Hansel and Gretel
Book & Lyrics by Douglas Jones
Music by Ron Barnett

TEACHER RESOURCES

Hansel and Gretel and this study guide are produced in support of the teaching of English and Math.

AT THE LIBRARY

Hansel and Gretel retold by Holly Hobbie
Hansel and Gretel retold by Rachel Isadora
Hansel and Gretel Stories Around the World: 4 Beloved Tales by Cari Meister

ON THE WEB

Reading is Fundamental! Activities and Lesson Plans rif.org/literacy-central/book/hansel-and-gretel

PLAY SYNOPSIS

Hansel and Gretel are brother and sister in a very loving yet very poor family. Times are particularly hard because Poppa broke his leg recently, and hasn’t been able to earn his usual woodcutter’s wages. There’s not much money to buy food and everyone is hungry, but they try to make do with what they have.

The parents send the children off to pick berries, but Hansel has another plan. He wants to leave the forest and find the gingerbread house, so that he and Gretel can bring home lots of food for the family. They plan to leave a trail of breadcrumbs to help them find their way home, but a flock of birds eat the crumbs, leaving the children lost, cold and hungry in the forest.

The next morning, Hansel and Gretel find the gingerbread house. The witch appears disguised as an old lady. And she lures the children into the house with promises of even more delicious food, and then reveals herself in all her wickedness.

The witch locks Hansel in a cage, and instructs Gretel to fatten him up. Gretel manages to outsmart the witch and push her into the roaring flames of the oven.

“Remember: in the dark or scary weather
Just hold hands and stick together
Breadcrumbs make a lousy map
Candy houses could be traps
Things aren’t always what they seem
Bye for now, and pleasant dreams!”
Background

THE BROTHERS GRIMM

_Hansel and Gretel_ is just one of hundreds of old German folktales collected and published by two scholarly brothers in the early 19th century.

Between 1807 and 1814, the Grimm brothers, Jakob and Wilhelm, collected the tales mainly from friends and acquaintances who lived in and around Kassel, Germany. They worried that fewer and fewer people could tell the tales accurately, since many of the tales were passed down orally from generation to generation. Their goal was to preserve the tales in written form as an expression of the German culture and spirit. Jakob wrote, “It is high time that these old traditions were collected and rescued before they perish like dew in the hot sun or fire in a stream, and fall silent forever in the unrest of our days.” The first volume of Grimm’s Fairy Tales was published in 1812 and by the last edition of 1857, 210 tales had been collected.

The most famous Grimm’s Fairy Tales include _Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, Rumpelstiltskin, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and Rapunzel_. If not for the visionary scholarship of the Brothers Grimm, we might not know any of these stories today.

Both Grimm brothers were born in Hanau, Jakob in 1785 and Wilhelm in 1786. They were educated at the University of Marburg, where they became interested in philology, the study of language as it relates to human culture and history. Jakob published an important book called _Deutsche Grammatik_ (German Grammar), which for the first time set forth a strictly scientific grammar for all the Germanic languages. This work, in which language is considered not as something static but as something ever growing and closely bound up with the life and destiny of the people who speak it, proved revolutionary in the field of philology. The brothers also contributed pioneering work to a German dictionary which was not completed until after their deaths.

The brothers worked together in complete harmony. They spent all their lives under one roof, sharing books and other property, a happy partnership that even Wilhelm’s marriage did not change. Wilhelm, the sicklier of the two, died in 1859 and Jakob died in 1863.
Background

FACTS ABOUT GERMANY

FAST FACTS
Capital: Berlin
Population: 80,457,737
Official Language: German
Money: Euro
Area: 134,838 sq. miles

GEOGRAPHY

Germany is located in the heart of Europe and has nine border neighbors, more than any other European country. There are many forested hills and mountains, as well as large rivers known as the Danube, Main, and Rhine rivers. The northern part of the country flattens out into a wide plain that stretches to the North Sea.

The Black Forest is a large wooded mountain region in the southwest part of Germany, near the Swiss border. This forest contains the Danube, one of Europe’s longest rivers.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

German culture has been influenced and shaped throughout history and is home to 82.2 million people. Germans call their country “Deutschland” while English speakers call it Germany. Over 95% of the residents of Germany speak German, however, because of the high number of immigration, there are other languages spoken too, most notable are Romani, Danish, and Turkish.

Germany has been called the “Land of Poets and Thinkers” because many artists well-known in history come from Germany. Famous composers from Germany include Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven. Nowadays, Germany is home to many music festivals, starting from electronic music to hip-hop and rock & roll. The largest music festival in Germany, which is also one of the largest in the world, is the Rock am Ring festival, which gathers artists, performers, and music fans from all over the world.

Clothing is typically western, but Germans occasionally dress in traditional costumes. For example, in the state of Bavaria, the traditional costume for men is leather trousers that end above the knee, and women where a dress that incorporates a bodice, blouse, full skirt, and apron. You can see these clothing items being worn at carnivals and festivals.

NATURE

The government of Germany works hard to protect the country’s wildlife. With just under 100 nature reserves, Germany boasts many diverse natural settings, the biggest of which is the Black Forest.

The flat northern coast of Germany is home to sea life and wading birds. The forested hills and mountains in the south are home to wildcats, boar, ibex, and other large forest animals.

Germany’s coastlines are an important stopover point for many migrating birds, and the government has set up reserves for their protection.
**VOCABULARY**
Which words would you use to describe Hansel and Gretel? Circle them!

young  rich  lazy
naive  silly  aggressive
cheerful  foolish  friendly
outrageous  cowardly  loving
intelligent  scared  brave
clumsy  hungry  cautious
cooperative  adventurous  grumpy

**CHARACTER PROFILES**
Describe the characters from *Hansel and Gretel.*
The Characters: Hansel, Gretel, the Witch

**Character profile: Hansel**

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**Character profile: Gretel**

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**Character profile: The Witch**

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NUMBERS & COUNTING

The witch has made jelly bean paths to her door! Fill in the missing numbers from 1 to 20 (each number is missing once).
Activities

STUDY GUIDE

WORD SEARCH
Search up, down, forward, backward, and on the diagonal to find the hidden words in the box below.

WORD BANK

HANSEL
WOODCUTTER
GINGERBREAD

BREADCRUMBS
GRETEL
FOREST

PATH
OVEN
WITCH

DARK
CANDY
HOUSE

HANSEL WOODCUTTER GINGERBREAD
BREADCRUMBS GRETEL FOREST PATH OVEN WITCH
DARK CANDY HOUSE

Name:
STUDY GUIDE

Activities

GRAPHING

Color in the squares below to show how many of each candy you see.

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Answer the questions below:

1. How many are there? ________________
2. How many are there? ________________
3. How many are there? ________________
4. How many are there? ________________
HANSEL AND GRETEL

WORD SEARCH ANSWER

Answer Key

STUDY GUIDE

WORD SEARCH ANSWER

G A R D K R B L Y S
G P K O B T E T D T E V D D H E M Z
C K T H D O S W J E T W O E H M O Y
A G R E T E L G T H N N C L U L Y W
G P X C R A C L U E A K R D Y P N S T
L H S O C B P C T P N A E S M S L L D
X A F D G S D A L V S I E Z X Z Q Y V
V Q T N F O A O X J E O Z Y L Z X N J
M E A Z O H F T K X L Y C F K S S S K
P S B W R T R V H K C G N Z B T X W C
E O R C I N O Y Q D U P T N V C L Q O
L T E A N T K P D I U R U S J H X J Y
H A A N U O C L Y C H E A G M G N P B
M J D D F G U H G I N G E R B R E A D
L I C Y Z A G K B K S I K F W S V M I
D Q R R S T S U R W L H U T E M O C K
K J U Z J H Q R V S B T O X F G W J Z
V Z M A Q F E T P Q S H F U H F E G S
B J B L F F W V D O A W L R S A I K S
E T S D Q Q V R A I E V A Q Z E N L S
RECIPE FOR A VERY TASTY HOUSE!

Gingerbread was a popular dessert in Germany when the Brothers Grimm recorded the tale of Hansel and Gretel in the early 1800's and it still is today. Gingerbread can take many different forms: light and spongy, rich and sticky, or the biscuit-like variety commonly used to make gingerbread people and gingerbread houses.

The following is a simple recipe for one kind of gingerbread:

Ingredients:
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar (white or brown)
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon lemon rind
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ginger
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 1/2 cup molasses

Directions:
1. Cream shortening and sugar.
2. Beat in eggs and add lemon rind.
3. Sift remaining dry ingredients together, and add them alternately with the liquids to the shortening/sugar mixture. Beat until blended.
4. Bake in a greased 8x11 inch pan in a 350 degree oven for about 40 minutes.

Try it with applesauce or whipped cream!
Discussion Activities for Teachers

1. **Discuss the brother/sister relationship in *Hansel and Gretel***.
   How do Hansel and Gretel get along with each other? Do they ever fight or disagree? Do they take care of each other or protect each other from danger? What is fun about having a sibling, and what is difficult about it, if anything? Teachers, encourage students to share examples from their own family lives.

2. **The world of *Hansel and Gretel* is full of things that children might commonly find frightening: witches, the dark, black cats, the deep forest**.
   Why are these things scary to some of us? How do Hansel and Gretel handle some of their scary situations? Are scary things in plays, books, and movies any different from the scary things we might encounter in real life? It’s natural to be frightened sometimes; even adults are often frightened of something. Discuss strategies for dealing with the scary things we all encounter.

3. **Use *Hansel and Gretel* to explore an assortment of important safety and health issues**.
   For instance, do the children behave wisely when they wander off the forest path and enter the home of a stranger? What should we do if we ever become lost in an unfamiliar place? Who are the appropriate people to turn to for help? What do we do if we are approached by a stranger?

4. **Kitchen safety and good nutrition are other possible discussion topics**.
   How do we behave around hot ovens and stovetops? A house made of sweets may sound like a tasty idea, but would that be enough for a healthy diet? What makes a well-balanced meal, and what are some healthy snack ideas?

5. **The Brothers Grimm collected folk tales like *Hansel and Gretel* by talking with people**.
   Before the Grimm brothers, many of these stories had never been written down; they were passed from generation to generation orally, or out loud. In the play, Poppa tells a story to the children about cats and witches, a story that perhaps he heard from his own grandfather. Teachers, encourage students to share stories that they have heard from their parents or grandparents.

As a related physical exercise, play “telephone” to explore how a story might change as it is passed from generation to generation. Sit in a circle and designate one person the “story starter.” The story starter should come up with a simple one sentence story and whisper it to the person seated next to them. That person then whispers it to the next person, and so on. When the circle is complete, have the last person report on their “version” of the story. Is it at all different from the original story?
Cues at the Theatre

When you are in an audience at Hansel and Gretel or any play, pay attention to the following:

**Cue**
1) Command given by stage management to the technical departments.
2) Any signal (spoken line, action or count) that indicates another action should follow.

**House Lights**
The auditorium lighting, which is commonly faded out when the performance starts.

**Blackout**
The act of turning off (or fading out) stage lighting.

**Curtain Call**
At the end of a performance, the acknowledgment of applause by actors — the bows.

**Build / Check**
Build is a smooth increase in sound or light level; check is the opposite — a smooth diminishment of light or sound.

**Fade**
An increase, decrease, or change in lighting or sound.