search the story which helps them. Every child or adult connect in different way with each tale.

It is undeniable that Hans Christian Andersen knew how to connect with readers; and thanks to him, we have a big collection of fairy tales we can use at class to teach and learn. His tales offer us different readings and interpretations, but at class our goal is to use them in an enriching way, using all their possibilities.

The Little Mermaid is a really good tale to work at class. Firstly, all of our pupils probably know. Knowing the original version could motivate them. It is also one of the tales which original version is possible to use at class easily and it offers the opportunity to work: literature, the communicative skills, the knowing of ourselves, feeling...

To sum up, classic fairy tales could be great tools to use in English class and working with appropriate activities and materials we could achieve to teach and educate our students in a funny way. And, having fun, we always learn more.

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## 10. ANNEXES

### Annex 1:

### The Little Mermaid's Dictionary

	WORD	KIND OF WORD	SENTENCE, SYNONYM or DEFINITION	DRAWING
1	<b>Deed(s)</b>			
2		Noun or adjective	<i>Sentence:</i> A person who can't talk is a dumb person.	
3		Noun		
4	<b>Garden</b>		<i>Definition:</i> A piece of ground or other space with ornamental plants, trees...	
5		Noun		
6		Verb	<i>Synonym:</i> To stab (someone)	

7		Noun		
8	<b>Sharp</b>		<i>Sentence:</i> Lions' teeth are very sharp.	
9		Noun		
10	<i>(To) sink</i>			
11				
12		Noun	<i>Definition:</i> The spiritual and immortal nature of humans.	
13		Noun	<i>Sentence:</i> The child took his first steps when he was 11 months old.	
14		Verb	<i>Synonym:</i> To say goodbye	

**Annex 2:**

Continue the story from the moment when the mermaid swims to the surface and she sees a boat.

**Option A**

- You have to add these characters: a frog and twin princes.
- You can invent the places and what happens.
- You can choose between a happy or sad end.

**Option B**

- You have to add these places: a cave, an island and a castle.
- You can add new characters and you can invent what happens.
- Try to impress us with the end!

**Option C**

- You have to add this character: a man siren and a talkative octopus.
- Someone have to die and someone have to born during the story.
- Invent what more happens and different places.

**Option D:** *Invent your own rules:*

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- 
-



**Annex 3:**

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Character</i>
<i>You</i>		
<i>Your classmate</i>		

Some character we meet in fairy tales:

- Bluebeard
- Cinderella
- A mermaid (The little mermaid, the sea king...)
- The little match girl
- A puppet (Pinocchio...)
- A frog
- Gnome
- A fairy (A fairy godmother, the elder fairy...)
- Stepmother
- The Ugly Duckling
- Little Red Riding
- Puss in Boots
- Thumbelina
- A pirate
- Hunter
- A wolf
- One of the three little pigs
- A knight
- Queens and Princesses (The princess and the pea, the snow queen, the sleeping beauty, Snow White, the queen bee...)
- Elf
- Alice (of Alice's adventures in Wonderland)
- A scarecrow
- A butterfly
- A giant
- Rumpelstiltskin
- Fisherman
- The wonderful musician
- ...

<i>You:</i> _____	<i>Your friend:</i> _____
(drawing)	(drawing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I feel happy when...</li> <li>▪ I feel alone when...</li> <li>▪ I would like to travel to...because....</li> <li>▪ I think I am... (add three positive adjectives)</li> <li>▪ When I grow up, I want to become... (A doctor, a teacher...) because...</li> <li>▪ I feel satisfied when...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I think she/he feels happy when...</li> <li>▪ She/he feels alone when...</li> <li>▪ I think she/he would like to travel to....</li> <li>▪ I think...</li> <li>▪ I think...</li> <li>▪</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>