

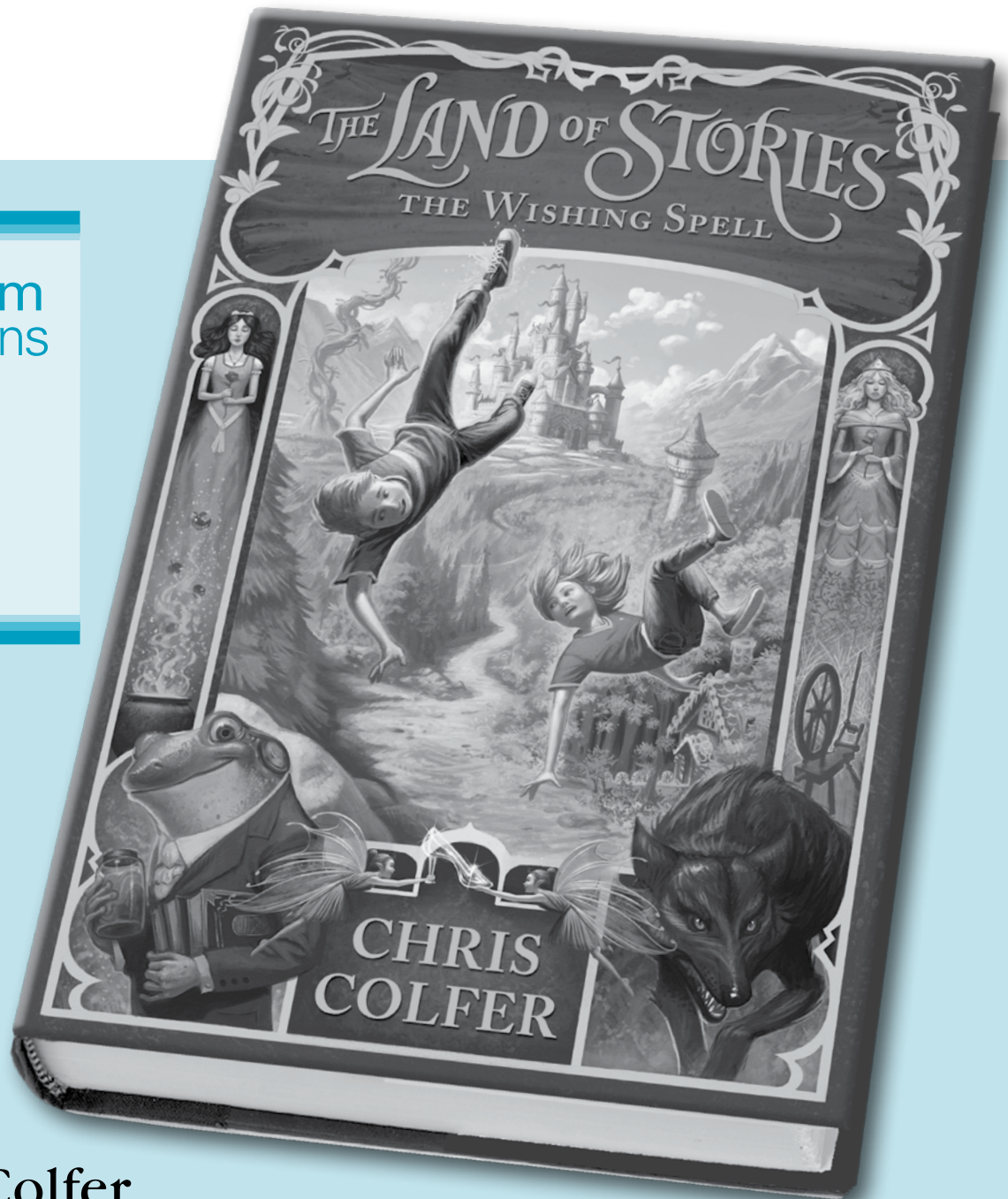
THE LAND OF STORIES

THE WISHING SPELL

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Fairytales
- ❖ Fantasy
- ❖ Fiction

Ages 8 & up



By Chris Colfer

AT THE CORE: APPLYING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Upon first glance, the movement in education toward development of a common set of standards and practices can make the creative teacher feel stifled and threatened. If teachers are focused on meeting all of these standards, how will there be time to include lessons that stretch students' imaginations or foster their love for literature, history, and the sciences? The truth is, if standards are truly going to improve student learning outcomes, then they must do all of these things. The ideas set forth in this guide are designed to address many of the Common Core standards in reading, writing, and social studies. They are designed to challenge students to examine, analyze, and critique arguments. They are focused on explicitly teaching students to connect their learning and to develop their ability to use text-based evidence. Most of all, these ideas are offered to help students discover their own potential and to help them become independent thinkers and creators in their own right. These goals are at the core of good teaching. When placed in the hands of the creative teacher, common standards can be a gateway of learning for students, just as *The Land of Stories* opened a whole new world to Alex and Conner.

BUILDING BACKGROUND

Fairytales Jigsaw

It is quite possible that students may not be familiar with the Hans Christian Andersen or Brothers Grimm versions of the fairy tales referred to in *The Land of Stories*. To build students' background, use a Fairytales Jigsaw exercise. Provide copies of the traditional tales such as *The Little Mermaid*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Little Red Cap*, and the Robert Southey version of *The Three Bears*. Randomly assign students to study and prepare to teach one of the stories. Then, have

students gather in groups (with students who all have different stories). Have students take turns telling the story they learned about. To help students stay focused and become aware of any misconceptions they might have had, use an anticipation guide. Students can fill out the "Before Jigsaw" section showing what they thought before the exercise, and then they can fill out the "During/After Jigsaw" section to show what they learned. (See Blackline Masters for an example of an anticipation guide to use with this lesson.)

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Allusion

An allusion is a reference in a literary work to a person, place, or thing in history or another work of literature. There are many examples of this literary device in *The Land of the Stories*. After introducing or reviewing allusions, have students find and share examples from the book. Discuss how allusions often help readers understand concepts by connecting them to a familiar story. Have students share the allusions in *The Land of Stories* and explain the references. Then, connect to other literature by having students search for allusions in other books. Share these examples and discuss how references to the familiar helps readers more deeply understand the author's meaning.

Literary Device Scavenger Hunt

Beyond allusions, *The Land of Stories* has many other examples of literary devices. Challenge groups of students to work together to find examples of different types of literary devices within *The Land of Stories*. There are extensive lists of literary devices at www.literary-devices.com, as well as on the websites of several major universities. An example of a Scavenger Hunt Sheet for this exercise may be found in the Blackline Masters section.

WRITING

Persuading the Jury and Enduring Personality Traits

The ability to write arguments and examine and convey complex ideas is an important goal for every student writer. *The Land of Stories* offers many opportunities for students to think critically and focus on the craft of writing. From persuasive writing to writing a comparative essay using evidence from three different texts, students can use *The Land of Stories* to hone their core writing skills. The Blackline Masters for persuading the jury and enduring personality traits are examples of ways teachers can use *The Land of Stories* to achieve writing standards.

SCIENCE

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? Learning Lessons from Wolves

Malumclaw and the other members of the “Big Bad Wolf Pack” were feared in *The Land of Stories*. Throughout time, in fairy tales and folklore, wolves were used as symbols of danger. They were used to teach lessons, usually the idea that disobedience or poor behavior can have frightening consequences. In real life, wolves can teach important lessons too. Biologists, sociologists, psychologists, and scientists of other many varied specialties study wolves. Have students read about wolves and the types of research scientists are engaged in regarding wolves. Then, ask students to choose one area of interest and explain and convey in writing the lessons scientists in this area are learning from wolves.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Historical Context

Fairy tales have changed through the years, in part to reflect changes in society. Help students understand the importance of historical context by having them choose a fairytale from any area of the world and any time period. Then, have them research the important events that were taking place when that version of the story was most commonly told. (See the Blackline Masters for a graphic organizer for this project.)

Real Life Fairy tales

Fairy tales resonate with people around the world for many reasons, but the idea that dreams can really come true is one of the reasons people of all ages enjoy fairytale elements in the stories they read. Have students investigate stories in the media or from history that could be considered “real life fairy tales” and compare and contrast these examples with the fairy tales they most closely resemble. Students may want to create an interest-grabbing headline and frame their writing as a news article. The polished drafts could be compiled to create a class newspaper or magazine.

United Nations/Happily Ever After

In *The Land of Stories*, the kingdoms form the Happily Ever After Assembly to uphold the treaty all of the rulers signed in order to maintain peace and promote prosperity. Alex comments that it sounds like the United Nations. Have students research the history behind the formation of the United Nations and explore its official mission, as well as some of its current functions. Have students create a slide show or other multimedia presentation comparing the Happily Ever After Assembly with the United Nations. In what ways are they similar? How are they different?

ARTS, MUSIC, AND GAMES

Storytelling Booth

Storytelling is important in many cultures, and the oral tradition is where fairy tales find their roots. Have students practice their speaking skills by retelling the fairy tales they have been studying about. Have groups of students work together to create props and sound effects to accompany their tales. Then, connect with a local library or primary school. Set up storytelling booths (pop-up tents make great booths) and invite listeners to come inside to hear the stories.

Summary Soundtrack

Music and stories are often intertwined. Give students the opportunity to show their understanding of *The Land of Stories* by having them create a summary soundtrack. Have them identify the key scenes in the story, and then match these scenes with songs. The song titles themselves might capture the idea, or it might be the sound of the music chosen. Ask students to write the song titles for each main event and then explain why they chose that particular song. This could be an individual or group assignment. (See the Blackline Masters for a graphic organizer that may be used for this project.)

Game Design Challenge

The Land of Stories, with its many kingdoms and its quest for magical items, could be envisioned as a video game or board game. Challenge students to create a board game or video game proposal based on *The Land of Stories*. Students may want to research game design techniques or modify an existing game. Working in teams, have students develop a game. It should be true to the story, have an identifiable game concept, and a rule sheet that clearly explains how to play the game and the purpose of the game. As an extension, students could host a family game night to showcase and play their games.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Fairy Godmother Projects

Fairy tales can serve as an inspiration beyond the morals and lessons they impart. As Mrs. Peters says in *The Land of Stories*, “The solution to almost any problem imaginable can be found in the outcome of a fairytale.” They can move people to take action towards making a difference. Have students discuss the needs of their community and then look toward fairy tales to help them address a problem. They may want to collect prom dresses for teens who cannot afford the expense. They could arrange their own dress drive in collaboration with a local charity or see www.fairygodmotherproject.com or a similar organization to learn how they can help with an already established program.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Prologue

In the prologue, the Evil Queen tells Snow White, “Once the world has made a decision, there is little anyone can do to change its mind.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Give an example from the real world to support your view.

What is the purpose of the prologue? What information do you think will be important as the rest of the story unfolds?

Chapters 1-3

How would you describe Mrs. Peters? What evidence from the story helps you visualize her?

Alex and Conner are introduced in the first chapter. Although they are twins, they are very different. Compare and contrast the twins using the information you have been given so far. Which twin do you most closely identify with? Why?

Mrs. Peters assigns the class the task of choosing a favorite fairytale and writing about the real lesson the story is trying to teach. Why do you think she gives her students this assignment?

On the way home from school, Alex is chatting with her brother and then stops mid-sentence. What sight caused her to stop speaking? Why is this important?

Alex cheats in school to help her brother. She decides she did the right thing, “not as a student, but as a sister.” What does she mean by this? Do you agree with her reasoning? Why or why not?

The twins father used storytelling to connect with his children. What story does he tell Alex? What story does he tell Conner? How do each of these stories help the twins?

Alex shares with the class her interpretation on the real lesson taught by Cinderella. What does she say is the lesson? Do you think she is right? Explain your answer.

The twins were excited to discover their grandmother was visiting. What special gift did she bring them for their birthday? Why was this gift so meaningful?

Chapters 4-6

Conner notices a change in Alex’s behavior. What specific changes does he notice? What does he think might be the problem?

How does Conner discover what has been bothering Alex? What does he do to keep Mrs. Peters from learning about the buzzing sound?

What is Alex’s reaction when she falls into *The Land of Stories*? How does Conner react? What specific phrases or descriptions help you know how they are feeling?

When Alex and Conner meet Froggy, he says, “I’ve learned that the more people embrace their disadvantages, the less disadvantaged they become.” What do you think he means by this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your position using examples from your own life or from history.

What reason does Froggy give for not searching for the Wishing Spell items himself? How does this show he is not done learning the witch’s lesson?

How does the encounter with the witch from Hansel and Gretel begin to change the way Alex sees her brother?

When the twins first see Goldilocks, she is nothing like the little girl many imagine from the tale of *The Three Bears*. What is she like? What are some specific characteristics mentioned?

Chapters 7-9

When Alex first sees Rapunzel's tower, she says, "It must have been so hard for her. Seeing people and places so far away and never able to visit them." Alex seems to identify with Rapunzel. How does this help explain some of Alex's actions up to this point?

As Alex and Conner read the journal, they discover a set of riddles that describe the items needed for the Wishing Spell. Read the riddles, and using your prior knowledge of fairy tales, try to predict which items will be needed for the spell. Record your thoughts, and then compare your list to the ideas Alex and Conner have about the items. Are there any you could not figure out?

The Evil Queen gives the Huntsman a chance at redemption. What is redemption? How does The Huntsman hope to achieve it?

When the Evil Queen looks in the Mirror of Truth, she sees a disheveled and aging woman. Then, when she looks in it while holding the heart of stone, she sees a different image entirely. Who do you think she sees? What do you think this could mean?

Alex and Conner use different methods to cross the river bordering the Charming Kingdom. How did Alex cross the river? How did Conner cross it? Which method would you use? Why?

As Alex chatters at Smithers (the man driving the cart full of firewood) she asks him if it is frightening to live in a place of such uncertainty. His response causes Alex to conclude that her world and the fairytale world might not be so different after all. Do you agree with Alex's conclusion? Why or why not?

During their tour of the Charming's castle the twins learn there are four Charming brothers. Where is each one now? How did the disappearance of the youngest Charming help lead his oldest brothers to their wives?

Alex has a new respect for Cinderella after talking with her. What are some of the challenges Cinderella faces?

Chapters 10-12

What are some of the possible explanations the twins suggest for the appearance of the glass slipper? What do you think?

Red Riding Hood's castle appeared massive from a distance, but was quite different up close. In what ways was it like Cinderella's castle? In what ways was it different? What is Red Riding Hood like as a ruler?

When Jack meets the hooded woman outside the castle gates, he tells her he loves her. She replies, "A flame may love a snowflake, but they can never be together without harming the other." What did she mean by this?

In the Troll and Goblin Kingdom, the Tradesman makes a sacrifice for Conner and Alex. Why do you think he does this?

When Alex and Conner encounter the fairy, Trix, they have different goals. Alex wants to help, but Conner just wants to gather the items needed for the Wishing Spell. Later, it is Conner that tries to help. How do the personal experiences of Alex and Conner influence their motivations?

Chapters 13-15

The Evil Queen makes a pact with the wolves. What does she promise Malumclaw in return for the twins? Why would this prize be so important for Malumclaw?

When Conner and Alex meet Sleeping Beauty, they discover she has many challenges to face as a leader. Compare and contrast her situation with Cinderella's. In what ways do they face the same challenges? How are their situations different?

While looking through Snow White's castle, the twins find some love letters and a painting. What did the twins discover in the painting? Why is this important? What could be the significance of the love letters?

While heading toward the Dwarf Forest, Alex and Conner look up to see a lone tree in the middle of a field of stumps. Upon seeing this, Conner said, "Things always find a way of becoming more complex." What does he mean by this statement?

Chapters 16-18

After narrowly escaping a confrontation with Malumclaw and his gang, Conner and Alex find themselves captured once again. Conner leaves a trail of blood, and although Alex is not sure why he is doing it, she trusts he has a plan. Why is this an important moment in their relationship? In what ways have the experiences to this point changed the relationship between Alex and Conner?

The Evil Queen reveals the "true story" behind Goldilocks' visit to the home of the bears. How does this differ from the traditional tale? Why would the Evil Queen reveal this to Goldilocks?

What do the twins learn from *The Little Mermaid*? How might this information change the way they approach their next task?

Chapters 19-21

Outside the Thornbush Pit, Alex and Conner make a decision that puts their goals in jeopardy in order to help a friend. What is their reasoning? Do you think you would do the same in their position? Why or why not?

Alex seems to make sense of the world around her by making connections between her own experiences and the experiences of others. She identifies with many of the

fairytale characters she meets, but she is unsettled to discover herself identifying with the Evil Queen. In what ways can she relate to her? How does this change how she views the Evil Queen?

The Evil Queen manipulates Alex in order to get her to cry. Why does she do this? What could this mean?

In what ways have Mira and Evly changed? Why are they so different now than they were years ago?

Chapters 22-24

What tragic lesson do the twins and Snow White learn from the story of the Evil Queen? What is Snow White's suggestion for how to honor her memory? Do you think this is a good suggestion? Why or why not?

Red Riding Hood can be characterized as self-centered and spoiled throughout most of the book. What does she do that does not fit this description? What advice does Froggy give her?

There are many secrets revealed in the final chapter; what do you think is the most shocking secret? Which one holds the most meaning for Alex and Conner? Which one holds the most meaning for the Charmings?

Alex and Conner changed and grew through their adventures in *The Land of Stories*. Using evidence from the story, choose one of the twins and show how they changed. How might this affect their future?



Name _____

Date _____

PERSUADING THE JURY PLANNING SHEET

Character: (Circle one)

Queen Evly

Goldilocks

Malumclaw

Your Role: (Circle One)

Prosecution

Defense

Position Statement: _____

Evidence from *Land of Stories*
(phrases, quotes, page numbers)

Analysis
(How does this support your position?)

Name _____

Date _____

ENDURING PERSONALITY TRAITS

Although fairytale characters may have different names or the details of their stories may vary depending on the storyteller and the historical context, most main characters are still recognizable by their personality traits. Choose one fairytale character and read three different versions of that character’s story: Pre-20th Century (Brothers Grimm version), modern (1950-present), and *The Land of Stories*. Then, decide what personality trait is evident in all three stories. Use the planning sheet to gather evidence from each text. Then, explain in writing how the character embodies the personality trait you chose.

CHARACTER _____

PERSONALITY TRAIT _____

Pre-20th Century

Name of Book/Author

Modern (1950-Present)

Name of Book/Author

Land of Stories

By Chris Colfer

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Evidence:

Name _____

Date _____

ANTICIPATION GUIDE: FAIRYTALE JIGSAW

Indicate whether or not you think the following statements are true or false. Complete the left hand side prior to meeting with your jigsaw group. Then, complete the other column during or after meeting with your jigsaw group. Be ready to discuss how your prior knowledge changed or stayed the same after this exercise.

BEFORE JIGSAW

DURING/AFTER JIGSAW

I think this is true.

In the Brothers Grimm version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the Evil Queen is forced to dance until she dies.

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

I think this is true.

In the Robert Southey version of *The Three Bears*, Goldilocks is not a young girl.

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

I think this is true.

Rapunzel was locked in a tower for 100 years.

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

I think this is true.

In the Brothers Grimm version of *Little Red Riding Hood* (called *Little Red Cap*) the wolf changes his ways and has tea with the grandmother.

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

I think this is true.

The lesson taught in Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* is "Don't be afraid to take a chance on love."

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

I think this is true.

The Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* used a poisoned comb to try to kill Snow White.

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

I think this is true.

Sleeping Beauty fell into a deep sleep when her evil step-mother tricked her into eating a poisoned apple.

I think this is true.

I think this is false.

I think this is false.

Name _____

Date _____

Team Members _____

LITERARY DEVICE SCAVENGER HUNT

Literary Device	Example from <i>The Land of Stories</i>
Alliteration	
Allusion	
Epithet	
Foreshadowing	
Hyperbole	
Metaphor	
Personification	
Parable	
Motif	
Onomatopoeia	
Simile	

about the book



THE LAND OF STORIES THE WISHING SPELL

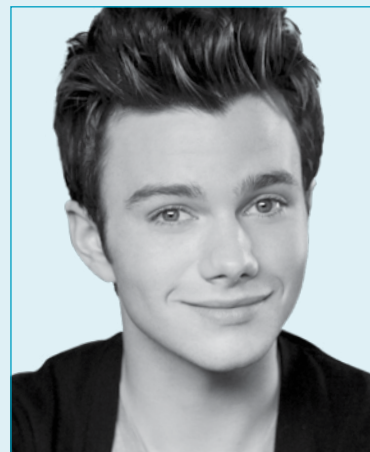
by Chris Colfer

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The Land of Stories tells the tale of twins Alex and Conner. Through the mysterious powers of a cherished book of stories, they leave their world behind and find themselves in a foreign land full of wonder and magic where they come face-to-face with the fairy tale characters they grew up reading about.

But after a series of encounters with witches, wolves, goblins, and trolls alike, getting back home is going to be harder than they thought.

about the author



Chris Colfer is a Golden Globe-winning actor best known for his role as Kurt Hummel on *Glee*. He was recently honored as a member of the 2011 *TIME* 100, *Time's* annual list of the one hundred most influential people in the world. *The Land of Stories* is his first novel.



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